

Five Things I Believe About Strategic Planning

- 1. The process of planning is as important as the resulting document.**
A strategic plan created by a few people misses the point. Strategic planning is a huge opportunity to create and build support for a shared future. Don't leave people out just because you're afraid of conflict or too many voices. You'll have to deal with those differences eventually.
- 2. The Board's role is to identify the results they want and the overall strategy and the staff's role is to decide how to implement those strategies. Results should be SMART –**
Specific
Measurable
Achievable (stretch is good)
Relevant
Time-bound.
- 3. A strategic plan that won't gather dust outlines no more than 3-5 SMART goals.**
Agreeing on a small number of goals or targets requires a higher level of collaboration in the group because you can't simply include everyone's favorite. Such collaboration and focus, however, is of tremendous benefit to the organization. It allows the organization, much more easily, to measure progress towards its goals.
- 4. Given the rate of change in today's world, a realistic time horizon for goals is 1-3 years. A vision, however, may extend 5-10 years.**
I simply don't believe we know enough to plan with any degree of confidence beyond three years. That doesn't mean an organization can't dream, it just means the planners need to acknowledge that there is a great deal that no one can predict, that will affect the organization's achievement of its goals.
- 5. Planning should include facts AND people's opinions, feelings and perceptions.**
Especially when people are in conflict about "shoulds" or "needs", it is helpful to distinguish between facts and opinions. Helping the group identify facts about the situation can often help them identify a shared reality. Conversely, trying to get a group to only be logical about planning omits their passion and inner wisdom.