

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND VISIONING

		Level of Performance			
		Business Unit	Process	Work Group	Individual
Performance Change	Establish	●	○	●	○
	Improve	●	○	●	○
	Maintain	●	○	●	○
	Extinguish	●	○	●	○

Alternative Names

Mega planning
Macro planning
Micro planning
Ideal visioning
Strategic thinking

Definitions

Strategic planning is the process of identifying the direction in which an organization should head, why it should head there, and how to tell when it has arrived. Strategic planning aligns everything that an organization uses, does, produces, and delivers while also defining value added for external clients.

Visioning is the process of defining in measurable terms the future that the organization is committed to creating. An *ideal vision* is the measurable statement of the kind of world the organization commits to create for tomorrow's child. An ideal vision is used to derive an organization's mission; the mission statement describes which parts of the vision the organization commits to deliver and move toward. When the ideal vision and the mission are established, the

strategic plan describes the results that are required to achieve the vision and the mission.

Description

Several essential questions are answered by engaging in strategic planning and visioning:

- Where are we headed?
- Why do we want to go there?
- How we will know when we have arrived?

Strategic planning and visioning are critical in setting an organization's direction and in determining societal, organizational, and individual success criteria. They are also basic to determining what it takes—in terms of resources, interventions, actions, and results—to get from here to there (from the current state to the desired state). The performance technologist may facilitate the development of a strategic plan or may identify the need for one and then work with a consultant who specializes in this intervention.

When using a vision and a mission for performance improvement, the measurable criteria serve to (1) align organizational and human performance objectives with organizational purposes and (2) supply the basis for evaluation and continuous improvement.

Strategic planning and visioning interventions are changing with the times. Today's planning and visioning activities are being required to address not only conventional bottom-line indicators of success (such as quarterly profits or market share), but also another, more basic bottom-line consideration, which is the value added to society (Kaufman, 1998; Kaufman & Watkins, 1996).

The strategic planning process is often best facilitated by an outsider so that participants are free to share goals, objectives, and strategic plans openly. A strategic plan should be no more than ten pages in length and should identify only (1) where the organization is headed, (2) why it is headed there, (3) how all parties will know when they have arrived, and (4) the resources required to get the organization from the current to the desired state. If a strategic plan is loaded with details and analysis, it is usually a blueprint for micromanaging and is likely to be a tactical or operational plan. However, tactical or operational plans should be derived from an accepted strategic plan. Note that the strategic plan should be proactive in defining *what should be* and *what could be* based on adding value to external clients in society. Although the process of creating the plan can take as

little as one day to complete, strategic planning should be a continuing process within any organization.

Most people initially prefer an ideal vision that has a positive sound, such as, "All people will live in a healthy, positive, safe, and satisfying environment in which all things both survive and thrive. People may create any type of world they desire as long as they don't violate the basic ideal vision" (Kaufman, 1998, pp. 52–58). Although such a statement can be comfortable and uplifting, it provides little "meat" in terms of what performance technologists require for planning, design, development, implementation, and continuous improvement.

Because performance and results are essential ingredients of performance technology, it is necessary to take the positive ideal vision one step further and state it in the form of results and consequences. Then measurable statements of deviation from the positive can be made. A basic ideal vision is written with the same precision and rigor as any measurable performance objective.

An example of a measurable and useful ideal vision follows (Kaufman, 1998, p. 54):

There will be no losses of life or elimination or reduction of levels of well-being, survival, self-sufficiency, quality of life, livelihood, or loss of property from any sources including but not limited to the following: war and/or riot; unintended human-caused changes to the environment, including permanent destruction of the environment and/or rendering it nonrenewable; murder, rape, or crimes of violence, robbery, or destruction of property; etc.

From this ideal vision an organization would identify what it is committed to moving toward in its mission objective. An example of an organizational mission objective is this: "We at XYZ Enterprises will reduce the number of incidents of juvenile crime in our community to zero by the year 2050." Subsequent objectives would then include the *benchmarks* that must be met in the years 2010, 2020, and so on, for the organization to accomplish the mission objective.

Strategic planning plus is one responsive, practical, and pragmatic model for strategic planning and visioning initiatives (Kaufman 1992, 1998). It begins with the identification of the measurable societal contributions to be delivered and then identifies the required or desired results to be achieved at the organizational level and subsequently at individual performance levels. Seen in this manner, organizations (and their parts) are the means to both external client and societal ends. In the hypothetical example above, the strategic plan would then identify that an individual might be expected to produce (in cooperation with community groups) "a list of potential strategies approved by community representatives" as

a required product leading toward the accomplishment of the organizational mission and ideal vision. This process of cascading down from the highest to the lowest level ensures that everything the organization uses, does, produces, and delivers is aligned with positive societal consequences and payoffs.

The process offers the performance technologist an effective tool with which to test any performance initiative being considered by asking: “Will what is being considered move us closer to or further from our mission and ideal vision?”

This approach of integrating strategic planning and ideal visioning is capable of providing organizations and individuals with justifiable directions and criteria for success. It is by linking what an organization uses, does, produces, and delivers to external clients that the strategic plan becomes an integral part of performance technology. If the performance technologist has no strategic plan or ideal vision with which to test the viability of an intervention, he or she has no rational way to justify decisions on intervention selection and implementation.

Steps of Strategic Planning and Visioning

The four steps of strategic planning and visioning are as follows:

1. Develop or obtain agreement on the ideal vision that states the future results for society and for external clients.
2. Align the organization’s mission objective with the ideal vision so that it states what parts and portions of that vision the organization is committed to delivering or moving toward.
3. Identify the functions (products to be successfully completed) that are required to move the organization from the current to the desired state.
4. Identify the costs and consequences of meeting the needs—closing the gaps between current results and consequences and required ones.

Performance Technology Tools Used in Strategic Planning

The strategic plan integrates the following tools of performance technology:

- Needs assessment (to identify the performance gaps between current and required results for society, external clients, and the organization and also to identify the performance gaps for the functions to be delivered)
- Measurable performance objectives (to define current and required results)
- Evaluation and continuous improvement

When to Use

The circumstances under which strategic planning can be used are as follows:

- When top management wants to ensure that everything that is used, done, produced, and delivered adds value to the organization as well as to external clients and society
- When no formal plan exists to ensure that what the organization delivers adds value to external clients and society

If the performance technologist is not involved in developing the new strategic plan or the vision, he or she may use the existing one to identify the extent to which various performance initiatives will add value to associates, the organization, and external clients.

Case Studies

Two case studies illustrate strategic planning, with particular attention to the new issue of the value added to society.

An Organization with an Unused Strategic Plan

An executive was disappointed with her organization's current strategic plan. She observed that it was long, detailed, laborious, and never used when decisions were to be made. She noted that she had prepared a "vision for the organization," as a large consulting firm had suggested. The vision identified the major means by which the organization would achieve success: quality management, customer focus, a market-driven philosophy, and the use of technology. As she somewhat proudly noted, this vision statement was created to be similar to those of many other successful organizations. It included phrases such as "committed to long-term growth," "achieving outstanding value for our clients," and "our most important resource is our people."

Following the procedures of conventional strategic planning, she asked her associates to identify how each would contribute to this vision. She then began to realize that most of her people only used the words of her vision to justify doing the same things as before. Although she had followed what she thought was competent advice, her organization was losing market share, shareholder value, and its good reputation.

By using a planning process focusing on societal value added, she found that she could now justify resources, methods, approaches, products, and deliverables in terms of what they added in value to external clients and society. Her previous strategic planning approach focused on current means for doing business (quality, reengineering, technology, and so on) and tended to lock her and the organization into business as usual. The societal framework and mind-set—strategic thinking—changed how the organization does business, justified many current products, identified many opportunities, and provided the basis for eliminating some activities and products that did not add value to internal and/or external clients. She requested the assistance of a staff performance technologist to shift from a means-and-resources-focused approach to a results-referenced one.

Some of her associates were at first uncomfortable with changing how they thought and planned, but soon they realized that a proactive and continual planning process focused on value added to society was very practical. It even allowed them to be responsive to and prove value for clients and society, adding desired meaning to their jobs. For example, the new organizational vision defined a community in which all individuals are self-sufficient and crime, poverty, and discrimination do not exist. From this vision they derived an organizational mission stating which parts of the vision the organization was committed to delivering. It should be noted that although the organizational vision and mission did not specify long-term growth and profit, the organization pursued its vision knowing that providing useful results to the community would be financially profitable. Profits did improve, as did customer satisfaction and the morale of associates.

A Government Agency

A government agency was under intense pressure to cut costs and reduce the number of employees. Each review by the legislature cited the agency for poor results and high costs. The agency had followed conventional strategic planning approaches, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and writing a values-vision-mission statement that said, "Excellence in service to our citizens." Yet the newspapers often reported negative stories about the way in which the agency conducted business and printed examples of how efforts at downsizing were futile. There was eventually talk of firing the agency secretary and bringing in a popular politician as a replacement. Employees were nervous and therefore spent a lot of time documenting their worth and looking for new jobs.

The secretary and his executive staff adopted a societal-referenced planning and decision-making model to get a new perspective. The agency came up with a new mission based on adding value to society: "Put ourselves out of business through success." "Out of business?" asked some associates. The answer came

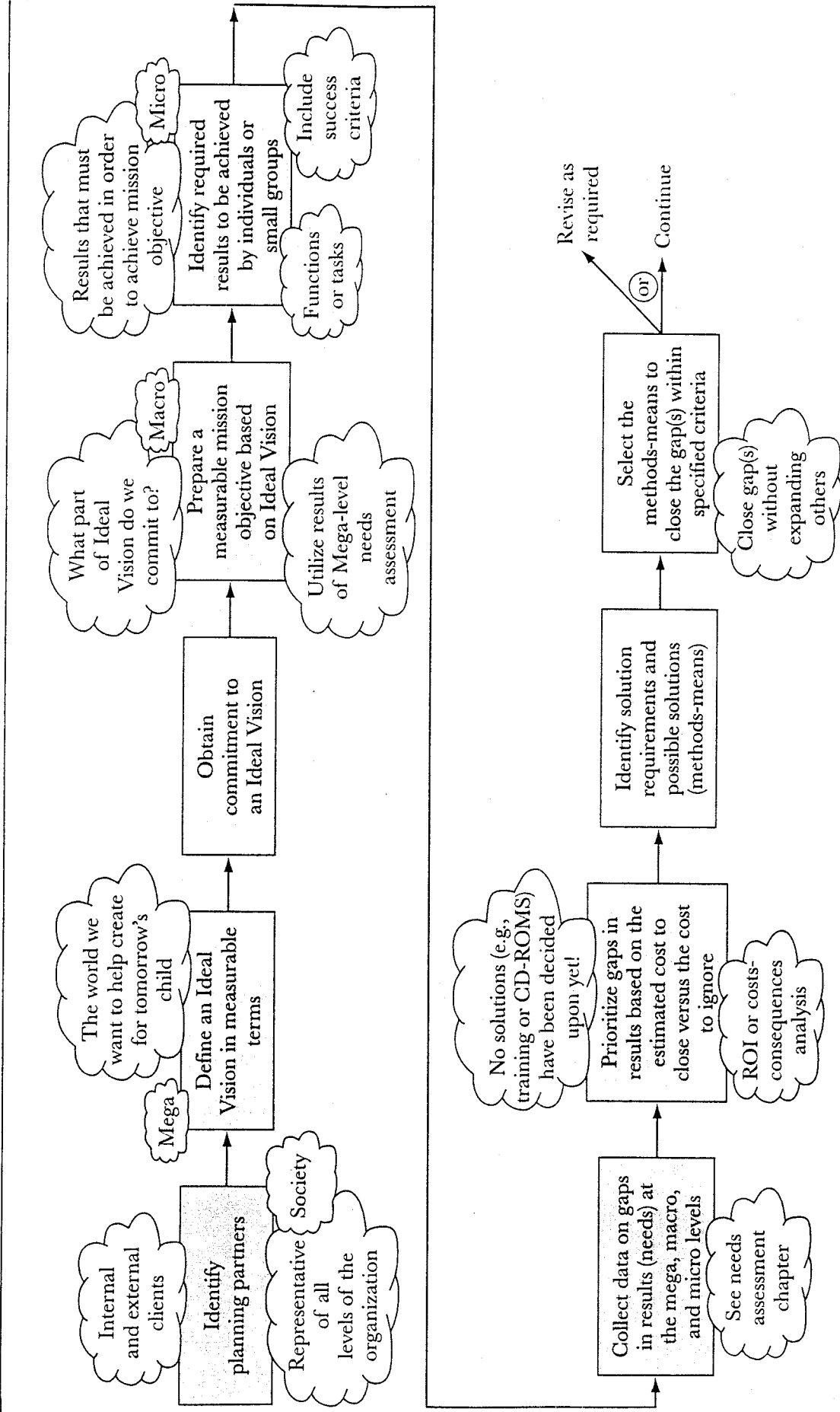
back, "We are not likely accomplish this goal in our time, but if we aren't intending to be so good at what we do that we are no longer needed, then what do we have in mind?" This was a major shift in how they thought about themselves, their current clients, and their responsibilities. With a societal orientation they found that many of their services added no value to citizens. This perspective allowed them to rethink their services; by eliminating those of no value, they became leaner, more efficient, more effective. They had begun to work themselves out of business. Then they reorganized their operations to improve how they worked with and related to their clients. The following year they won an award from a citizens' committee for exemplary service to the state.

Figure 1 offers an introductory *map* (algorithm or flow diagram) that describes several of the primary steps in developing a societal-referenced strategic plan. The clouds represent additional topics and questions that should be addressed during each step of the development process.

Resources and References

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FIGURE 1. MAP FOR DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN.



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