



Unit: Time Management
Skill 10: Planning is Proactive
Activity B: Basics of Strategic Planning

Activity Skills:

Small group discussion or personal reflection.

Leadership Skills:

Understanding what the key priorities of your life are and how these relate to time management and setting daily task priorities.

Suggested Level:

Advanced

Time:

20-30 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Paper
- Pens or pencils to write

Do Ahead:

N/A

Source:

Developed by:
 Rory Klick
 UW Extension

Based on:

Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Achieving and Sustaining Organizational Development,
 John M. Bryson,

BACKGROUND:

The term planning is fairly well understood; we plan ahead for the future, or we plan all the various aspects of a project to make sure they get done on time. But what is strategic planning? Very simply, strategic planning is “a set of concepts, procedures and tools designed to help leaders think and act strategically.” (Bryson) Strategic planning isn’t a substitute for leadership, it’s something used by leaders to guide what actions are addressed and in what priority, all relative to the group’s mission.

Thinking “Big Picture” like this helps people’s tasks stay focused so that the work being done always relates back to the purpose of the group or organization – having a strategic plan helps tasks stay relevant. Going through a strategic planning process can help a group resolve the most important issues they face and can help clarify how they are adapting to change.

As a leader, what are the basics you need to know about strategic planning? No one activity can provide a complete understanding of such a complex topic, but we do want to cover the highlights. There are several key steps to strategic planning:

- **Define the mission:** What is your primary purpose? Why does your group exist and what do you want to accomplish?
- **Assess your strengths:** What resources, skills and abilities do you have within your group or organization?
- **Know your weaknesses:** Once you have reviewed your strengths, then it becomes clearer as to where your group’s weaknesses are. Will you need to add more people to your team, provide additional training for your team, or find more resources?
- **Find best practices:** Once you have defined your mission and know your group’s strengths and weaknesses, investigate how other groups have handled the task. What operations, procedures or practices have been tried that provide you with some ideas about “best practices?”
- **Set goals:** Define the goals that address and serve your group’s mission and provide measurable accomplishments.
- **Determine actions:** Once goals are defined relative to mission, then you can develop a list of actions or tasks that need to be done in order to achieve the goal.
- **Review and evaluate:** Once your group has established their strategic plan, make sure you periodically go back to it and see how you’re doing, or if it is time to update the plan.

Skill 10: Planning is Proactive

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Notes:

WHAT TO DO:

This activity can be done in small groups of 3-6 people. Ask each small group to develop a mission statement for a theoretical organization. Have them discuss their organization's strengths and weaknesses (they will make these up based on the mission), and then define their three (3) top goals and some actions to achieve those goals. Reconvene and have each group present their basic strategic plan.

TALK IT OVER:

Reflect:

- Have you ever heard of strategic planning before?
- Was the exercise easy or difficult? Why?
- Why do you think it's become such a big deal for groups, organizations and companies to go through strategic planning?
- Where do you think you could find best practices?
- How often do you think groups need to review and evaluate their strategic plan?

Apply:

- Why do leaders have to know about this?
- Can you see how this process might help focus the activities and work of your group or organization?
- Sometimes even very experienced leaders hire outside consultants to guide their group through a strategic planning process; why might this be?

BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework:

Ask students to look through business publications (like the Wall Street Journal or Business Weekly) and see if they can find any references to strategic planning among the articles. What did they learn by reading the article? Have them write a brief description of the article and what it stated about the company and its strategic planning.

Resources And Web Links:

<http://www.des.calstate.edu/processmodel.html>