

Strategic Assessment and Plan: Phase 4

Are we getting there?

In the [first article](#) in this series we discussed Phase 1 of the Strategic Assessment and Plan: *Where are we?* That assessment phase included the first three steps of the 10-step plan. Phase 1 was where we determined our mission, the leader's responsibilities, and analyzed the environment in which our organization exists or functions. The [second article](#) examined Phase 2: *Where do we want to go?* In that phase we looked to the future by working through steps 4 through 7 to develop our vision and organizational values; identify key processes and systems; determine gaps in performance; and finally, establish objectives and goals. In the [last article](#) we explored the third phase of our plan: *How are we going to get there?* That phase had two steps and required the development of an implementation plan and systems for monitoring performance.

Finally, we turn to Phase 4: *Are we getting there?* These two last steps involve monitoring performance, analyzing feedback, review and evaluation. This is the phase most often overlooked or underappreciated but critical to the success of our strategic plan. "What gets measured gets done," is an old but true proverb. Therefore, as discussed in [Step 6](#), our choice of metrics is vitally important to goal achievement. Do we measure *effectiveness*, i.e., doing the right things, or *efficiency*, i.e., doing things right? Step 9, therefore, is where we determine how we will measure objective/goal accomplishment and identify other means for progress feedback. This step is often overlooked because it is difficult and frequently frustrating to determine the measures that will tell you what you want to know. The fast and easy choice often doesn't measure our true success or failure. Finding the right metrics can be a process of trial and error. That's why it is necessary to frequently review and evaluate the data and its associated metric.

Step 10 is review and evaluation. Here we determine the process for continued review of our progress on objective/goal accomplishment. How frequently will we review the data? What level of variation (deviation from plan) will cause us to change our implementation plan? What criteria will we use for changing strategic direction? How often will we review our mission and vision? What events would cause us to change? These questions need to be answered with broad participation throughout the organization. I recommend that the senior level of the organization conduct an annual review of its [Guiding Principles](#) and its major objectives. Objectives and associated goals should be reviewed at least semiannually at the division level and more frequently (quarterly/monthly) at the next level down.

This completes our Strategic Assessment and Plan. Although the examples given here may not directly relate to your type of organization you will find that the 4-Phase, 10-step Plan applies equally well to all types of organizations. It provides a systematic way to focus on organizational Guiding Principles, long-range plans, and key systems within the organization. I hope that you have been challenged by something written here. If you have, I encourage you to try the Plan in your organization. You will be surprised by the outcomes you can achieve when people work together with long-range guidance and direction!

The Strategic Assessment and Plan

An Outline

Phase 1: Where are we?

1. Determine the mission

What is our purpose, reason for existence?

What business are we in?

Who are our customers?

2. Identify the leader's responsibilities, leadership style & values

What are the things only the leader can do? (i.e., what *cannot* be delegated?)

What leadership style is required given the circumstances (level of commitment & competency)?

How will the leader's own personal values affect the organization?

3. Analyze the external & internal environments

What are our own internal strengths & weaknesses?

What are our distinctive competencies/competitive advantages?

Who are our competitors & what are their strengths & weaknesses?

What other external threats & opportunities can we identify?

Phase 2: Where do we want to go?

4. Develop the organizational vision & values

What is our vision for the future of our organization?

What values will we adhere to in dealing with our customers (those we serve), both external & internal?

5. Identify key processes & systems

What are the few, key systems & processes that differentiate us from our competitors?

What are those systems & process that are most important to our survival?

6. Determine gaps in performance

What is our current level of performance in our key systems & processes?

When we compare our current performance with our desired future state, are there gaps in systems or processes?

7. Establish objectives & goals

What are the strategic and operational objectives that, once obtained, will close our gaps in performance?

What are the necessary goals we will need to achieve in order to accomplish our stated objectives?

Phase 3: How are we going to get there?

8. Develop the implementation plan

For each goal, determine:

who will be assigned responsibility?

what steps are to be accomplished?

what resources are available?

how will the work be accomplished (in general terms)?

when do we want the goal completed?

Phase 4: Are we getting there?

9. Monitor performance & feedback analysis

How will we measure goal accomplishment?

What other means will we use for feedback on our progress?

10. Review & evaluation

What will be the process for continual review of our progress?

What criteria will we use for changing strategic direction?

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