

Preparing Yourself for a Strategy Session

What Strategic Planning is:

If the existing strategic trajectory of an organization is working and is expected to work under projected future circumstances, there is no need for a plan. Strategic plans alter the trajectory of an organization, prepare it for new circumstances in the organization's environment, and/or are a response to an impending threat or opportunity. The strategic plans with the most vitality are those that reflect planned change. (Babak Armajani, *Governing*)

Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future. (Adapted from John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*)

“Fear and discomfort are an essential part of strategy making” (Roger L. Martin, “The Big Lie of Strategic Planning, Harvard Business Review)

What Strategic Planning is Not:

Strategic planning is “not a budget with a lot of explanatory words attached....If you pass the five-page mark it is time to ask: Are we answering the five key questions or are we doing something else and calling it strategy? If it is the latter: eject, eject!” (Roger L. Martin)

Another type of weak strategic objective is one that is “blue sky”. It’s typically a restatement of the desired state of affairs or the challenge- and skips over the fact that no one knows how to get there. (from ProfitPath)

Strategic Planning Fails When

Planners ignore marketplace reality, facts, and assumptions. Don’t bury your head in the sand when it comes to marketplace realities, and don’t discount potential problems because they have not had an immediate impact on your business yet. (Forbes blogger Aileron)

The Accountabilities for Each Action are Not Understood. Who will be responsible for each individual action is almost more important than understanding who is responsible for the overall plan. It has to be someone who is willing to accept the responsibility and has the authority to drive the action. (Robert A. Simkins)