

Do You Have Strategic Pain Or a Strategic Plan? Answer These Questions to Find Out

Simplify decision-making by using a strategy to guide you every day.

By Karen Eber Davis

The other day someone sent me a copy of a strategic plan via e-mail. I laughed out loud at the subject line: “Strategic Pain.” Was this a typo, autocorrect, Freudian slip, or secret in-house nickname for a process the sender takes up under duress?

Let’s face it, many organizations consider strategic planning a pain. But if you don’t have a strategy that you use daily, you’re missing out on a powerful tool. Strategies simplify decision-making, reduce conflicts, align efforts, and shorten runways. They shrink the energy required to reach your goals.

Do you have an effective strategy? Look at these five statements. Count the assertions with which you agree.

1. You can tell outsiders – in 240 characters or less – the overall gist of how your organization will succeed.
2. Every time you meet with your board and staff, you reflect together on the organization’s strategy while resolving issues.
3. While obtaining resources may be a challenge, you have a clear understanding of *how* to obtain the funds you need.

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4. In the commotion of operating your nonprofit, you’re solving today’s challenges while building a better future.

5. Instead of hashing over big ideas about what to do next, your staff, volunteers, and board grapple with the best options to achieve specific goals.

How did you do? If you answered yes to the whole list, you have an effective strategy. If you scored less than 100%, you may have strategic pain. **S**

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Strategy Eases Conflict

Strategy work isn’t a ritual exercise you take to humor your funders. It’s a management tool you can – and should – use every day. Gathering your team to discuss strategy transforms potential firestorms into controlled burns. New and better options develop. For more on strategy, read articles such as these at NonprofitWorld.org:

How Can Your Board Participate in Strategic Planning? (Vol. 30, No. 2)

Eight Steps to Managing Conflict (Vol. 20, No. 4)

Before You Plan Where to Go, Find Out Where You Are (Vol. 29, No. 3)

Don’t Give Up on Strategic Planning: 10 Keys to Success (Vol. 22, No. 3)

Do You Know Where Your Goals Are? (Vol. 26, No. 5)

Advance to the Future or Retreat to the Familiar? (Vol. 22, No. 6)

Strategic Planning on a Budget (Vol. 23, No. 4)