



Plans May Be Strategic, But They Need Proactive Staff to Succeed

Do your employees pass the test?

BY BRUCE GLASRUD

Yes, a strategic plan is important. But you can't root your ability to deliver leading-edge services solely on your strategic plan. Your success depends on an organization-wide ability to *think strategically* and *act tactically*. In other words:

Never mind producing a perfect strategic plan. Put your mind to producing a perfectly strategic organization!

To create a strategic organization, you need to evaluate your staff's ability to think and act proactively. To do so, ask these four essential questions:

1

Are all employees focused on a dynamic mission?

- Do they view your organization's mission as one of static tradition or of dynamic action to serve changing community needs?
- Do they understand your organization's overall functions and how those functions combine to serve your mission?
- Do they focus on the "big picture" of the mission and how their own "cog in the wheel" contributes to it?
- Do they make suggestions about the mission beyond their job function?
- Do they feel a sense of ownership in a vigorous, forward-thinking organization?

2

Are employees flexible in their own job niche or function?

- Do they seek changes in the parameters of their job?
- Do they offer suggestions to upgrade their position?
- Do they propose eliminating outmoded job functions?

- Do they advance their skills by attending workshops?
- Do they learn things outside of their job function?
- Do they say "That's not my job" when a new task is suggested? Or do they offer ways to integrate new functions into their work?
- Do they keep current with professional reading in your organization's mission area?
- Do they familiarize themselves with other job functions or departments in your organization?

3

Do employees engage change instead of evading it?

- Do they look for wastefulness and flawed procedures in their jobs?
- Do they challenge antiquated ideas in the organization?
- Do they anticipate the changing needs of your organization's clients?
- Do they seek clients' opinions in order to meet their needs?

4

Do employees see change as opportunity to serve the mission?

- Are they resilient when facing changes or challenges?
- Do they respond quickly to non-routine needs of clients, stakeholders, or other staff members?
- Do they say "We've always done it this way" when new ideas are suggested?
- Do they blame others for their reluctance to change ("The board wouldn't like it")?
- Do they view change as a positive test of their competency or a negative challenge to their competency?



- Are they eager to test and evaluate new programs, services, and methods that may better serve the mission?

These questions are universal to any job description, including yours and your board's. Simply by asking the questions, you've set in place an expectation that your organization values proactive traits.

Modern organizations are shifting away from job descriptions focused on "doing" and toward a focus on "being" functions. Thus, it makes sense to evaluate and compensate staff for their ability to work strategically and tactically. It also makes sense to value those traits more than traditional credentials and experience when evaluating new hires.

Your claim to being proactive can't rest on a static plan, historical achievement, or past performance assessment. It must hinge on an

organizational culture that rewards people for being resilient, change-seeking, and anticipatory in all their actions. It must be achieved through constant vigilance and aggressive action to keep your mission vital and your programs viable. May you pass that test with flying colors! ■

Selected References

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Nonprofit World • Volume 19, Number 1 January/February 2001
Published by the Society for Nonprofit Organizations
6314 Odana Road, Suite 1, Madison, WI 53719 • (608) 274-9777
www.danenet.org/snpo

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