

The Process of Strategic Planning



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What is Strategic Planning (SP)?

A process that seeks the strategic fit between the mission of an organization and its internal strengths and external opportunities.

SP develops a shared vision among the stakeholders of an organization and a blueprint for how to achieve that vision.

SP is much like the scientific method—a process to an end, NOT an end in itself!



Why should chapters do SP?

Non-profit and volunteer organization resources are constrained—even a small error in direction can have a significant impact on viability. It is very important to map out the future course if your organization is to prosper and fulfill its purpose.

To that end, simplicity and focus are paramount in establishing and maintaining purpose.

It is vital that your vision, mission, and goals are

- easy to articulate and understand
- competitively distinct
- compelling



SP? Sorry, I'm too busy...

Why is SP so dreaded?

The process often becomes bogged down in an endless cycle of meetings, sabotaged by outspoken naysayers, or derailed by leaders uncommitted to the process and its results.

Why should SP *not* be dreaded?

It is an opportunity for stakeholders to consider the dreams and vision for an organization and to articulate the essence of its values. It is also a chance to visualize, ponder, and debate the future within the context of known realities and facts—these change!



A good SP process

- is an organizational, political, and rational process.
 - examines all facets of an organization in all 4 SWOT dimensions (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).
 - places the organization in context by examining the environment in which it operates.
 - includes internal and external stakeholders—and thus provides perspective!
 - is logical, rational, disciplined, and highly creative.



Outcomes: what can we hope for?

- Clarify the organization's mission to all stakeholders.
- Assess and adjust programs.
- Reaffirm that organization is headed in the right direction (or not).
- Address external uncertainties and change.
- Preparation for seeking and garnering financial support.
- Build teamwork, communication and expertise among your board.
- Measure organizational effectiveness.
- Develop a framework within which to make difficult programmatic and financial decisions.



SCB 1985: A “Crisis Discipline” Was Born

SCB was formed to focus on a unique and important issue - the conservation of biological diversity. Initial goals:

- Define and communicate the values of biodiversity
- Define and communicate the threats to biodiversity
- Approach biodiversity crisis in an interdisciplinary manner
- Consider ecosystem conservation in addition to species conservation
- Integrate conservation of biodiversity with human society needs





What were we then?

Around 5000 members (until 2001)...

- Mostly North American
- Mostly academics
- One publication
- One annual meeting
- About 1.5 million USD annual budget



Things have changed...

As of June 2006, SCB is over 11,500 members...

- From over 130 countries
- With a wide range of expertise from the social sciences, agriculture, economics, policy, and many, many others
- Approximately 30% students
- More than 60% of members have advanced degrees, but no longer all academics
- Representation from government, business, NGOs, conservation advocacy groups, universities, and many, many others

- ✓ 7 Regional Sections
- ✓ Dozens of chapters
- ✓ 12 standing committees
- ✓ Yearly regional and global meeting
- ✓ Executive Director and E. Office
- ✓ Over 3 million USD annual budget
- ✓ And a whole lot more...



Our Institutional Conservation Ethic

What are the values we hold to be true about ourselves and our organization? As a rule, these are unchanging through time.

The SCB and its members share the following common values:

- The natural diversity of organisms, ecological complexity, and evolutionary processes have value and are necessary to support all species including our own.
- Human-caused extinctions and the degradation, destruction, or loss of functionality of natural ecosystems are undesirable.
- Maintaining and restoring biodiversity is the responsibility of all people and governments.
- The sciences, especially conservation sciences, perform a critical role in understanding how the natural world operates and how human societies and actions can both positively and negatively affect the natural world.
- Science should inform policy and management decisions that affect biodiversity.



SCB's Vision

...we see a world where people understand, value, and conserve the diversity of life on Earth—and SCB is an effective, internationally respected organization of conservation professionals that is the leading voice for the study and conservation of Earth's biodiversity.



SCB Mission (2006)

Advance the science and practice of conserving the Earth's biological diversity.



Six Organizational Goals

To achieve our mission and help realize our vision, we determined there are six main areas we can have an impact:

- 1. Conservation Science**
- 2. Conservation Management**
- 3. Policy**
- 4. Education**
- 5. Impact and reputation**
- 6. Organizational Capacity**

Strategic Planning Resources

SCB 2006-2010 Strategic Plan available:

<http://www.conbio.org/AboutUS/>

This presentation available:

<http://www.conbio.org/Chapters/StrategicPlanning.pdf>

The Nonprofit Board's Role in Planning and Evaluation. JA Yankey, and A. McClellan. 2003. Governance Series, #7. BoardSource.

Available for order via <http://www.BoardSource.org/>