So You Have to Write a Strategic Plan: Why Not Make It Interesting?

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So You Have to Write a Strategic Plan: Why Not Make It Interesting?

Anne Marie Casey
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Your Experiences

- **Good**
  - You had input
  - The Library realized the majority of the goals
  - It was a fun process

- **Not so Good**
  - Nobody asked your opinion
  - The plan was shelved as soon as the ink dried
  - The process was painful

- **Neutral**
Strategic Planning 101

- Vision – Where we aspire to be a few years down the road
- Mission – What we do/Why we exist
- Values – What we stand for
- Priorities – What is most important to us
- Goals/Strategies – Big picture steps that will get us to the vision
- Objectives/Activities – Specific tasks, procedures, etc. related to goals
- Measures – What tells us we are successful
- Responsibility – Who owns it
- Timeline – When do we plan to accomplish it
- Annual Report – How much we actually accomplished
Common Strategic Planning Processes

- Library develops an environmental scan
  - Literature Review (Horizon Report, ACRL Trends, etc.)
  - Conducts surveys
- The plan is drafted (tends to be top-down) by:
  - Senior management
  - All management
  - Representative Committee
  - Librarians
Potential Outcomes

- Advantages
  - Process is faster
  - Consensus may be easier
  - High-level issues covered

- Disadvantages
  - Less opportunity for organization-wide input
  - Lack of buy-in or shared vision at all levels
Importance of Buy-in

- General Dunwoody’s comment
  - “Engaged in visioning”
- Everyone contributes to the plan
  - GWU Libraries
- Everyone owns a piece of the plan
- Everyone is invested in achieving the goals
- More likely to have a positive outcome
- Without it – there can be resistance to the entire plan
  - Dissertation example
Buy-in the Hunt Library Way

- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's Hunt Library
  - Supports Residential campus (ca. 5800) in Daytona Beach
  - Also supports ca. 23,000 distance learners all over the world

- Organizational Structure
  - Director
  - Four associate directors
  - 15 librarians
  - Two non-MLS professionals
  - 12 library technicians
Strategic Planning 2010: Grassroots

- Management Team (director and associate directors)
  - Drafted a vision statement related to the university vision
  - Reworked the mission statement to reflect current organization
  - Adapted values statements from ALA examples
  - Planned a mandatory all-staff retreat

- Retreat activities
  - Pink card/white card exercise
  - Readings and discussion
  - Adopting vision/mission/values
Digitizing the Media Instruction Books (or how the 2010-11 strategic plan developed)

- Pink card/white card ideas categorized into broad concepts
- Concepts from retreat discussion added
- Goals drafted from broad concept areas
- Activities/objectives developed from ideas brought by all staff
- Responsibility/metrics/timeline added for each activity
- But who owns the ideas that do not fit departments?
  - Push-back from department leads
  - Cross-departmental teams
- Results?
Steering around Bumps in the Road

- **Resources**
  - Successfully advocated for discovery-tool funding
  - Did not receive new ILS funding

- **Campus space constraints**
  - Losing the third floor
  - Massive weeding project

- **Losing staff positions to attrition**

- **Extending the one-year plan to two**
  - Added in activities from retreat not in first year plan
Planning for three years – phase one: SOAR

- Has anyone heard of SWOT
  - What does it stand for?
    - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
- Have you heard of its relative, SOAR
  - Can name the components?
    - Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results
- Appreciative inquiry + strategic planning = SOAR
- Appreciative inquiry involves “the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential” (appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/whatisai.cfm)
SOAR Retreat, 2012

- Director met with each department to explain SOAR
- Departments developed a worksheet with their ideas for each category
- At retreat, management team compiled departmental lists
- In open discussion, lists were finalized
  - Great deal of similarity
  - Provided early discussion of new broad categories for three-year plan
- Good start to an environmental scan …
  - Still had work to do
Scenario Planning – the Next step

- Scenario planning is a way to envision the future
- Scenario planning steps
  - Determine the key forces in your library’s environment
    - For example: Funding, New building, Staff attrition
  - Develop a quadrant displaying most important and most uncertain forces
  - Identify aspects of each area of the quadrant
  - Write scenarios (stories) to illustrate the aspects
  - Ask stakeholders to discuss and select the most appealing scenario
  - Develop plan from results of their discussions
- Hunt Library had some missteps, so the next chapter features NEFLIN
NEFLIN 2016-2018 Strategic Plan

- Board developed quadrants
- Board wrote very brief scenarios (stories) that reflected each quadrant
- Regional focus groups
  - Hired a consultant to facilitate groups
  - Held four around the region in early 2015
  - Participants placed into four groups
    - Read and discussed one scenario
    - Reported back to entire group
  - Entire group voted for top scenario
  - Consultant captured discussion point and prepared cumulative report
Quadrants – NEFLIN 2016-2018 Plan

**ADV. / MKTG**

**Superior Stakeholder Support**

- Educating people on successful change elsewhere
- Modelling excellence in innovation

**TOO MANY COOKS**

**ON THE FOREFRONT**

- Training for non-traditional roles
- Training for new tech

**ON LIFE SUPPORT**

- Cultivate culture of innovation
- Support mktg. / advocacy

**TWO MANY HATS**

- Training-time management
- Consortial purchasing
- Innovation grants
- Loaning technology
- Expert loaning (consultant)

**No Stakeholder Support**
Developing the Final NEFLIN Plan

- Board members read the report
- Developed goals from member feedback at focus groups
- Crafted objectives from feedback
- Added a small number of organization-specific objectives
- Board member feedback
  - Was very positive
  - We enjoyed the process as much as the final product
This is all very interesting, but how do I incorporate some of these ideas?

- You are not a library director
  - Talk to your director – suggest new ways of planning
  - If you are a manager, try some ideas out on your department
- Wish I had started taking notes at the beginning!
  - A brief list of references is on the next slide
  - This presentation will be posted to commons.erau.edu by next week
  - Contact me (or other planning geeks for ideas/guidance)
- Take a chance – it just might work
  - And if it doesn’t, maybe you can get a publication/presentation out of it!
Inclusive Planning

Appreciative Inquiry
- If you Google appreciative inquiry and strategic planning, you will find several good presentations and publications. My favorite is a presentation located at http://www.cpsen.ca/images/2012/presentations/2a.pdf. (Slide 9 has the worksheet Hunt Library adapted for our retreat.

Scenario Planning

Hunt Library strategic plans
- http://huntlibrary.erau.edu/about/strategic-planning/index.html
Questions
Thank You!

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