

Embedding Ethics into your strategic plan

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Strategic planning is a powerful tool to provide a focus for the few key things that an organisation must do in the next few years. Strategic planning must also be able to add value to the activities of that organisation.

Why is it, then, that there have been numerous examples in the past few years of the strategic mismanagement of organisations and the resultant devastating impact on shareholders, the business environment and the community generally. The business decisions that arose out of traditional strategic planning scenarios have often resulted in an angry consumer base, cries of foul play from industry regulatory watchdogs, and general negative publicity resulting from a disenchanted public.

Far from minimising the negative effects of change, strategic planning often exacerbates the problem by ignoring the ethical implications of any proposed strategies. In the current environment, where governance and ethics are under increasingly closer scrutiny, any major organisational decision should consider the ethical dimension. The most effective way to ensure this ethical dimension is considered, is to embed a consideration of ethics into the strategic planning process from the outset.



The strategic planning process typically leads the planning group through the visioning, SWOR (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Risks) analysis, strategy setting and action planning stages. The more sophisticated strategic plans will then shape the Board's agenda, and lead to the development of staff performance measures.

Ethical implications of proposed actions need to be considered at the action planning stage. Identifying and analysing ethical implications of proposed action plans can add robustness to your strategic planning that will add value to the actions and protect the organisation.

The action plans should include the following elements

- Name of Strategy
- Action Plan description
- Scope of action plan
- Resources required
- Start date
- Finish date
- Project Manager
- Success measure
- Ethical implications

A sample action plan might look like:

Name of Strategy: Strategy 5- 'Extract maximum value from all member services'

Action Plan 5.1 - Reassessment of all current member services.

Scope: Identify current services and identify any gaps between current services and what we should be providing, recommend any reduction in services or new services.

Resources: Staff time

Start Date: February 2007

Completion: March 2007

Project Manager: GS

Success Measures: Board approves all proposed reduction of services

Ethics: Are we disadvantaging any members by reducing some service?

Once the ethical implications (rights, obligations, fairness, relationships and integrity) have been identified, then their implications and management need to be rewritten into the Scope section of the action plan.

The ethical implications of rights, obligations, fairness, relationships and integrity are essential ingredients of any strategic planning process. The future of our organisations, the people they represent, and the wider community can only be strengthened by embedding ethics into the strategic planning process