

Implementing a Strategic Plan

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After months of work with your Team and Board, your organization finally has a strategic plan you can be proud of.....now what? If its business as usual and the plan sits on a shelf, there is no value to all that effort. Implementation is where the hard work really begins.

Most non-profits don't have trained project managers on staff to lead implementation. You have to rely on existing staff who are experts in other areas. Still, you can succeed if your approach includes the following:

Develop a Road Map: Don't take everything on at once. Look at priorities and dependencies to schedule implementation projects; list the order of projects and when they should start and end. This will later evolve into more detailed work plans.

Assign Resources: Each project needs an Executive Sponsor to champion and guide it and a Project Manager to lead it on a daily basis. The Project Manager needs to be freed up to dedicate time for this work. The Project Team should include different stakeholders and, even if just 3 people, responsibilities should be clear.

Write a Scope Document: This outlines what is to be accomplished and how it will be done. It includes objectives, what will and what will not be delivered, organization and approach, key milestones, timeline and resources. This becomes the guide to determine if the project is on-track.

Use a Work Plan: So nothing is dropped, keep track of specific tasks, dependencies, accountabilities, and start and end dates.

Monitor Progress: Set up measurable milestones to check progress along the way. Review these regularly to see if the project is on target. If not, make adjustments in time, resources or the scope.

COMMUNICATE!! Make sure the entire organization knows what is being worked on, why, by whom and progress being made. Most staff are touched by these efforts, so make sure they know what is going on and that the work has Executive support.

Change is hard. Don't be over-ambitious, yet be flexible, as there will be bumps along the way. But, if your process includes these steps, your strategic plan implementation will have a greater chance for success.

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