

Twelve Ways to Fail at Strategic Planning

1. Always try to do thoughtful strategic planning when you're in the middle of a juicy crisis.
2. It's even better if the Executive Director or the Board President think strategic planning is a waste of time.
3. Don't involve your Board. Why would they be interested in Big Picture stuff like the future of the organization?
4. Don't involve Staff. Who needs their expertise anyway?
5. Don't involve volunteers or clients or stakeholders. What do they know about what the community really needs?
6. This won't cost anything...don't bother to apply for a planning grant from United Way, Marin Community Foundation, or other technical assistance funders (www.humaninteract.org/pcbrdatabase.htm).
7. Make sure it drags on....and on...and on.... Hint: Pile on the surveys, focus groups, interviews, evaluations, assessments, and esoteric research until a satisfying state of Analysis Paralysis has been achieved.
8. Don't be distracted by picayune things like demographic, economic, political, or funding trends; gaps in services; or what your competitors are doing.
9. Set lots and lots of vague goals. Prioritizing is such a drag, and anyway, you have lots of resources to spare.
10. Don't waste time developing Action Plans for each of the goals. You've got enough stress without identifying who should do what, when.
11. Ignore those worrywarts who whine about having the infrastructure (staff, training, facilities, technology, board) and financial resources to accomplish the new goals.
12. The Strategic Plan document should be big, ponderous, full of acronyms and lingo, dull, uninspiring, and of course, unachievable (since we're only dreaming here.) Don't bother to put it in the board binders...just stash it in a file folder and let it mellow until next year's retreat.