

Defining the Future: A Framework for Effective Strategic Planning



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Overview



Step 1: Identify Critical Issues

- **What challenges do you have today?**
- **What questions do you have as you start?**
- **What are your stakeholders asking you to do?**
- **What are you satisfied with?**
- **What are you dissatisfied with?**

Step 2: Envision the Future

- **Describe your Ideal Future - where you will be if you are outstandingly successful during the years of your planning horizon.**
 - It should be visionary.
 - It should be comprehensive.
 - It should be achievable while requiring hard work.
- **Envisioning the future should:**
 - Clarify your **Mission**. (why the organization exists)
 - Articulate your **Vision**. (description of the organization in the Ideal Future, what you will be in the future and what your impact will be)
 - Define clear, overarching **Goals** for the organization to achieve. (description of the end state or outcome in your critical focus areas)
 - Define **Values** or Principles that will guide your decisions.

Step 3: Assess Current Reality

- **The Reality Assessment objectively describes:**
 - **The environment in which you work today and what you anticipate the future environment to be.**
 - Demographics
 - Trends and anticipated changes - social, economic, employment, technology, regulatory/legal, etc.
 - **Your client/customer/constituent needs today and in the future.**
 - **What you do very well, perhaps even better than any other institution (**strengths**).**
 - Products, deliverables, skills, attributes, reputation, etc.
 - What will drive or enable you to succeed?
 - **What you do poorly, the areas needing improvement (**weaknesses**).**
 - Products, deliverables, skills, attributes, reputation, etc.
 - What might cause you to fail, what might hinder your ultimate success?

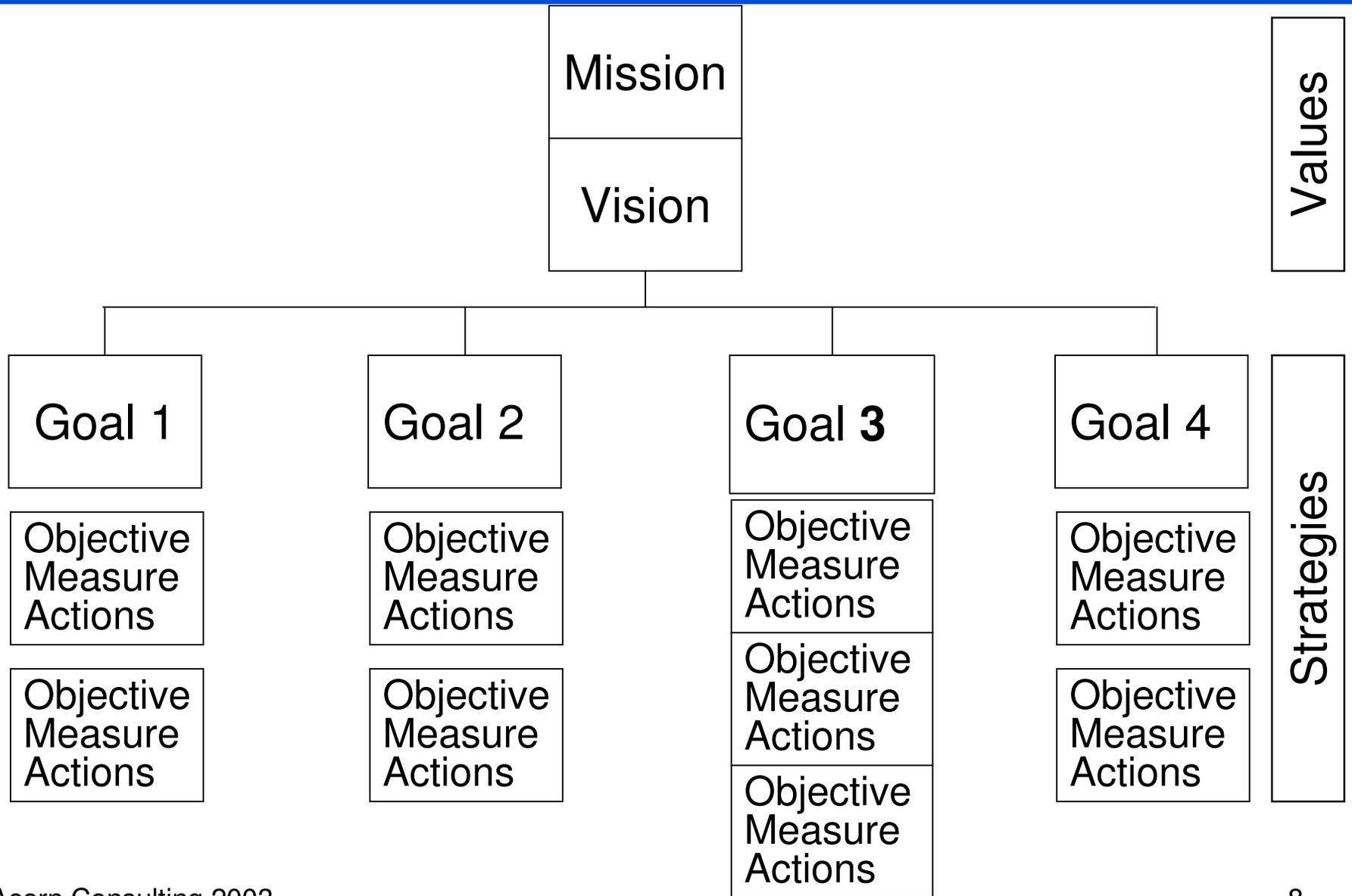
Assess Current Reality (cont.)

- **The Reality Assessment objectively describes:**
 - **What your industry and your suppliers are doing.**
 - Are changes anticipated in any aspect?
 - **What your competitors are doing and how well they are succeeding.**
 - Who are your competitors?
 - What are they doing?
 - **Are there new possibilities you can pursue? (**opportunities**)**
 - **Are there new dangers to avoid? (**threats**)**

Step 4: Define the Implementation Steps

- **Assess the gap between the Ideal Future and the Current Reality.**
 - Can you bridge the gap?
 - What **strategies** or approaches will help you bridge the gap?
- **Define your tangible, measurable accomplishments within each goal:**
 - If we are outstandingly successful, what will we accomplish? (**objectives**)
 - For each objective, how will we know when we accomplish it? (**measures**)
 - For each objective, what must we do to achieve it? (**actions**)

Planning Relationships



Step 5: Make the Transition

1. Engage the entire organization (and needed stakeholders) to understand and commit to the Ideal Future.
2. Ensure new skills needed to achieve the Ideal Future are present in the organization.
3. Ensure you have the appropriate organization structure to support the Ideal Future.
4. Identify risks or obstacles that might keep you from succeeding.
 - What can you do to prevent each risk or mitigate the damage should the problem occur?
5. Identify critical success factors to monitor to verify that you are on track towards the Ideal Future.
6. Implement the plan.

Step 6: Monitor and Adjust

- **Monitor ongoing performance and progress.**
 - **Measure results.**
 - **Take corrective action.**
 - **Ensure appropriate actions and results are supported and rewarded.**
- **Monitor changes.**
 - **Has a competitor released a new product that will undermine your success?**
 - **Is the economy strengthening or weakening?**
 - **Has technology changed, enabling new possibilities?**
 - **Has a regulation changed, enabling new possibilities or threatening some aspect of your plan?**

Terminology

- **Mission** - Description of purpose, why the organization exists. Should clarify what is within and outside your scope of responsibility.
- **Vision** - Description of the organization in the Ideal Future. May include end state, impact, reputation. Should be inspirational.
- **Values** - The beliefs and principles that guide decisions and influence actions.
- **Goal** - An overarching focus area. An end state or outcome in a specific area that will lead to the vision.
- **Strategy** - An approach, a means, the HOW of achieving a goal, objective, or action. Typically long term approach.
- **Objective** - Tangible outcome or accomplishment in support of a goal, typically time based.
- **Measure** - Identification of what success looks like; how we'll know when we achieve the objective.
- **Action** - The specific work to do, the initiative to launch.
- **Tactic** - A short term approach, means or HOW that is needed to address a specific situation.