

## Strategic Plans

THREE YEARS PRIOR

By Sharon Danosky

Have you ever sat through a Board meeting where you heard any of the following?

- I just read about an organization similar to ours that has this great program
- The State has just cut our programs by 40% - what should we do
- How effective is that program we added last year

Or, maybe you are speaking at a meeting and you look out and see eyes glazing over



Boards function well when there are clear, well-articulated objectives, everyone is energized and all are pulling in the same direction.

At Danosky & Associates, we see strategic planning as more than simply devising the five-year plan.

We see it as a way of energizing and engaging your Board. We see it as leadership and management charting a

course together and where achieving a strong organizational impact is not only possible, it's the compelling focus. We also think that it's a great time to think about planning as you put together your budget and objectives for the coming fiscal year.

I like to think of strategic plans as a huge cargo ship, travelling across the ocean to its destination. The first order of business before casting off is to decide the ship's final port of call. Then, what cargo should be loaded, and what provisions are essential for the ship to make its journey.

To make the journey possible requires a strong crew. That's why we also advocate that for every strategic plan, a standing committee or task force of the Board be delegated with the responsibility for moving a strategy forward within a designated timeline. The committee or task force then develops the tactical steps necessary to achieve the strategic objectives.

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It is also essential to measure progress, to know where you are at any given point. We like to use a strategic planning dashboard – a tool that lists each strategy and whether the tactics associated with it have begun, are in process or completed. Dashboard can also identify potential problems that might arise in moving a strategy forward.

Strategic plans must also be flexible to thrive. Just as a ship might encounter rough waters during its voyage, or decide to make an additional stop, it still has its ultimate course charted. Yet everyone understands what the over-arching objective is and knows the strategies for getting there.

With that understanding comes consensus and engagement. And that builds a more dynamic and high-performing board which in turn creates a high-performing organization.