

# Stop Writing Strategic Plans and Start Thinking Strategically

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Brad Layland, CEO and Senior Consultant

Vince Burens, Senior Consultant



# Strategic thinking is more important than a plan

*"In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."*

*-Eisenhower*

*"Most successful organizations undertake a '20 Mile March' of methodical steps toward their goal, not a sprint to the finish line."*

*-Jim Collins*

**No school can afford *not* to be thinking strategically all the time!**

**This is more of a culture than a set of practices**

# What's Wrong with most Strategic Plans?

1

## **Static**

Written as if no internal or external changes are going to impact the plan over its life – *The illusion of control*

2

## **Episodic**

Thinking strategically every three years

3

## **No mechanism to adapt**

Plans can't change; they are written annually

4

## **Die with changes in leadership and board**

"That's not my plan."

5

## **Seeking the Holy Spirit once**

Operating on our own strength and skills until it's time to plan again



# Five Keys to Creating a Strategic Thinking Culture

## 1. Model it

- Board
  - Prayer and discernment
  - Expectations of HOS
  - Recruitment of board members
  - Iterative thinking at every board meeting- Be Agile!
- HOS and Leadership Team
  - Discuss assumptions
  - Watch trends
  - Understand the changing needs of your target audiences

# Five Keys to Creating a Strategic Thinking Culture

## 1. Model it (cont.)

- Faculty
  - Curricular implications of strategic shifts
  - Faculty development on changes and new ideas
  - Teach unchanging truth in an ever-changing environment

# Five Keys to Creating a Strategic Thinking Culture

## 2. Empower everyone

- Define the culture you want so people understand expectations
- To change culture, involve the whole community
- Train and equipped for it
  - Commit the time and resources
  - Hire accordingly
- Make it the '*lingua franca*' of the community
  - Changing culture means changing your language
- Embed it into your policies and processes



# Five Keys to Creating a Strategic Thinking Culture

## **3. Use Scenario Planning as an ongoing tool**

- Encourages creative, strategic thinking at every level
- Forces questions and ideas you may not otherwise consider
- Make it a part of ongoing board, faculty and staff development

# Five Keys to Creating a Strategic Thinking Culture

## 4. **Make it part of your discernment culture**

- How do you discern God's will as a school community?
- What habits and practices might enhance this practice?
- Does your commitment to prayer empower this culture?
- How might God speak to your school through the voices of your community?



# Five Keys to Creating a Strategic Thinking Culture

## **5. Have a plan that is relevant, agile, and driving the daily decisions of the school**

- Three-year rolling plan
- Created with stakeholder input
- Bathed in prayer throughout the process
- Tools to execute it, adjust it, and refresh it
- Communicated across the school community
- Celebrated when key milestones are met (God gets the glory)

# Steps to Making Strategic Thinking Possible



# Key Action Items: Bullets, not cannonballs

- How do we empower more people to participate?
- How could we use scenario planning to catalyze it?
- How do we engage everyone in a Holy Spirit led discernment process?
- Do we have a current, relevant plan? If not, create one.



# Closing Thoughts

*"Culture eats strategy  
for breakfast."*

*-Peter Drucker*

**The best chance you have to move strategically into an unknown future is to create a strategic thinking culture across your organization and let God speak to you through it.**

# Thoughts and Questions?



**Brad Layland**

CEO & Senior Consultant

[blayland@thefocusgroup.com](mailto:blayland@thefocusgroup.com)

**Vince Burens**

Senior Consultant

[vburens@thefocusgroup.com](mailto:vburens@thefocusgroup.com)

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**Email:** [discern@thefocusgroup.com](mailto:discern@thefocusgroup.com)

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