

Strategic Planning: Like Candy from a Baby

*Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia's February **Spark** Event of 2007
February 12th @ Plays & Players Theater, 3rd floor*

***Remember the second Monday of every month is a new Spark event hosted by the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia. Individual & Organizational members attend free, all others are charged \$10 per person. (This money may be applied towards membership dues!)

Special Guest:

Allison Trimarco - Affiliated consultant with LaSalle Non-Profit Center specializing in planning for small companies. Allison has her BA in theatre and has worked as a Stage Manager before getting her Masters in Arts Management from Carnegie Mellon. She has worked with many small theatres in Chicago and now resides in New Jersey working with small non-profits through the LaSalle Non-Profit Center.

Future Spark Event and Theatre Alliance Announcements:

- **Next Spark event: Sponsorship & In Kind donations: Gimme All Your Stuff: An insider's guide to cash and in-kind sponsorships.**
 - This event will take place on Monday March 12 @ 7pm. Location is TBD. Check the website for details on speakers and location.
 - Reception following with food generously donated by Whole Foods Market, our Spark sponsor!

What does a Strategic Plan make you think of...

- Finances, and goals.
- Makes you tired and anxious
- Concerned it is just a waste of time and there will be no follow through.
- It is very time intensive in and of itself there is no time to make the plan

How do we overcome these anxieties and concerns about Planning...

- Follow through is in everyone's hands. It is not the sole responsibility of one person to get all the tasks done.
- As a Theatre producer you are already planning all the time. So, whether it is a show you are putting on or your strategic plan for the next six months, you can do it!
 - Already have the skills to set the deadlines and meet goals - just as for a theatre production to get up on its feet and in front of an audience.
- It does connect with your Artistic Side of the company because your Plan will give you a bigger picture of what you may be able to accomplish 6 months or one year from now.

You might need a Strategic Plan if...

- You feel overwhelmed all the time.
- The world around you is getting more unpredictable by the minute.
- You wish to expand your company, receive more grant money, or produce larger shows.

What is a Strategic Plan?

- First and foremost, it is a tool to help you reach your goals.
 - Getting grants
 - Producing shows
 - Expanding your company
- A tool to help you figure out what kind of organizational structure works best for you.
 - Artistic Director, Managing Director model is not right for everyone.
- To help decide where your company is headed. Longevity and success are not the same.
 - Is your organization going to stay there as long as the artists want to stay OR...

- Is your organization going to become an institution and attempt to go on in perpetuity after the founders leave.
- Once again, what works for one company will not work for them all.
- It's ok, if your company does not go on in perpetuity.
- Most Boards of small theatres like to follow the artist's lead, but they need to know where that is and where is it going.
 - This is followed by a consensus on the part of the Board

Why does your company need a Strategic Plan?

- "If you do what you've always done, you're gonna get what you always get"
 - Planning needs to happen to invoke change
- Theatre is a Business.
- Plan what you want to do next.
- In order to add programs you need to first figure out how to add people first
 - People, in this circumstance, can mean Board members, staff, or volunteers.
 - The plan is a tool to recruit the right people for the program/project.
 - Find out what you want to do and how to get people for it.

What is the difference between a Strategic Plan, a Business Plan, and a Long Range Plan?

- Strategic Plan - most comprehensive for the most growth. Good for funding, audience development, and for an internal and external look at the company.
- Business Plan - where do we get the money for the next enterprise. Is money oriented.
- Long Range Plan - plans 3 to 5 years ahead. Looks at more external views of the company and not focusing internally.

Is now the right time for a Strategic Plan?

- If your company feels like it is all too much or that your current working model is unsustainable.
- If your company doesn't know what to do - a plan is how to make your company more structured.
- Get to the plan BEFORE the crisis.
- If your company is ready for the conversation, "Where are we going to be six months from now?"
- Create your plans when you are not producing (i.e summer)

How do you get the Board signed on?

- Have the Board write the Strategic Plan themselves. This will help them carry it out. This way they are not being told what to do but rather making the plans themselves.
- Small Theatre Company boards should be no larger than 6-8 people.
- Have a Board Retreat / A Planning Retreat and be sure to have all your Board present.
 - Discuss your mission statement
 - Discuss your values as an organization
 - Discuss what do they want to do (as a Board)
 - Being on your Board is their way of being a part of the Theatre industry.
 - Create an Action Plan
 - All the tasks that are to be carried out in the next six months
 - Should list the following
 - Tasks to be done
 - What is the deadline for each
 - Who is in charge of said task
 - What is the cost of accomplishing that task
 - Follow up all Action plans at all Board Meetings (Board Meeting should be at least 4 times a year).

What makes a Good Strategic Plan?

- Look at your mission statement
 - Does it reflect the kind of art you want to produce?
 - Is it easy to explain to others what you are all about?
 - Does it state what change in the world you would like to make? (being a 501 (c) 3 - there must be something.)
 - What is it lacking?
 - To someone outside of theatre, is it understandable?
 - Take the theatre words out
- Have your core values - what ideas are so important to your organization that you would never violate them. (5-7 for any small theatres company)..
 - i.e working with playwrights, ensembles, etc
 - Have core values which are specific and you may use to make decisions.
 - i.e. Respect versus Respect for the integrity of your audience or Respect for the talent of the artist you work with
 - i.e. if using excellence, explain what you mean by excellence and how you are going to approach your audience.
- Artistic Director should have their vision for the company on paper. Their artistic vision on paper will help with fundraising
 - The Strategic Plan is the vision for the Managing Director.
 - The two should coexist well.

Goals and Strategies

- 3 to 5 statements about major things to achieve in 3 years.
 - These need to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, and affect Change. (SMAC)
 - Specific (i.e.expand Marketing campaign vs raise audience attendance by 15% by year 3)
 - Measurable - when will this be done
 - Achievable - where are you headed and be realistic on goals. Do not set things clearly out of reach.
- Every goal should have a strategy. - Action oriented!
- The goals go to the funders.
- The action plan stays on your desk.
- Must have a budget in every plan - Money directly goes with any new project.
- Most sustainable organizations have Boards who feel ownership of the company.

You may need a consultant if...

- This is the first time your company is doing a plan
- If your company has done a plan in the past but never did anything with it.
- If there is any serious conflict within the organization
 - Consultants make excellent facilitators and mediators if there is tension within the staff/Board etc.
- If you feel like your company staff/Board has the same conversation over and over again without ever coming to a compromise.

You may acquire a consultant at...

- The LaSalle Non Profit Center at a subsidized cost.
 - Everything would be custom created for your theatre company
- Or the Arts & Business Council

Notes prepared by Karen DiLossi, Director of Program & Services for the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Presented by The Nonprofit Center at La Salle University

Allison Trimarco, Affiliated Consultant

www.lasallenonprofitcenter.org

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Topics to Discuss

- 1. Strategic Planning in Theatre Companies**
- 2. The Elements of a Good Strategic Plan**
- 3. Steps in Developing a Strategic Plan**
- 4. Implementing Strategic Plans in the Real World**
- 5. How to Learn More**
- 6. Questions and Answers**

The Elements of a Good Strategic Plan

Mission Statement

- Should be brief and concise.
- Everyone in your company (including the board) should understand it and be able to explain it.
- Avoid jargon and terms that people outside the theatre community might not understand.
- Should answer the questions:
 - What is the change we are trying to create in the world?
 - How will we go about doing this?
 - Who benefits from our work?
 - What makes us unique from other organizations?

Core Values

- Your values guide your actions when carrying out your company's work.
- When all company and board members agree on your core values, they become great decision-making tools.
- Should answer the question:
 - What ideas are so important to us that we would never violate them under any circumstances?
- Avoid overly-broad values statements (i.e., excellence, integrity). Be specific about what a value means to you and how it guides your company's actions.

Artistic Vision

- One to two page statement from artistic leadership about how they see the artistic work of the company evolving during the years covered by the strategic plan.
- Valuable to carry out the exercise of writing these ideas down – often clarifies things for the artistic leadership.
- Also helpful to communicate these ideas to other company members, the board of directors, and external stakeholders.

Goals

- Major achievements that you want your company to accomplish during the years of the plan.
- Quality goals are:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Change-oriented
 - Bad Goal: Expand marketing campaigns. (Not specific, not change-oriented. Emphasizes activities rather than results).
 - Good Goal: Increase attendance at productions by 15% by the end of Year Three. (Change-oriented, relates to constituents, specific benchmark of 15% can be measured).
- Plans should have no more than 3-5 goals.
 - You must make decisions about what's most important.
 - This focus is what allows you to make progress.

Strategies

- What you will do to achieve your goals.
- Are action-oriented, but can include measurable benchmarks.
 - Goal: Increase attendance at productions by 15% by the end of Year Three.
 - Strategy: Expand marketing campaigns to include direct mail three times a year. (Year One)
 - Strategy: Acquire 2,500 new names for the database. (Year Two)
- Should balance reality with the desire to grow – your strategies should be things you think you will be able to do.

Action Plan

- Internal document used to guide the implementation of the plan, and track progress toward achieving goals.
- Lays out each step that must be taken to implement each strategy, along with:
 - Deadline
 - Person Responsible
 - Cost, if any
- Changes frequently to reflect the reality of what's happening, what's been accomplished, what's off track, and new opportunities.
- Should be reviewed four times a year at board meetings – report on what's been accomplished, decisions about what needs to be done next.
- The Action Plan tells everyone what they can do to move the organization closer to achieving its goals.

Budget

- Implementing the plan will likely cost money.
- Budget for this up front by estimating what different strategies in the plan will cost.
- These numbers should be included in your annual organizational budget.
 - Example: if you are going to increase direct mail advertising by adding one new campaign in the first year of implementing the plan, the cost of this campaign should be estimated as part of the planning process, then included in the organization's marketing budget for that year.

Appendix/Research

- Any research or planning documents that have been developed as part of the process.
- Handy to have everything all in one place for future reference.

Developing a Strategic Plan

Step #1: Deciding to Plan

- What do we want to change about the way we operate?
- What do we need to learn about ourselves to make these changes?
- Do the majority of the company and board agree that we need to plan?
- When should we conduct the planning process?
- How far ahead can we reasonably plan?
- Who will be involved in the process?
- Do we need a consultant?

Step #2: Understanding the Environment

- Where do we fit into the marketplace?
- Who are our competitors? (Both theatres and other leisure time activities)
- What do other people think of us?
 - Audience, artists, donors, volunteers, collaborators
 - Interviews, focus groups, surveys
- What opportunities exist that we might choose to take advantage of?
- What threats exist that might pose problems for us in the future?

Step #3: Understanding Ourselves

- Are we clear about our mission and our artistic vision? Can other people outside the company understand our mission and artistic vision?
- What do we think of ourselves? (Interviews, surveys)
- What is great about our company? What do we need to change?

Step #4: Setting Goals & Planning to Achieve Them

- What would we like our company to look like ____ years from now? What do we want to change about our company? (Vision)
- What will we have to do to make that a reality? (Goals)
- What work will we have to do? (Strategies)
- What will it cost to make these changes?
- How will we manage this work? When will tasks happen, and who will be in charge of each one?
- Do we have consensus from the board and company that this is the right direction? Are we all willing to work towards these goals?

Step #5: Implementing, Adjusting, and Moving Forward

- What aspects of our plan will we work on this year? This quarter?
- How have things changed since we wrote the plan? How does this affect what we want/need/can do now?
- How should we adjust the plan and our activities to reflect where we are now?
- Who will be in charge of each task that we are focusing on?

Implementing Strategic Plans in the Real World

- **Goals** are likely to remain the same throughout the life of the strategic plan.
- **Strategies** will change as the world and your company change.
- **Your Action Plan** is the tool for making sure you stay on track.
 - **The Action Plan** should be reviewed quarterly at board meetings.
 - Reports on results from ongoing work – Board and company hold themselves accountable for the plan.
 - Decisions about changes that may need to take place.
 - Assignment of tasks for the upcoming quarter.
 - Agreement on interim objectives for that quarter (i.e, what are we going to try to get done in the next three months?).

- **Board Involvement** is key to the success of a strategic plan.
 - Make sure the board is involved in making decisions during the planning process.
 - Ask the board to evaluate the pros and cons of goals, strategies and action items from their perspective.
 - Grow by adding people, not programs.
 - Involve people from outside the theatre community on your board. If everyone on your board is actively involved in production, there is no one to support you during your busiest times.
 - Board members will not intuit what they can do to support the company. The strategic plan is one tool you can use to communicate to them how they can best help.

- **Stay focused on your goals, but don't get tunnel vision**
 - Small companies often see the most change in any given period – changes in leadership, artists, board, money, space, opportunities, audience, etc etc etc.
 - Take these changes as they come, and use your plan to evaluate how you should react to them.
 - This is where creativity helps the most – don't be afraid to see new paths towards your goals!

How to Learn More

Trainings offered by The Nonprofit Center:

Register at www.lasallenonprofitcenter.org or call 215.951.1701

Strategic Planning: The Creation

Wednesday, February 28, 9:30am-12:30pm

The Philadelphia Foundation, 1234 Market Street, Ste. 1800

\$67 for members, \$79 for nonmembers

No matter how you do it, strategic planning involves an investment of time, energy, and money. This workshop will help you maximize the return on your investment. Join us to review strategic planning, including why strategic planning is so important; what a healthy process looks like; what to expect; who should be involved; and how to get started. You'll leave this session better informed so you can assist your nonprofit through an effective and inspiring strategic planning process.

Implementing Your Strategic Plan

Wednesday, March 14, 9:30am-12:30pm

Montgomery, McCracken, Walker & Rhoads, 123 S. Broad Street, 28th Floor

\$67 for members, \$79 for nonmembers

Your board and staff labored for months to craft the perfect strategic plan for your organization's future. Now months- or even years - have gone by and it's still on the shelf. Implementation of your strategic plan is often the most challenging aspect of strategic planning, and something that is too often overlooked in the process. This workshop provides the guidance you need to help integrate your strategic plan into your regular board agenda and daily operations. Specific topics will include best practices for strategic plan implementation; board and staff roles and responsibilities in implementation; measuring and evaluating progress; demonstrating success to funders and stakeholders; strategic plan budgeting and fundraising; and when to start planning for your next strategic plan. This workshop is designed for board and staff members who want to play an active role in the successful implementation of their organization's strategic plan. We encourage attendees to bring copies of their plans with them.

On the Web:

- **The Free Management Library** (www.managementhelp.org/)
This free compendium of web resources includes links to great articles on strategic planning, sample plan formats, and exercises for board and staff.
- **The National Endowment for the Arts' Strategic Planning Toolkit**
(<http://www.nea.gov/resources/Lessons/index.html>)
Less of a toolkit, and more a collection of interesting articles on how strategic planning can best be carried out in arts organizations.
- **The National Arts Marketing Project** (www.artsmarketing.org)
A free resource guide that includes excellent templates aimed at strategic marketing plans, many of which can be adapted for organizational planning.

Consultants

The Nonprofit Center matches organizations with consultants to collaborate on strategic planning processes. Consulting work can sometimes be subsidized by foundations. Call Jason Rash at 215.951.1709 or rash@lasalle.edu for more information.