



## Turn Strategy Into Actions

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**Duration:** 4+ hours

**Group size:** small groups of 5-8 people

### Purpose

Strategy is a high-level statement of organizational direction. At this point, we move from strategy to tactics. Strategy is *what* we will do. Tactics define *how* we will accomplish strategy. The objective is to build consensus and a teamwork approach to implementing the strategy.

### Outputs

- Implementation plan
- Assigned roles

### Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with all the steps of this activity in order to lead effectively
- Set up the room for easy transition from full group to small group exercises
- Print a copy of the guidelines for each small group

#### Materials:

- √ Post-it notes
- √ Flip charts
- √ Large sheets of table paper
- √ Colored markers

### Guidelines

For this activity, we first determine the primary goals of the strategy and then breakdown the goals into tasks.

#### Step 1 – Define the primary goals

- What is it that you actually want to accomplish? On a flip chart, generate a list of possible goals related to your strategy. Then discuss these and agree as a group the top 3-5 goals on which you will focus.
- Write each of your 3-5 goals on separate sheets of flip chart paper and work together to create a clear definition of the ultimate aim of this goal. This may require robust discussion because you are working for a shared understanding and agreement of your purpose. This is crucial!

- Reassemble the full group. Have each group report on their work. Repeat bullet points 1 and 2 as a full group, attempting to build a consensus while refining the work of the small groups. If it becomes difficult to reach consensus, allow each participant an anonymous vote of his or her personal top 3 goals and report the results to the group.
- Keep in mind that the underlying purpose of this approach is to motivate participants as a group to work toward the fulfillment of your vision.
- When you reach agreement on the top 3-5 goals write them on a large piece of paper and display it in a prominent place. Everything you do from here on should support reaching these goals.

### **Step 2 – Decompose goals into tasks**

- Self-organize into roughly equal size small groups for each of the goals. The purpose of this exercise is to breakdown the goal into all the tasks required to accomplish it.
- Write your goal on a large sheet of paper.
- Brainstorm everything it will take to accomplish the goal, write them on individual Post-it notes and stick them on the paper around the goal.
- The objective here is to create a scatter diagram of tasks without attempting to organize or sequence the work – that will come later. This activity helps to reveal the full scope of the project, set expectations, and create ‘buy in’.
- When finished, take a photo of the scatter diagram for your records.

### **Step 3 – Organize and sequence the work**

- Now you will turn the scatter diagram into a workflow process.
- Start with a fresh piece of paper. Working from left to right, re-arrange the Post-it notes in an appropriate sequence bearing in mind dependencies each task may have on other tasks.
- You are creating a project plan. When tasks can be worked on simultaneously to expedite the project, place those Post-it notes together vertically on your time-line.
- This exercise will help to identify missing pieces and create a realistic estimate of time and effort to achieve the goal.
- Use a marker to draw lines on the paper to show dependencies, relationships, and overlap of tasks.
- Take a photo of the completed workflow process for your records.
- Reassemble the full group.
- Have each group show its work and receive feedback. Capture comments and suggestions on a flip chart.

### **Step 4 – Assign oversight**

- Determine who will take ownership of each of the goals, how progress will be reported, and what resources will be available.
- You might appoint a Program Manager to oversee all aspects of strategy implementation and a Project Manager for each of your goals. Then develop project teams for each of the goals.
- Finally, decide when the full group will meet again for updates on all the goals.

## Tips for facilitating group activities

- Consider changing the usual meeting environment to stimulate creative thinking.
- Keep the end goal of decisive action in mind for the duration of the activity.
- Open with a brief overview of the activity so participants know what to expect.
- Be careful and consistent to maintain pre-set boundaries of time and task.
- Encourage small group self-management; suggest that each group select a recorder, a reporter, a time keeper, and a discussion leader.
- Work with the people, ideas, and motivations you have to find enough common ground to act rather than being bogged down or sidetracked with an attempt to resolve “deeper issues”.
- Seek global perspective on issues by allowing all opinions to be expressed, validating polarities, and by agreeing to disagree on issues that cannot be resolved quickly.
- Encourage people to stay engaged in spite of differences. Resist the urge to intervene unless you observe movement toward ‘fight or flight’. Allow the group to resolve its own differences or agree to set them aside.
- Provide plenty of easily available nutritious snacks and beverages
- Consider using a Church Futures consultant to add depth and breadth of experience.

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