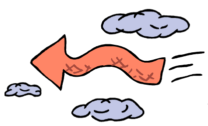
Strategic Thinking & Strategic Planning

The Future Is Not An Optional Event

Change has become a constant way of life and the need for boards to adopt a strategic approach to their operations is more pressing than ever. The goal for boards today is to be aware of both the opportunities and threats that lie ahead and to create an **INTENTIONAL FUTURE** for the Academy, rather than just dealing with whatever comes.

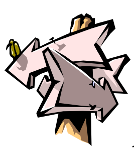
It is important for board members to view " *strategic planning* " as an on-going **PROCESS**….not a project. Even if the board maps out its goals and directions in three-year periods, strategic plans need to be reviewed and have an additional year added **ANNUALLY**, thus creating a continually advancing window into the future.



Where to Start?
Begin with a Vision of the Future and Work Backwards to Today

Strategic planning should start with a strong, compelling vision of a desired future. It is not about looking at everything you now do or offer and adding a little here and there. Following this method, your Academy will only creep forward incrementally. Today's world calls for bolder action.

Envisioning the future 3-5-10 years out is about imagining possibilities for a new and better reality that is relevant to changing times. Strategic thinking begins with projecting what the world might be like some years down the road. Your board then has the opportunity to plan for the probable…or to work now to actually shape the future into a reality it believes is most desirable.



All Roads will Get Us There if we Don't Know Where We're Going…..

The key is having a clear, compelling goal in mind! Then when you have a well-defined plan, it can

- ignite and focus volunteer efforts
- provide volunteers and staff with significant, meaningful work
- outline accountability and performance expectations better
- lead to a heightened sense of accomplishment.

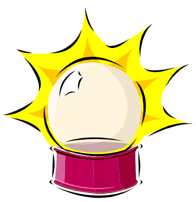
The **strategic plan**, linked to the **annual work plan**, should detail the actions, resources and systems that will be needed to achieve the Academy's vision for its future.

Mission Statements

The Mission of your Academy is spelled out in your charter and should be consistently reflected in your bylaws and all materials. It is the basis for all actions as the mutually agreed to statement of:

- Why you exist
- Who you serve
- What you do

Mission statements are a constant and change infrequently, though they should be reviewed annually to ensure they are still relevant and that the board is acting in accordance with their outlined purpose. Chapter mission statements should coincide with the mission of AAFP.



Vision Statements

Unlike mission statements, **vision statements** provide a future "snapshot" of the organization that is different from its current reality. These statements project future:

- Constituencies
- Products and Services
- Governance Structures
- Priorities, Position, Potential … etc.

Vision statements <u>do not outline HOW</u> the Academy will move towards this new future…just <u>WHAT</u> it is and why it matters to get there. They should be a stretch, but not so unrealistic people won't believe them or be willing to take the risks that may be needed to bring about the desired change.

The **strategic plan**, linked to the **annual work plan**, will detail the steps to reach the future proposed in the vision statement.

TIP: *See AAFP's and sample mission and vision statements*

Tools to Anticipate Change: *Environmental Scanning*

<u>Tracking Trends</u>

A major role for board members is keeping current with changes in the profession, the economy, society, government regulations and legislation. Evaluating these in the context of how potentially they may impact the Academy reduces the likelihood of being blindsided.

To stay current, board members may choose to:

- Work with staff to collect and study **trends analysis** from AAFP, The American Society of Association Executives, BoardSource, state medical societies, and other organizations

- Select a group to **scan media for articles** relating to trends such as changing demographics, studies highlighting emerging societal needs, economic forecasts, and other issues specific to each region

- Appoint a **legislative watchdog team** to keep an eye on proposed regulatory and legal changes

- Conduct a **brainstorming** session on changes board members see in macro areas in society

A portion of every board meeting should be devoted to discussing trends and their real or possible impact on the Academy and its members and what should be done to address them .

TIP: *See ASAE Foundation's "Facing the Future" and "Seven Conversations" scans at www.asaenet.org and review AAFP Environmental Scan 2000 at www.aafp.org and discuss*

Conduct a SWOT Analysis / Evaluate Possible Future Scenarios

As you begin developing strategic directions, conduct a **S***trengths* **W***eaknesses* **O***pportunities &* **T***hreats* analysis to determine the condition of your Academy today and areas that need improvement. After the board has identified potential strategic objectives, use the SWOT tool again to evaluate the Academy's **capabilities and capacity** (**S**trengths and **W**eaknesses) to achieve them. This exercise will help the board make choices between alternative strategies.

As an on-going part of environmental scanning, conduct "envisioned future" exercises imagining a range of possible **scenarios** from most desirable to most deadly….and strategize which future the Academy wants and what it will take to make it happen. This can be done in segments throughout the year, at the annual retreat, or by a Strategic Thinking / Planning Task Force of the Board.

TIP: *See sample envisioned futures exercises and SWOT forms to use for analysis*

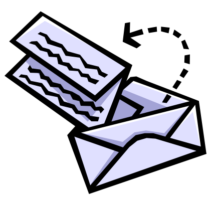
Techniques for Keeping Current …

Focus Groups

Gathering small groups of members, thought leaders, allied associates, or prospects together to ask questions and hear their ideas, concerns and impressions can be very beneficial. Such focus groups can be convened at sites around your state, at annual meetings or CME offerings. One advantage of focus groups is that you can hear the intensity of feelings expressed and can "read" the added messages from the participants' body language. If you are doing multiple focus group sessions, it is advisable to have the same facilitator(s) at all sites for consistency and to compare, contrast and synthesize the responses in a meaningful way.

Keys to Success

Well thought out questions … neutral, outside facilitator … 1-2 hours maximum… use & publish results

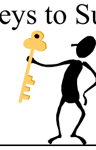


Surveys: By Mail, Online, On Site

While carefully crafted surveys can provide useful information for staff and volunteers, they are often ineffective because they are:

- too long and/or complicated
- don't appear important or relevant
- seemingly never used and recipients say… *why bother?*

Keys to Success



Effective surveys include: clear questions … short, easy to answer format … response envelopes or e-mail return … immediate thank you for responding … published results and indications of how and when the information is to be used to improve operations, services, relationships, etc.

TIP: *See Effective Survey Questions Dos and Don'ts*

Comparative Analysis

Ask board members, lead volunteers and members to share information they know or can research about similar associations such as:

- membership dues
- fees
- products and services
- course listings, sites, and formats
- annual meetings and exhibitors
- the range of delivery options from face-to-face to mail to online.

Ask staff members to review:

- salary surveys
- best practices reports for organizations of similar size and mission…. across the country and in your state.

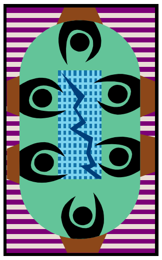
A Strategic Thinking / Planning Task Force can be charged with evaluating this information for the board and making recommendations based on the comparative analysis about everything from fees to formats and frequency of offerings, possible new product design and delivery, and adjustments in wages and operating expenses.

Identifying Your Organizational Culture & Image

Every organization has a **culture** all its own: Some groups build lots of strategic alliances and others are isolationists. Some groups have a safe, clear course charted out and rarely deviate while others are more flexible, responsive risk takers. Some groups are decisive, making choices and moving ahead, and others are still trying to resolve issues they've been debating for years.

Understanding your Academy's "culture" and how members, vendors, associates and sponsors view your organization can be both enlightening and helpful in establishing the working styles, relationships and image you prefer.

TIP: *See Identifying Your Organizational Culture exercise*



Facilitating Effective Meetings

Consider This: A study by BoardSource *(formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards)* has shown that 40% of volunteers leave an organization because their time was not well spent.

BEFORE setting a meeting, you should decide:

- Is there **real business** to talk about or are we just meeting out of habit?
- Do we actually need to bring people together to accomplish our goals or **can we use technology** such as teleconferencing, videoconferencing, or listservs to communicate?

Tips for Face-To-Face Board Meetings

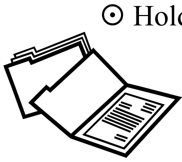
Keep the focus on the board's governance role:

- ⊙ policy issues
- ⊙ strategic thinking/planning
- ⊙ budget
- ⊙ management oversight (NOT management)

The purpose for meeting face-to-face is to discuss and deliberate governance---not to re-work committee and task force efforts, second guess the staff or to get bogged down in "*administrivia* "

75% - 25% Goal

- ⊙ Strive for 75% of the time being spent on BIG PICTURE issues & leadership development
- ⊙ Hold announcements, reports and routine matters to 25% of the total meeting time.



Create action agendas that:

- ⊙ have definite start and adjournment times
- ⊙ use consent agendas for routine and FYI items and/or actions not requiring deliberation
- ⊙ indicate how much time is allotted for each item and who is presenting it
- ⊙ list if the item is for *Information*, *Discussion*, or *Action*

TIP: *See sample agenda*

Send Materials to Board Members in Advance / Consent Agendas

Giving board members the opportunity to review meeting materials in advance, enables them to formulate questions, responses, ideas and opinions to share with others during meeting discussions. Many of the issues boards must address are complex and benefit from members taking the time to study reports and recommendations instead of being forced to make snap, on-the-spot decisions.

Along this same line, boards can save precious time together by moving routine, self-explanatory items into a **"Consent Agenda"** with supporting materials sent in the advance packet. Such items typically include:

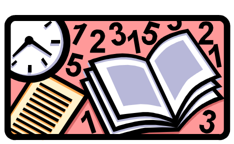
- ✓ minutes from the previous meeting
- ✓ committee/task force reports with executive summaries
- ✓ financial updates
- ✓ routine revisions of policies
- ✓ confirmation of standard actions outlined in the bylaws
- ✓ Chapter Executive's update
- ✓ copies of media coverage

The board chair should lead a discussion of the rules governing the use of consent agendas:

- If members have concerns/questions on items, they should contact the appropriate lead volunteer or staff liaison before the meeting for clarification
- At the meeting, any member can ask for an item to be moved back to the agenda & opened for discussion
- If no one asks for an item to be removed, the entire package is voted on together without deliberation

…and should ask members which items they wish to have included on a regular basis.

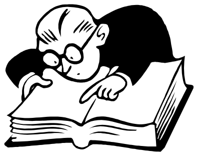
TIP: *See sample agenda and Executive Summary Template for Board Reports*



Create a Dashboard

A **dashboard**, so named because it provides critical indicators just like the dashboard in one's car when the ignition is turned on, is a valuable tool to give board members a quick update on the status of the organization. The board chair should ask members what key information they wish to have included for review at meetings. Typical "indicators" might include:

- budget variables with footnote explanations
- gains or losses in Academy membership
- CME course offerings / registrations



Who's Rules – Robert's or Bob's?

Board meetings are official acts of your non-profit corporation. It is important to give them structure and to follow protocols to assure the Board operates with accountability and transparency within legal and ethical guidelines. While informal procedures may be agreed upon for some items, you should use parliamentary procedure for any major action such as adopting a policy or strategic plan, allocating funds, buying or selling assets, or hiring a Chapter Executive.

TIP: *Robert's Rules of Order is the most widely used method of parliamentary procedure, though some Academy chapters may use Sturgis Parliamentary Procedure, instead. (See National Association of Parliamentarians at www.parliamentarians.org)*

Establish Conduct Agreements / Board Meeting Etiquette

While the board chair bears most of the responsibility for facilitating an effective meeting, the entire board shares the obligation for creating a positive outcome. Acceptable boardroom etiquette is a must. At the beginning of each year or at the annual board orientation, the chair should lead a discussion to identify guidelines. A mutually drafted conduct agreement might include such things as:

- Arriving on time and being actively engaged for the entire meeting
- Being prepared by studying materials in advance
- Listening to understand, not judge
- Sharing the floor…taking turns speaking one at a time
- Staying focused on issues, not sidebar conversations or personal agendas
- Asking questions for clarification
- Critiquing ideas, not individuals
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Recognizing when there is a conflict of interest and making the required declarations

Other expectations relate to decision-making agreements:

- Agree to consider varying points of view, but to move to action, being willing to make tough choices
- Determine what form of agreement the Board will seek -- compromise? consensus? majority rule? Check the bylaws to see if they stipulate a required process
- Specify the number of board members required for a quorum
- Understand that once the board reaches agreement, even dissenters MUST support the decision

TIP: *See sample board agreements*

Being an Effective Board Chair

To lead effective meetings, board chairs need to:

- Be prepared and goal oriented
- Stick to timeframes
- Encourage participation--- not letting one or two people dominate
- Respect all points of view --- draw out reticent members
- LISTEN
- Assign people to be 1) parliamentarian, 2) time keeper 3) mission keeper…to help stay on point
- Move discussions to action with clear assignments
- Remain neutral (or ask another board member to chair a deliberation if you wish to participate)
- Be diplomatic
- Role model and expect accountability
- Seek staff input and recommendations
- Delegate
- Share the credit and say *Thank You*

To Motivate Members

☆ Make sure board members have significant portfolios of work and are asked to take on important tasks … help them understand that their active involvement is critical

☆ Link committee and task force work to strategic plan elements to fulfill mission & vision

☆ Show board members their contributions matter…share success stories & statistics

☆ Use the board members' talents wisely, matching their interests to the Academy's needs

☆ Create a productive partnership with staff …set agendas together

☆ Foster an environment of trust, rapport, teamwork, good humor and possibilities

Leading vs. Facilitating

The Role of a "Leader"

- **To be in control**
- **Stating the problem/purpose of deliberations**
- **Outlining expectations for results**
- **Detailing procedures to be used**
- **Providing necessary background / supporting information**
- **Clearly stating and maintaining boundaries**

The Role of "Facilitator"

- **To be neutral –not expressing opinions**
- **Being process oriented—not tied to a specific outcome(s)**
- **Listening –to clarify and integrate ideas/comments**
- **Keeping movement towards a goal / resolution**
- **Finding points of agreement / consensus**
- **Encouraging participation**

Key Skills for Facilitation:

- Knowing when and how to interrupt, keeping discussion focused and preventing any individual or group from monopolizing
- Providing nonverbal feedback – moving around the room to draw participants out or shut others off, using gestures, eye contact
- Understand the motivations behind comments
- Using "Active Listening" for clarity … "*I hear you saying…*"
- Dealing with "challenging" participants diplomatically / effectively
- Knowing options for resolving conflict –consensus, compromise, majority rule
- Being able to draw out shy or reticent participants / tone down disruptive or dominating individuals
- Getting Closure … Moving to Decisions … Action

TIP: *See Handling Challenging Volunteers*

Keeping Minutes

Minutes are the official record of the Academy's actions and must by law be kept on file as long as the Academy/corporation exists. They are not meant to be verbatim accounts of a meeting, but should include enough detail to be useful for historical reference in the future.

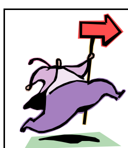
What to Include

- Organization's Name
- Date, Time and Place of Meeting
- List of members in attendance and those absent
- Notation of any guests
- Existence of a quorum
- Motions made and seconded and by whom
- A brief outline of any deliberations
- Voting results --- listing those abstaining by name
- Assignments for future action & timetables
- Materials distributed for information/review
- Adjournment time

NOTE: *To be legal, the minutes need to be signed by the Secretary.*

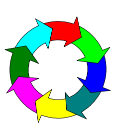
Caution

Minutes can be used in legal actions and board members often fear individual liability…include just what is needed for the record. Avoid direct quotes and attributed comments. Make sure members know they have the right to ask that they be shown as dissenting if they disagree with an action.
Do not tape record meetings. Members may feel inhibited and without candid discussion and debate, Board members may not be able to fulfill their fiduciary roles of exercising due care.



Action Follow-up

Many organizations are now highlighting ACTION items in the minutes as well as pulling them out and listing them on a separate worksheet. Included with the action to be taken is the name of the person or group responsible, allocated resources, staff liaisons if appropriate, timetables, and reporting dates. These lists help busy board members track what is expected of them and increase accountability.



Distribution of Minutes

It is best to distribute minutes as soon as possible after the meeting to bring those absent up to date and to remind those who attended what transpired and what they agreed to. Any changes that need to be made should be brought to the attention of the secretary and ratified at the next meeting.

TIP: *See sample minutes and action sheet*

Meeting Logistics

Room setup

- ✓ Secure a convenient, comfortable location with flexible meeting space and enough room to mingle and mix at breaks and to allow for small break-out groupings

- ✓ A hollow square or "open U" enables board members to see each other most easily

- ✓ With a speaker or audiovisuals, use the "Open U" and place them in the opening with the board chair in the middle of the table at the base of the "U"

Seating Assignments

Controlling seating arrangements by assignments or using table tents enables the chair to increase effectiveness by:

- ✓ integrating new members among the continuing members to help them get to know each other and the culture of the group

- ✓ seating people together who will be presenting as a team

- ✓ separating those who disrupt the discussions with sidebar conversations

- ✓ reducing tension by separating opposing factions --- but be wary of seating them opposite each other all meeting where they have to face each other for hours

To Eat or Not to Eat?

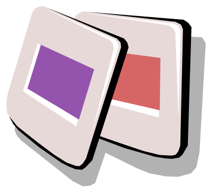
- ✓ Having water and wrapped sweets within easy reach is much appreciated by participants

- ✓ For meetings lasting more than 2-3 hours, plan refreshments and/or meals --- *Remember:* Sugary treats give people quick bursts of energy that are good for brainstorming, but think "carbs" for long deliberations! Offer a mix of healthy snack choices, as well as traditional pastries and sodas.

- ✓ If you want to have a "working lunch" to conserve time, allow members to visit briefly with each other before returning to the meeting…this is important time to build relationships

- ✓ If you are serving lunch, consider a buffet because it**:**
  - ➢ *is often less expensive*
  - ➢ *saves time*
  - ➢ *gets members standing up and mingling*
  - ➢ *accommodates special dietary requirements easily*

- ✓ hold off serving dessert at lunch, saving it for a more substantial afternoon break


Audiovisual Checklist

☑ Select the best medium to communicate your messages

☑ Flip charts and overheads allow you to track ideas and focus attention – use multi-colored <u>dark</u> markers for the best visibility --- stable easels are a MUST

☑ Book meeting rooms with controllable lighting & blackout capability

☑ Control risks by taping down cords / clearing the area around the speaker

☑ Check sight lines to make sure all attendees have a clear view

☑ Keep slides and overheads simple… use minimum type…clear graphics

☑ Don't use AV equipment unless you are familiar with it and can present smoothly --- awkward pauses, stops and starts, etc. are distracting

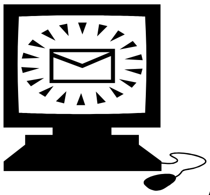
☑ Rehearse all presentations on site to make sure slides are in the right order, overheads are focused and fit the screen, and video monitors are cued up with the right channel selection
…if working with facilitators and/or trainers, run through the set up in advance

Microphones

☑ Consider voice amplification for speakers if the room is large or the ceiling is high and you have more than 30 people listening/talking for several hours --- especially if speakers are not professionals

<u>Caution</u>… *when using a wireless mike, remember to switch it **off** when not presenting… otherwise, off the record remarks and random sounds will be piped through the PA!*

Using Technology for Taking ACTION



Many boards send announcements, minutes, reports, supporting materials and agendas via ***e-mail****. This is an easy, quick way to reach members with greatly reduced direct and indirect costs … saving the Academy $$$ and staff time.*

Caution: In some states, e-mail votes are legal, but this is still rare. Check state laws. If in doubt, ask members to vote via FAX or mail if you are not meeting face-to-face.

When members are spread over a large geographic area or are hard to get together, **teleconferencing** is often a viable alternative to frequent face-to-face meetings. This method of communications is not recommended for more than 8-10 participants because facilitation is difficult.

To use this medium effectively, follow these simple suggestions:

- send an advance copy of the agenda and any supporting documentation
- focus on no more than 2-3 subjects
- keep the call to 30-45 minutes ideally --- but don't exceed one hour
- have a designated facilitator
- assign someone to take minutes
- ask callers to identify themselves before talking
- limit the amount of time each member can speak on an issue
- request members not repeat the same points others have made—instead, ask them to say they concur with *xyz* comments and only raise new points
- summarize the discussions before signing off and make sure every action has someone responsible for follow-through
- circulate a report and action list within a week of the call

Caution : *Boards may NOT officially vote via a teleconference in many states. If you ask for a consensus for discussion, send a formal motion to the board via FAX following the teleconference and instruct members to mark their vote, sign their name on the FAX and return it via FAX to the Academy office. Notify members of the results ASAP.*

Strategies for Effective Communications

Support the Messengers

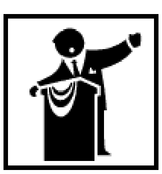
Remember the Academy's volunteers are on the front line of communications --- in their offices, communities and practice settings and no one likes surprises! It is vital to keep your leaders well informed (in advance) about Academy actions, and to help them respond to health care-related issues that may arise in the media or on capitol hill.

Checklist for Communications … consider sending your leaders/members:

☑ **Quick Reference Sheets** on everything from designated health months to new treatments
☑ **20- questions…** answers to tough questions members/leaders are frequently asked
☑ **Position Papers** on legislation
☑ **Sample Press Releases** that can be tailored for local communities
☑ **Legislative Alerts** on issues state government is considering
☑ **Calendars** of upcoming events, classes, meetings
☑ **Flyers** promoting healthy lifestyles or other patient information for distribution
☑ **Early Warning Notices** on changes in laws, regulations, reimbursements, etc….
☑ **???**
☑ **???** ***brainstorm other needs your members / volunteer have***

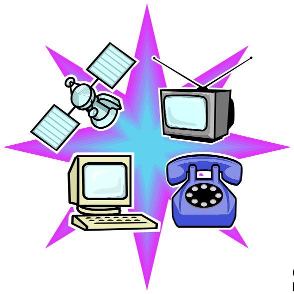
Be Available!

Volunteers and leaders need access to staff on a regular and timely basis. Members seeking information expect answers quickly, too. Establish and publish hours the Academy office is open and a policy for responses within a 24-hour period. Even if all the information that someone is seeking isn't initially available --- and this is especially true for media inquiries—respond to callers and set a time for a call back.



Have ONE Designated Spokesperson

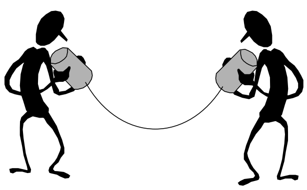
All inquires from external sources should be routed to one designated spokesperson who has been trained to deal with unrehearsed inquires. This is generally the role of the lead volunteer or the Chapter Executive. Assign a backup if the spokesperson is unavailable.



Staying Connected … Keeping Interest & Support

Members are leading busy lives in their own communities and can easily lose touch with the Academy unless staff makes a continual effort to keep in contact. To communicate effectively, you must be:

- **Clear** … is the meaning of what is being sent easily understood?
- **Concise** … does it get to the point to save time and motion?
- **Complete**… is all the necessary information provided for a member to be able to make a decision, vote, join, attend, etc.?
- **Credible**… is the information believable, supported with statistics and stories and is it accurate?
- **Creative** … do graphics, headlines, cartoons, etc. grab the receiver's attention <u>without</u> sacrificing the importance of the messages being sent ?



Listen as well as Speak!

To communicate effectively, staff and volunteer leaders must be good listeners. It is important to develop systems for capturing, analyzing and using the information, comments, ideas, complaints and feedback the Academy receives. These might include:

- ✓ Suggestion boxes on the web site
- ✓ Fax-back comment cards, pages in publications
- ✓ Surveys
- ✓ "Questions of the Month" which staff can pose to members calling in
- ✓ Idea cards circulated at meetings and workshops
- ✓ Others ???? *Brainstorm ways with your volunteers & staff*

TIP: *If you ask for information and get it… it is CRITICAL to acknowledge the receipt of the information and let members/volunteers know the Academy is actually using the input to help with the design of products and services. Unless you thank people for sending in information and show them how the Academy is using it, they will not continue to communicate with you.*

☑ **Position Papers** on legislation

☑ **Sample Press Releases** that can be tailored for local communities

Meet the Tate Family

You may have heard of the TATE FAMILY.
They are in every organization.

There is DICTATE who wants to run everything,

AGITATE stirs up trouble whenever possible with the help of IRRITATE who is always there to lend a hand.

Every time new ideas are suggested, HESITATE and VEGETATE say they can't possibly work.

IMITATE just wants to copy what other organizations are doing and never try anything new. DEVASTATE loves to be disruptive and POTENTATE wants to be the big shot.

But there is FACILITATE, COGITATE, and MEDITATE who always save the day and get everything going and everyone pulling together.

Author Unknown

TIP: ***Share this "family" at your annual orientation to lead off a discussion of*** *leadership traits. It is a non-threatening way to highlight inappropriate behavior.*