

# Future Focus

**YOUR JOB IS TO LOOK AT WHAT THE ORGANIZATION IS TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH AND WHETHER OR NOT THOSE THINGS ARE GETTING DONE. HERE'S HOW TO GET STARTED.**

By Glenn H. Tecker

“  
As a member  
of your  
association's  
board, it's your  
job to make  
sure every part  
is headed in  
the same  
direction.”



**A**n association is a lot like a rocket ship. Why? The rocket ship has many parts, and each part has a different role to play. If one part decides to go somewhere different than the rest of the rocket, you are pulled off course. If every part decides on its own where it wants to go and all go in different directions, the rocket disintegrates and showers down little flaming pieces that will create fires you'll have to put out.

As a member of your association's board, it's your job to make sure every part is headed in the same direction. That's where strategic planning comes in. Here's how it's done, in five basic steps:

**Environmental scan.** You begin by taking a look at the broader environment in which the organiza-

tion and its members are functioning. You'll look at this through three lenses: current conditions, trends, and assumptions about the future. Simultaneously, you examine the capacity and strategic position of the organization.

**Identity.** With that understanding of the context in which you're work-

ing, you then articulate the organization's identity. This has two parts:

- **Core purpose:** statement of the fundamental reason the organization exists.
- **Core values:** statement that describes how the organization needs to behave in order to fulfill its core purpose.

Once identity is determined, you don't have to do it again, because it is perpetual.

**Direction and goals.** Next, you move on to a discussion of direction and articulate a set of goals. In strategic planning, goals are statements that describe the outcomes you are trying to achieve. Goals begin with who will be benefit from this work (for example, "Members will...", "The public will...").

For each goal, you establish a set of objectives, which always begin with a word that indicates direction (for example, "increase," "decrease").

**Strategy statements.** These describe the kind of work the organization needs to do to get where it wants to go. You also need to consider alternatives, because the essence of strategy is having choices.

You then pick the path to take based on what you know about the external environment, the organization's core competencies, and your judgment about which course of action will lead you to achieve your external and internal visions.

**Implementation.** For each of the high-priority strategies, an action plan is created. The plan lays out what will be done, in what order, by whom, by when, and using what resources. After implementation, the board, CEO, and staff need to be able to answer two questions with confidence: Are we following the plan, and is it working?

Without a strategic plan, the board cannot govern. The board's job is to provide oversight; it's not possible to do that if no one has articulated the outcomes the organization is trying to achieve.



**GLENN H. TECKER** is chairman and co-CEO of Tecker Consultants, LLC in Yardley, Pennsylvania. He is a chief facilitator of ASAE's CEO Symposium and coauthor of *The Will to Govern Well*. Email: [gtecker@tecker.com](mailto:gtecker@tecker.com)