

## **Why Strategic Plans Fail** ... *and what can you do about it!*

The organisational leader works to set the agenda of the organisation, inspire support for the agenda, and effectively direct others in achieving the vision. This session will discuss the following: characteristics of successful organizations, reasons why plans typically fail, outcomes of failing to achieve a successful plan, and taking steps to create an effective plan and avoid failure.

**Jerry Twombly** is the senior partner of the Aspiran Group, an international organisation committed to addressing the development needs of nonprofit organisations. Jerry is a graduate of Miami Christian University and Grace Theological Seminary. He has written several books that include: *Funding Your Vision: New Hope for Nonprofits*, *Transforming Culture: The Church at Work in the World*, *You Snooze, You Lose: Thriving in These Turbulent Times*, and *The Organizational Planning Primer*. He has served over 1,000 different nonprofits throughout the world over the course of the last 40 years in helping them raise in excess of \$1 billion. Recognizing the changes taking place in the world of 21st Century philanthropy, Jerry has been a leader in tracking new trends and developing new programs to help nonprofits thrive in changing times. Jerry and his wife Sue live in Indiana. They have two sons and three grandsons.

- I. **Introduction**—Check it out. *Inc. Magazine* boldly report that far and away, 90% of all strategic plans fail. Other resources suggest that 50-90% fail. So regardless of what you might feel, effective and successful strategic plans are rare and there is a cost to be paid for failure.
  
- II. **The Big Picture**—The four characteristics of highly successful organizations
  - A. **Mission**—Highly successful organizations have a *mission statement* that states in quantifiable terms their mission and purpose. Generally a mission statement will include a series of clauses that clarify their mission and how they intend to fulfill it.
  - B. **Vision**—These same organizations have a *clear vision* of what this mission statement would look like if it were successfully accomplished.
  - C. **Strategic Plan**—The successful *strategic plan* spells out in quantifiable terms over a relatively short amount of time (rarely no more than 2-3 years) the steps they are going to take place to achieve their plan.
  - D. **Development Plan**—The organizational *development plan* outlines in quantifiable terms the resources that will be required to achieve these annual goals.
  
- III. **The Big Problem**—The *majority of plans fail*. Here are some of the reasons . . .

- A. ***Too Often Created in a Vacuum***—Creating unrealistic goals given available resources
- B. ***Including the Wrong People***—Those who are the first to volunteer to help are those who often have a “hidden agenda”
- C. ***Including the Right People***—The primary people involved in an organizational planning team should be limited to members of the Board of Directors and administrative personnel (with some agreed upon exceptions)
- D. ***A Lack of Specificity***—Big ideas need to be narrowed down to measurable and quantifiable objectives
- E. ***Not taking into Consideration Core Competencies***—A realistic analysis of the competencies of those assigned to strategic planning initiatives
- F. ***Lack of Accountability***—There is often not a clearly defined time agenda to which participants are accountable
- G. ***Failure to Engage Input of Others***—In areas of the plan that go beyond the expertise of the planning team

IV. **The Sad Outcome**—A failure to achieve a successful plan will ultimately result in the loss of confidence of the people you need more. Consider the *Attitude Continuum* below:

---

- V. **Smart Planning**—Several *strategic plans* can be more effective in moving things forward. There are eight steps in this planning process:
- A. Create a Profile of the Ideal
  - B. Assess the Realities of Where You Are
  - C. Quantify the Deficiencies
  - D. Prioritize the Deficiencies
  - E. Create a Plan
  - F. Organize

G. Implement

H. Evaluate

## **VI. Conclusion**