

PART

IV

*Program and Facility
Management*

Forming and Planning a Program

“Apathy can be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal, which takes the imagination by storm, and second, a definite intelligible plan for carrying that ideal into practice.”

ARNOLD TOYNBEE

STRATEGIC CONCEPTS

PROGRAM FORMATION

- Determining Stakeholders
- Delineating Values
 - Identifying Values*
- Creating a Vision
 - Drafting Vision Statements*
 - Sample Vision Statements*
- Drafting a Mission
- Establishing Goals and Objectives

STRATEGIC PLANNING

- SWOT Analysis
- Strategy Mapping
- Hoshin Planning
- Strategy Pitfalls to Avoid

DRIVERS OF INNOVATION IN FORMATION AND PLANNING

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ANALYTICAL AND INTUITIVE DECISION MAKING

- Analytical Decision Making
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CHAPTER SUMMARY

CHAPTER RATIONALE

Role Delineation Study Components

Domain V: Organization and Administration

- Knowledge of strategic planning and goal setting

Educational Competencies

- Describe vision and mission statements to focus service or program aspirations and strategic planning (e.g., “weaknesses, opportunities, threats and strengths underlying planning” [WOTS UP], “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats” [SWOT]) to critically bring our organizational improvement.

Key Terms

Hoshin Kanri (or planning): A Japanese phrase that is translated “direction setting” and is the systematic process by which an organization sets and achieves specific long-term goals with respect to quality.

Intuition: A compressed expertise; or instinctive knowledge that comes from instantly accessing and assimilating years of experience or a lot of experiences in a moment.

Mission statement: The athletic training program’s statement of its reason for existence in respect to present-day clientele, distinct services offered, philosophy, and geography.

Planning: The act of delineating behaviors intended to bring about a predetermined or expected course of actions.

Strategic planning: The process of diagnosing the organization’s external and internal environments, articulating values, vision, and mission, developing overall goals, implementing action steps, and allocating resources to achieve goals and promote values.

SWOT analysis: The thorough assessment of a program’s specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Vision statement: An ideal image of the future one seeks to create.

The opportunity for an athletic trainer to integrate leadership and management is perhaps at its all-time high during the formation, planning, and implementation of an athletic training program. Leaders are often expected to think strategically, while managers are often required to implement strategy. Forming and planning an athletic training program requires both the strategic intent and thinking of a leader as well as the implementation and assessment of a manager.

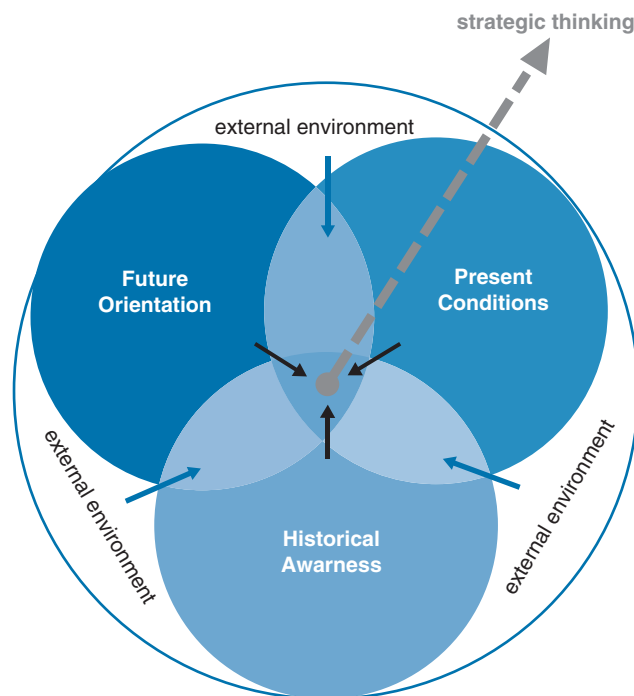
Planning an athletic training program from beginning to end is no small task. Athletic trainers must take intentional actions when creating and establishing athletic training programs. These actions should meet patient’s needs, meet financial obligations, achieve needed clinical outcomes, promote the integrity of the profession

and the allied health care industry, as well as provide a satisfying environment for any staff.

The overall strategic process is multi-faceted and includes delineating organizational, stakeholder, and individual values, creating vision statements and mission statements, setting goals and objectives, program analysis, and an established decision-making process. Therefore, in this chapter we will examine important leadership roles necessary in establishing and strengthening an athletic training program. We will begin by discussing the first aspect required to establish a strong athletic training program: determining stakeholders and delineating values. Next, we will discuss drafting vision and mission statements, followed by setting goals and objectives. After we discuss these elements, we will look to strategic planning and how to implement an S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. Finally, we will discuss the role of innovation in program planning as well as decision-making strategies.

STRATEGIC CONCEPTS

Strategic thinking requires conceptualizing the past, present, and future. This requires understanding any relevant history, including the factors that helped or hindered the process up until the present day. Relevant present-day activities that are occurring locally, professionally, or globally (i.e., perceptions, new research, changing regulations or reforms) must also be accounted for. Only after historical information and the present-day environment has been evaluated can the process of planning for the future and implementing decisions proceed. Furthermore, planning for the future must include innovation and a willingness to navigate change.



Therefore, athletic trainers who are planning programs should be aware of the historical evolution of the profession, a department, or a program, the current contextual variables that inform the present-day attitudes, as well as future expectations. Only after these three conceptual elements have been assimilated is the strategic backdrop properly prepared.

PROGRAM FORMATION

No one can convincingly argue that planning is not a fundamental aspect of long-term success, or that lack of planning is a considerable contributor toward failure. Therefore, it is paramount that planning be taken seriously by athletic trainers wishing to establish a new, revamp, or sustain an existing athletic training program. The principles of planning work in any athletic training context. **Planning** is the act of delineating behaviors intended to bring about a predetermined or expected course of action. For athletic training programs, key planning behaviors should include the following:

1. Determining stakeholders
2. Delineating values
3. Creating a vision
4. Drafting a mission
5. Establishing goals and objectives

Determining Stakeholders

All enterprises in every industry across the globe have stakeholders. Stakeholders are anyone that is affected by the actions or plans of an organization, department, or even an individual. A fundamental component to proper planning is to realize that all decisions and actions affect something or someone. Therefore, decision makers must take responsibility for their actions. Not all actions equally impact all stakeholders, but they have an affect nonetheless. In athletic training, stakeholders can include athletes, patients, parents, students, staff associates, coaches, physicians, the community, friends and loved ones, other members of the sports medicine team, and other medical or health professionals.

When planning, athletic trainers must take the time to determine which stakeholders will be impacted by any decisions or ensuing actions. In other words, athletic trainers must ask and answer the question, “If we do this particular action who (from the greatest to the least) will be impacted, and to what degree?” Different programs will have different stakeholders and not all stakeholders are as important as others, but all should be considered. Determining stakeholders early on in a program’s forming and planning process can facilitate an easier implementation of any plans. Furthermore, determining stakeholders will help inform the values of the program and ultimately help ensure longevity and satisfaction. After stakeholders are identified, the next step is determining the values of those stakeholders.

Delineating Values

Delineating values can be a long and hopefully fun process. Values are those practices or attitudes which are predetermined to be celebrated.² Values are a list of ideals on which the organization focuses its time, attention, and resources. Later on, it will be values that guide the creation of the vision and mission statements. In essence, values are the framework to the entire strategic planning process (Fig. 12-1).



FIGURE 12-1 Strategic planning pyramid

Values are delineated based on input from stakeholders and critical self-reflection. First try and delineate the values of stakeholders. This can be a formal or informal process. A formal process includes interviewing and questioning stakeholders about what they deem to be important and how the athletic training program you are creating or reorganizing can facilitate those values. An informal process includes casually observing stakeholder's behaviors and forming an educated guess as to how they might react to the program's actions. Next, it is important to decide your values (or your team's values) as they relate to the athletic training program. Being able to critically and accurately self-reflect is a necessary skill to determine values.

Actions should be informed by 1) the values of key stakeholders; and 2) the personal values of the creating team. For example, it would be illadvised to violate the values of referring physicians, especially if the program is dependent on referrals for revenue. Likewise, to ignore personal values could potentially create ethical or moral dilemmas and even conflict. On the other hand, having a clearly defined list of values can help inform actions and guide decisions. For example, if an opportunity violates or simply does not promote a core value deliberation over a course of action is easier; or if there is a new opportunity that promotes one or all of the values then that too helps to inform any decision. However, if no values have been defined, it becomes much more difficult to make decisions or decide which opportunities to pursue.

Identifying Values

How many values does an athletic training program need? There is no set number of values required, however, the longer the list of values the greater the risk of some of those values conflicting. Conflicting values (either internally or among stakeholders) can be extremely problematic and can paralyze decision making. Values can be identified by asking stakeholders or team members to critically reflect and analyze behaviors or attitudes they deem critically important to success. Because success means different thing to different people, expect the list to long and varied. Part of the process of identifying values involves honing down the list to a manageable size. It is a good idea to have approximately three to five values, any more than this and it becomes difficult to clearly articulate a concise vision statement.



LEADERSHIP ACTIVITY

Divide into small groups (each group needs at least three members). Appoint someone in the group to be the Head ATC and the others as staff ATs at XYZ Rehab, a division of a large local hospital, in a thriving metropolitan city. There are three primary competitors, including two other hospitals and one private physician's clinic. Once your team is created, create a list of your values for this division. Once you have your lists, combine them and eliminate duplicates. From that master list, have the team hone it down further to delineate three core values of your division. Using those values, have the student who was appointed head AT draft a vision statement and submit it to the team for edits, and once the vision statement is completed and agreed upon, use the values and vision to collaboratively draft a mission statement. Once those are completed, as a team, identify two objectives for your division. Then articulate three S.M.A.R.T. goals for each of those objectives.

Values can be anything from behaviors to attitudes. Experience, personal conviction, and ethics are the only necessary guides to establishing values. A list of values in athletic training might include:

- Cost-effective treatment
- Empathy toward patients
- Safe and timely return to competition
- Quality health care
- Service orientation
- Profit
- Teamwork
- Empowerment
- Promoting diversity

Without clearly articulated values, the meaning of a vision statement is lost.

Creating a Vision

Leadership expert Peter Senge¹ reminds us that, “without a vision people perish.” Meaning a clear and articulate vision is essential for the successful operation of any enterprise. A **vision** is an ideal image of the future one seeks to create.^{1,2} It is the goal or direction an organization, individual, or team strives toward. This concept of vision suggests an orientation toward the future, and a key leadership practice is to visualize an ideal future. Athletic trainers and students can facilitate the advancement of their program and their profession by maintaining a vision of a desirable future for athletic training.

Vision statements are important because people need to know where they need to be in order to act in a reasonable manner to get there.³ Articulating a clear picture of the future with a vision statement is important for every athletic training program. However, creating a clear and concise vision statement is not as easy as one might initially believe. Nearly 75% of vision statements do not provide an adequate picture of the future.⁴ Many vision statements are filled with contemporary jargon and catch-phrases, which is difficult to translate into tangible action.⁴ Therefore, it is important to use stated values as the framework for vision.

The vision statement should be created through consensus, not as an edict from senior leadership. Buy-in of the vision statement by all involved parties is extremely important because accomplishing the vision requires a combined effort. Although the senior leadership may ultimately decide on the exact wording of the vision statement, the ideas and values presented in the statement should come from key stakeholders.

Drafting Vision Statements

Once the leadership is satisfied with delineated values, the process of drafting the vision statement begins. The vision statement itself is a concise, one or two sentences, describing the values the athletic training program wishes to propagate for the future of the program. Ultimately it is the vision statement, based on the program's values, that determines the effectiveness of the program. On a regular basis the athletic training program should be evaluated based on its stated vision.

Vision statements have at least five characteristics:⁴

1. They are brief – typically one or two sentences.
2. They are verifiable – at least 10 people should be able to recognize if the vision is being accomplished.
3. They are focused – they remind others of one or two issues critical for success to your target population.

4. They are understandable to everyone – clearly articulated and free from industry or organizational specific jargon.
5. They are inspiring.

Sample Vision Statements

The following are examples of vision statements from various sports medicine and athletic training settings. In the university setting, a sample vision statement might read,

“The department of athletic training services at XYZ University is dedicated to the comprehensive health care needs and the highest quality injury management for our athletes.”

An industrial athletic training program’s vision statement might read,

“IQ Industries sets a standard within our industry for least number of work hours lost due to on-site injuries and is committed to the overall wellbeing of all employees.”

An example of an occupational or outpatient rehabilitation’s vision statement might read,

“XYZ Hospital’s Athletic Training Services will be the leading provider of athletic training coverage and injury rehabilitation services to the high schools of Metro city.”

Finally, using three of the values identified earlier (i.e., service orientation, empathy toward patients, and safe and speedy return to competition) a vision statement might read,

“to provide affordable, accessible, and uncompromising health care to the active population in our community.”

Drafting a Mission

After the vision statement has been developed the next step is to develop a mission statement. Mission statements expand on the vision statement by adding “how” the vision will be accomplished. There is a fundamental difference between vision and mission statements: The vision statement is future oriented, and the mission statement is oriented toward current services and conditions; visions challenge, missions anchor.⁷ The mission statement keeps the athletic training program focused on who it is serving and how it is serving them. A clearly defined mission can help drive leadership decisions and actions.⁶ The following elements are often found in many health care related mission statements:

- Customer definition (stakeholders)
- Product/service definition
- Organizational philosophy
- Description of public image
- Geographical area
- Distinctive competencies.⁵

Based on these elements we will define **mission statement** as the reason for existence in respect to present-day clientele, distinct services offered, philosophy, and geography. An example of an effective mission statement might be:

“Mercy Hospital’s Athletic Training Department exists to provide high quality sports medicine services to the physically active and student–athletes in our local community by providing: injury prevention, clinical evaluation and diagnosis, immediate injury care, treatment, rehabilitation, reconditioning, and community education that is competent, efficient, and professional and to ensure a safe and timely return to activity at or beyond their normal level of involvement and competition. We intend to accomplish this by providing easy access to sports medicine clinics, and a tangible presence at community-based sporting events, and by providing certified athletic trainers to each High School within the local community.”

Drafting a mission statement is similar to drafting a vision statement. Begin with the vision and simply explain how that vision will come to past for the current stakeholders or target population. In the sample mission statement above it is easy to identify what the vision statement was... “to provide high quality sports medicine services to the physically active and student-athletes in our local community.” In other words, the mission was drafted by including the “where” and “how” of their existing vision statement. After vision and mission are articulated, next is the establishment of goals and objectives related to those statements.

Establishing Goals and Objectives

As the process of determining stakeholders, listing values, drafting vision and mission statements nears the end, it is important to compile a list of goals and objectives. For effective planning and strategizing, it is important to state goals and objectives clearly. While some debate exists as to the difference between goals and objectives, generally speaking objectives are the ultimate end one hopes to achieve. Therefore, objectives are usually generalizations of what is expected or hoped for.

On the other hand, goals are more specific and include time-specific and measurable language. Goals should answer the questions of “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” and “how” of the objectives. In other words, goals are specific action steps. You should strive to create S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-oriented) goals. The reader of the goals should easily be able to identify each of the S.M.A.R.T. elements within the statement.

Typically each goal is based on a larger objective. For example, the more general objective of “to be a premier sports medicine provider” may be further explained by the following goal, “to be one of the top three most profitable sports medicine providers in the county by the end of the fiscal year.” Note that the objective is general and lacks measurable language. On the other hand the goal is measurable and includes time-oriented language.

Another example of an objective may be to “reduce the amount of injuries on the job.” The goal to meet that objective might be twofold: 1) to hire an athletic trainer to introduce a validated injury prevention education program to be attended by 90% of employees by December 31; 2) hire an athletic trainer to conduct and publish a work-safety analysis of each division on a quarterly basis. These goals help to accomplish the objective and are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time oriented.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is the process of diagnosing the organization’s external and internal environments, deciding on a vision and mission, developing overall goals, creating and selecting general strategies to be pursued, and allocating resources to achieve the organization’s goals.⁸ Athletic trainers of all levels and ranks participate in strategic planning, both formal and informal. In its purest form, strategic planning is undertaken to gain a competitive advantage over competition. Stated another way, strategic planning involves developing innovative strategies to perform similar tasks differently than competition. This has particular relevance to entrepreneurial initiatives of athletic trainers in the marketplace (i.e., clinic owners). However, athletic trainers in not-for-profit arenas such as high schools or public universities also need to plan strategically to ensure buy-in and participation of others.

The process of strategy includes answering the questions, where do you want to go, and how do you want to get there? In athletic training programs, strategy may

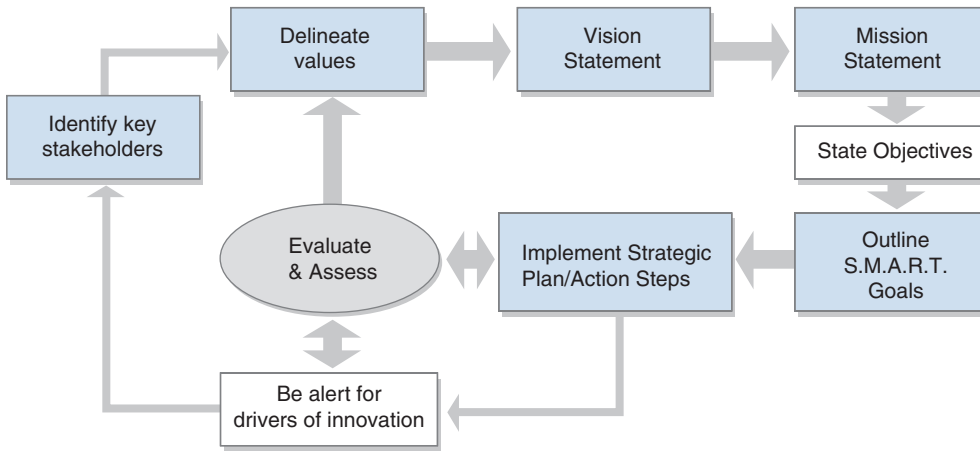


FIGURE 12-2 Strategic planning cycle

involve evaluating current delivery models and comparing those to competitor’s delivery models, then coming up with a viable plan to implement that model. For example, in a large metropolitan area there are likely to be several companies offering athletic training services to local high-schools. A sound strategic planning process can help set one athletic training company above its competitor(s).

A majority of the strategic planning process includes what has been previously discussed, i.e., stakeholders, values, vision, mission, objectives and goals. However, the crucible of strategic planning comes when it is time to implement those stated goals. Once implementation begins, strategic planning is not over. Strategy must be continually monitored and evaluated. An important part of monitoring the strategic plan includes conducting a SWOT analysis. Figure 12.2 shows the strategic planning cycle.

SWOT Analysis

The strategic plan includes evaluating and assessing internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats. Many strategists call this a **SWOT**

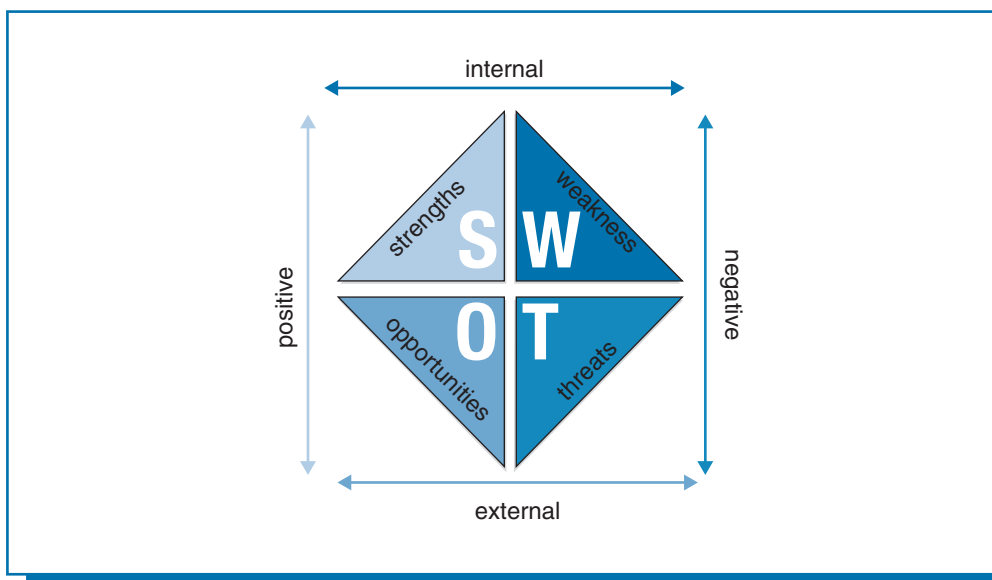


FIGURE 12-3 Common layout for a SWOT analysis

analysis. A SWOT analysis is an internal assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses (i.e., SW), and an external assessment of Opportunities and Threats (i.e., OT); combined, they become a SWOT analysis.

It is important to articulate values, vision, mission, and goals before a SWOT analysis is performed, as it is important to have a baseline measurement. Even though there are similarities between many athletic training programs, values and objectives are individualized and as such threats and opportunities may differ significantly. Furthermore, opportunities need to be examined in the light of values and goals otherwise time and resources may be wasted on things that may not help in accomplishing objectives or worse wasted on opportunities that do not promote the values of the organization or team.

The SWOT analysis has two distinct phases. First, the internal SWOT in which assessment is focused on the organization's strength and weaknesses. The second part is the external SWOT in which the environment is assessed for opportunities and threats. Figure 12-2 shows a common layout for performing a SWOT analysis. In addition to conducting a SWOT analysis, other tools or models used in strategic planning include strategy mapping and Hoshin planning.

Strategy Mapping

A strategy map can show how different aspects of a strategic plan work together.¹⁰ It is specifically useful for assigning a value to intangible skills. In other words, a strategy map can help create a visual representation of how seemingly unrelated values are related. A properly developed strategy map can prevent others from developing a myopic or biased view of an individual's worth or contribution. For example, an athletic trainer in an outreach setting who is only valued or assessed by generated referrals could use a strategy map to illustrate how his or her "other" skills add significant value to the organization. Another example in an outreach setting might include the athletic trainer who has responsibility for several high schools and therefore can only triage injuries once or twice a week at each high school. A strategy map could depict how pulling away from a multiple venue system and focusing on how having a major presence in one high school adds more value than having a minor presence in many schools.

Strategy mapping involves the following three parts.¹⁰

1. Describing the intangible asset – An example of an intangible asset in athletic training might be several leadership competencies, such as excellent communication ability and people skills.
2. Aligning and integrating intangible assets – This means identifying which aspect of the organization's strategy the athletic trainer's leadership competencies can best enhance.
3. Defining how intangible assets can be developed or promoted – You measure intangible assets the same way accountants measure other assets, by how fast they can be converted to cash (their liquidity). This means providing opportunity for the athletic trainer to use these skills to promote the organization's goals.

Figure 12-4 is a sample of how a strategy map can be used in athletic training, and

Hoshin Planning

Hoshin planning (also called **Hoshin Kanri**) is a Japanese form of strategic planning that is sometimes used in the health care industry, especially in hospitals. Hoshin Kanri is a Japanese phrase that is translated "direction setting" and has been defined as "the systematic process by which an entire organization sets and achieves specific long term goals with respect to quality."¹¹

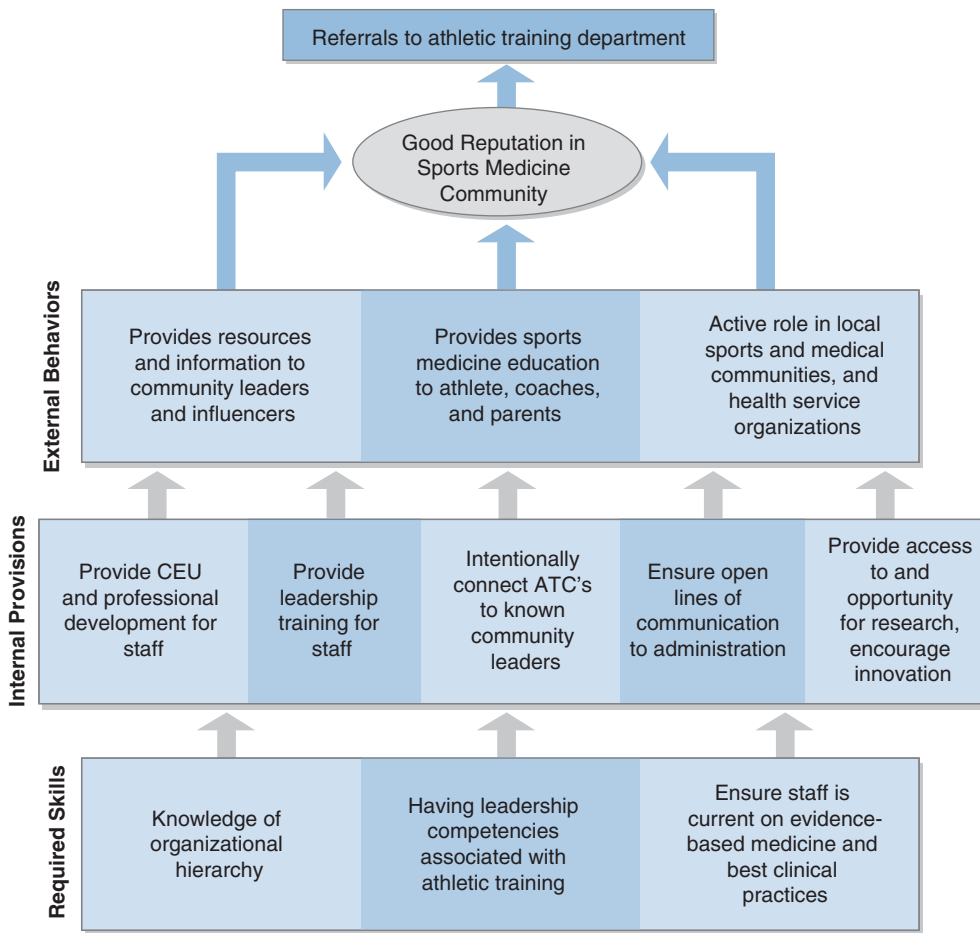


FIGURE 12-4 Strategy map

Hoshin planning is a top-down approach to strategic planning, where decisions and directions are primarily set by organizational leaders.¹² However, Hoshin planning does allow for a team-based process. For example, decisions are based on feedback, input, and implementation from many organizational members and stakeholders. Hoshin planning relies heavily on each member of the organization sharing a common vision. This common vision is often implemented through group interaction and consistent feedback referred to as “catchball” (i.e., throwing around ideas and goals until everyone buys in).

Hoshin planning is essentially a two-pronged process. The first prong involves long-range planning for the entire organization. This is typically completed by those with formal leadership or management roles. Once long-range plans are articulated, the next prong involves tracking how departments or divisions are implementing those plans.⁹ For example, within a large hospital there can be several areas of specialty, such as “sports medicine,” and within sports medicine there might be physicians with differing specialties such as therapists, physiologists, and athletic trainers. Once the plans are set for the entire hospital, it is up to individual departments or specialties (i.e., athletic training) to determine how they can best contribute to and accomplish those plans. For instance, if the hospital has a plan for increasing their presence in the local community, then the athletic training division is left to decide how they can best do that. Obviously what athletic trainers might do to accomplish that plan is different from what another branch of medicine might do. When all is



From the Field

For financial reasons, a local hospital I had worked for decided to eliminate its sports medicine department, leaving me and four other athletic trainers who had long histories in the community without jobs. Because the values that drove our athletic training department were community and service oriented, all the athletic trainers provided more than merely athletic training coverage. We were vested into the high schools (in fact most of us were alumni of the schools we served, which was intentional), therefore, we went above the call of duty, not only event and practice coverage, rehab, and injury diagnosis but routinely volunteering to teach courses, supervising the strength programs, creating and supervising student aides, and covering camps, etc. Ultimately, the hospital's financial decision to drop athletic training had additional long-term negative impact. This was demonstrated by the fact that within 24 hours of our being notified our services were no longer needed, we were all employed by competitors and each of us retained our schools. The hospital's reputation in the sports medicine community was tarnished badly. Rehabilitation referrals, once taken for granted, were now referred elsewhere, and even the physicians and orthopedic surgeons associated suffered financially. This is an example of how failure to recognize other intangible assets that athletic trainers contributed to the overall mission of the hospital ended in financial loss and an tarnished reputation in the sports medicine community.

said and done, the athletic training division has their own strategy of how they can increase their presence in the community, which in turn contributes to the entire organization's goal.

The Hoshin process involves seven steps. The first three steps are typically done by those in leadership roles, and steps 4–7 are completed by everyone in the organization:

1. Identification of critical issues
2. Establishment of objectives to address these issues
3. Definition of the company's over-all goals
4. Development of strategies that support the over-all goals
5. Definition of sub-goals (objectives) that support each strategy
6. Establishment of indicators for measuring process performance
7. Establishment of fundamental measures¹²

Strategy Pitfalls to Avoid

Careful strategic planning is not a guarantee of success. If care is not taken to prevent some of the common mistakes, time, effort, and momentum can be wasted or lost. Among the most common offenders are:⁹

1. Setting unrealistic or arbitrary goals
2. Failing to focus on real values
3. Allowing goals to become “wishes”
4. Lacking common values among team players
5. Planning sessions being treated as events
6. Having inadequate or outdated data
7. Relying too much on expert and experienced planners
8. Leaders failing to take responsibility for outcomes
9. Relying too heavily on financial outcomes as a basis for decision making.

DRIVERS OF INNOVATION IN FORMATION AND PLANNING

Innovation is the creation or introduction of something brand new. Conceptually, innovation is typically framed around future action or intention. On the other hand, change (which is usually mentioned in conjunction with innovation) is typically conceptually associated with a historical fact or behavior. This is perhaps why many people generally resist change, but often embrace innovation. Furthermore, organizations that intentionally practice and are committed to innovation are often the most successful.¹³ Innovation is a prerequisite for longevity.

In athletic training, innovation can help create new ways to offer “athletic training services” to the non-traditional athlete or in non-traditional settings. This can be a tremendous asset to the formation and planning of athletic training programs. Peter Drucker¹³ has identified seven drivers of innovation:

1. Unexpected occurrences
2. Incongruities
3. Process needs
4. Industry or market changes
5. Demographic changes
6. Changes in perception
7. New knowledge

While all of these drivers of innovation deserve attention, four have an obvious relationship to athletic training: new knowledge, changes in perception, industry or market changes, and demographic changes.

New Knowledge

Athletic trainers who perform research and disseminate their findings and the athletic trainers who implement those findings are innovators who are ensuring the profession’s future. New knowledge and discoveries can be great sources of innovation that can help athletic training make a permanent mark in the health and medical industries. As athletic training knowledge expands, it fosters another driver of innovation: changes in perception. As other professions change their perception (positively or negatively) of athletic training (based on this new knowledge and the quality of it), further innovation is likely to follow. Therefore, since athletic trainers have decided to create a culture of discovering knowledge, innovation will be a natural by-product.

Changes in Perception and Industry

Another driver of innovation in athletic training is changes in perception. Changes in perception can be positive and negative, and anything at any time can contribute to a change in perspective. Therefore, these specific drivers are often unanticipated. If a perception changes that is threatening to the profession, an innovation can occur in retaliation. If a perception shifts that benefits the profession, such as a new state’s licensure, there is likely to be innovation as well. Either way, athletic trainers must respond to changes in how we are perceived with new ideas on how to forge ahead in light of those perceptions.

Industry changes can also drive innovation. For example, athletic trainers who identify a new work setting or practice niche as a response to new or revised regulations,



From the Field

My first real athletic training job (after being a G.A.) was in a small rehabilitation clinic in a small blue-collar town. Very few of the patients I worked with had sports-related injuries and none of the the patients were athletes. Furthermore, I was hired “experimentally” as the clinics first-ever athletic trainer on staff. Friday night football was my only satisfying sports medicine outlet. I felt forced to innovate: I researched the local area, surveyed some local physicians, and developed a plan and presented it to my clinical director for a medically supervised fitness program for high risk patients. After the program was implemented, it quickly grew a new clientele based on physician’s referrals, all of whom paid directly out of pocket. This innovation created a new revenue stream, added credibility to the clinics reputation, provided publicity, and reflected well on me and athletic training. So much so in fact when it was time for me to move on to a more traditional athletic training role (at a neighboring clinic), they offered me a significant raise to stay. The point is that it was the willingness to innovate that allowed me to use my skill and expertise as an athletic training in a brand new way, in community that previously thought there was little use for an athletic trainer.

accreditation outcomes, educational reform, or law suites, ultimately benefit the profession and the organizations that employ them.

Demographic and Market Changes

Another opportunity to innovate occurs when demographics change. For example, the aging populations, many of whom still want to remain active, or the growing number of ethnically diverse patients and clients, all need athletic training services. As the demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, education, ethnicity) of a population change, athletic trainers will be forced to create new practice settings, delivery models, or create new recruitment models that attract more ethnically diverse students to the profession; this will accommodate the changing demographic or expand into a new arena made up of a new demographic. Innovating as a result of changing demographics and target markets will help ensure athletic trainers remain on the cutting edge.

Performing a thorough SWOT analysis and paying close attention to the external opportunities and threats is one way to stimulate innovative ideas. Leaders in the athletic training profession take advantage of these opportunities to innovate, but it is the strategic process that often alerts someone to these drivers of innovation.

ANALYTICAL AND INTUITIVE DECISION MAKING

Forming and planning an athletic training program requires decision making. Furthermore, the practice of innovation requires decisions. Leaders cannot afford to be squeamish about making decisions. Making the right decisions fosters trust and increases credibility. Failure to make the right decisions or even hesitating to make decisions undermines the decision maker’s credibility and can jeopardize morale.

Leaders need to have a process for making decisions. Risk and emotion are inescapable parts of every decision.¹⁴ The presence of human emotion in the decision making process can be what makes them so risky. Ironically, reducing risk is often the goal of many decisions. Therefore, a keen sense and understanding of one’s emotional state of mind is critical before making a decision. It has been said that decision’ implies the end of deliberation and the beginning of action.¹⁴ This deliberation is a multi-stage multi-layered phenomenon that involves analytical, rationale, and intuitive processes.

Analytical Decision Making

Mack, Crawford, and Reed¹⁵ have delineated an analytical and rationale seven-step model for making healthcare-related leadership decisions (note: this is distinct from clinical decision making). The seven steps are:

1. Understand the organization.
2. Define the objective of the decision.
3. Identify and prioritize the factors that will influence the decision.
4. Collect information needed to make the decision, and generate decision options.
5. Evaluate options and make the best choice.
6. Develop an action plan, and implement the decision.
7. Monitor decision’s effects, and revise as appropriate.

Understanding the Organization

Understanding the organization implies knowing the organizational culture (i.e., its politics, symbols, policies and procedures, and influencers) as well as how decisions have historically been made. Often an organization takes on a personality of its own with different symbols, beliefs, and unwritten values weaved into its culture. The conscientious decision maker will take time to learn and assess the organization's culture.

Defining the Objective of the Decision

Defining the objective of the decision involves determining what outcomes are expected from the decision, i.e., what should be different after the decision is made. For instance, expectations for decisions made in a crisis or medical emergency might be different from day-to-day operational decisions or long-range strategic decisions.

Identifying and Prioritizing the Factors That Will Influence the Decision

Identifying and prioritizing the factors that will influence the decision simply implies recognizing any obstacles that may impede the decisions implementation. This step involves brainstorming with key stakeholders. Prioritizing involves ranking (i.e., assigning a point value) to the factors that will influence the decision then tallying those points to determine the most significant factors.

Generating Decision Options

Collecting information needed to make the decision, and generating decision options means to collect as broad a range as possible of all available options or possible outcomes. This step also should involve multiple stakeholders' interests, which may require input from several sources. It is a good idea to get input from trustworthy stakeholders with opposing points of view.

Evaluating Options and Making the Best Choice

Evaluating options and making the best choice involves evaluating the pros and cons of each potential decision (or option). This step involves listing all options then assigning pros and cons to each option. Each pro is assigned a point value and each con is assigned a negative point value the option with the highest point total is theoretically the "best" decision. These points are not assigned arbitrarily. Point values are assigned to each option based on the objectives set in step 2. For example, an athletic training department needs to find a way that motivates staff to make better clinical decisions and reduces medical errors. Therefore, two options arise and a decision needs to be made between paying overtime or reducing the work load. Each decision will have individual outcomes. Both may produce "happier" staff (+1), but option one (paying overtime) means less personal time (-1) and therefore more fatigued staff (-1); and option two (reducing work load) means more personal time (+1) and allows more time to read evidence-based literature at work (+1), points are assigned to each option's objectives and totaled. The best decision is the option with the highest points; option one (overtime) totaled -1; option two (reduced load) totaled +3, therefore, it appears option 2 is the best decision. This process works for an infinite number of options.

Developing an Action Plan and Implementing the Decision

Developing an action plan and implementing the decision involves obtaining buy-in from stakeholders as well as deciding how to deal with the obstacles identified

earlier. Part of this involves establishing priorities, setting target dates, delegating authority and assigning responsibilities, and determining how the decision will be evaluated. Follow-through is critical at this juncture. Planning is only as effective as the degree of implementation. Some experts indicate that success is 20% planning and 80% implementation.¹⁵ Decisions are worthless and time is wasted without proper implementation. For example, in the earlier example of deciding that it is best to reduce staff work load is worthless unless there is a strategy in place to actually implement reduced workloads.

Monitoring the Decision and Revising

No decision is without its flaws or blind spots. Hopefully the flaws can be minimized and discovered during the previous six steps, but it is unrealistic to believe no other obstacles will arise. A decision is only as good as its ability to be flexible and adaptable. Therefore, once a decision is implemented it is important to assess its effectiveness.

One drawback to the above seven-step process is the time required to implement them. If a quick decision is needed obviously these seven steps can not occur in a few minutes or even in a day. In the above case the decision-making process is deliberate and occurs in stages that involve input from multiple stakeholders and may take significant time. This is as it should be. However, the luxury to take time and involve multiple stakeholders is not always an option. Another drawback to analytical decision making is that it can present too much information, which can create blind spots or lead to faulty conclusions. Therefore, an acceptable alternative to a purely analytical approach is to include intuition in the decision-making process.

Intuitive Decision Making

Another aspect of the decision making process is intuition. Intuitive decision making is well documented in scholarly literature.^{16,17,18,19,20} Intuition is the skill of focusing on potentially important but often faint signals that fuel imagination, innovation, and creativity.¹⁷ **Intuition** has also been explained as “compressed expertise” or instinctive knowledge that comes from instantly accessing and assimilating years of experience or a lot of experiences in a moment.¹⁶

Intuition plays an important part in every decision regardless of how much time is available to make it. Intuition is a pronounced aspect of decision making in experts.²¹ Therefore, the greater the expertise of the leader or the clinician the more one can expect to rely on intuitive sensing (or the proverbial “gut” reaction). However, regardless of experience there is a certain level of intuitive insight expected of those in leadership roles.

While there is evidence to support intuitive decision making as a viable process, there are shortcomings to relying purely on intuition and most researchers suggest utilizing a combination of intuition and analytical processes. The most obvious shortcomings of intuitive decision making are the lack of reproducible methods. However, intuitive decision making has a place, has been documented to be very effective, and has been demonstrated to be more effective at times than purely analytical or “rational” decision making.¹⁶

Traps of Decision Making

Decision making can be as much an art as it is science. Within the art and science of decision making, athletic training leaders can fall into several traps. Some of the more common things that hinder effective decision making are described below.

Anchoring

A common trap in decision making includes anchoring, which is when the mind places too high a value on the first information it receives.²² The most common anchor is the past, specifically past successes or failures. Often these successes or failures bias us from seeing other viable decision options. Anchoring tends to bias the decision maker toward repeating similar decisions or avoiding logical ones.

Status-Quo Trap

The status-quo trap is also very prevalent in sabotaging decisions and its probability of occurring increases as the number of choices increases.²² The status quo trap is very powerful and displayed in actions intended to “not rock the boat.” Examples of the status-quo trap include tabling decisions until later, waiting for a situation to “stabilize” which further entrenches current behaviors, decisions based on trends, or historically justified decisions. Status-quo traps are particularly attractive because omission (doing nothing) appears to have less consequence than commission (doing something).²²

Sunk-Cost Trap

The sunk-cost trap is another way decisions are sabotaged. The sunk-cost trap is making a decision in order to justify a previous decision.²² For example, hiring an unqualified employee, and later needing to give extra training, mentoring, and development money in order to get that person qualified. Another example might be pouring money into the maintenance of equipment that is never used, but was lobbied hard for in the past. The best way to avoid this trap is to admit to the failure of a past decision and cut losses.

Confirming-Evidence Trap

The confirming-evidence trap is when we place too much value on information and evidence that supports our original premise and too little value to equally as reputable, yet conflicting or contradictory evidence. There are usually valid sides to every option or opinion. The “side” of the evidence you “embrace” is likely biased by your experience(s). This in turn entrenches your decisions further. Confirming-evidence trap is also seen when asking peers for opinions and justification of decisions. For example, let’s say you want to build a 5000 square foot athletic training room (ATR), but are not sure if your institution actually needs or ever will need that much space. As part of the decision making process you phone a good friend and peer who has just built a 5000 square foot ATR and she tells you how great it is to have that much space and the all the new options available with that space, etc. A wise decision maker should not allow that conversation to be the sole source of input as it is likely subject to confirming-evidence bias.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Strategic planning is a critically important process in the creation, development, and implementation of an athletic training program regardless of context. The elements of strategy include identifying key stakeholders, delineating stakeholder and personal values, and drafting vision and mission statements. Following the drafting of the mission statement is identifying general objectives and S.M.A.R.T. goals that are measurable and time-oriented. Once objectives are clarified it is important to act on them and implement the plan, being sure to measure and evaluate the plan’s effectiveness.

▶ Leadership Application

You are a new member of the athletic training staff at a large community sports medicine clinic. You were hired because of your 18 years of experience with athletes, in a large collegiate setting. It is your second week of work in the clinic and you are unexpectedly invited by the owner to attend an annual strategic planning meeting with the clinic's senior staff. The senior staff is surprised to see you at the meeting, but seem glad of your presence. The senior staff consists of one athletic trainer, two physical therapists, one occupational therapist, one massage therapist, and the owner, an orthopedic surgeon. The agenda includes an open brainstorming session, where any and all new ideas are encouraged. The brainstorming session is specifically intended to generate ideas for new revenue streams. As an athletic trainer at a large university for several years prior you are new to this idea of generating revenue.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What experiences might you be able to draw upon to help you generate ideas for revenue production?
2. How might the senior staff respond to your ideas?
3. Identify external stakeholders you can now target because of your addition to the staff.
4. What is the benefit of having you present at the meeting, what are some risks?

Innovation and decision making are also important aspects of the strategic process. Without innovation it is difficult to sustain longevity. Finally we discussed the decision making process and emphasized both an analytical and intuitive process. Being mindful of common traps such as anchoring, status-quo, confirming-evidence, and sunk-cost traps can help the decision making process be more effective.

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