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[Q: How long does it take to complete the process of creating a strategic plan?](#)

Depending on the developmental status of the organization, the readiness of the organization's leaders, the extent to which staff or the board or directors has done their homework, a strategic plan can be developed in as little as several months or as long as year. We're not talking about a review and modification of an existing strategic plan, which should happen annually. We're talking about the organization being willing to start with a blank slate with a commitment to validating all assumptions, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of existing programming and considering all new possibilities. Such work, by definition, requires a commitment to disciplined study and process. It's also important to emphasize that organizations or boards that are going through a crisis should not begin a strategic planning process in the middle of such distractions. Good decision-making is enhanced by calm and considered decision-makers who are both open to new opportunities and insistent on critical thinking and strategic consideration of such possibilities.

Even athletics departments with missions, competitive divisions and conferences that have not changed for 50 years, need to go regularly go through a strategic planning process that considers the possibilities of change. The outcome may very well validate the current reality, but it may also invite new opportunities that result in the revitalization of the organization.

Because the strategic plan is the organization leaders' most important management tool, dictating everything from budget to program priorities and action strategies, every effort should be made to "nail" this responsibility. That's why outside consultants, paid or pro bono, are important to use as coaches in the development of a strategic plan. Staff and board members are usually too close to existing programming and operations 'to see the forest'.

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Topics

Strategic Planning

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