Strategic Plan Review

ReAnn Arcand, Kristen Brunelle, Sarah Fulton, & Sarah Gregg

University of Mary

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The healthcare system is continuously growing, changing, and requires a fast-growing pace that can executive goals in an organized and thoughtful way. Strategic planning is the key element in an organization’s plan to create expectations, guide the direction, and distribute resources to assist in growth and change. This paper will discuss the elements of strategic planning. This includes discussing differing aspects of strategic planning and the initiatives specific to successful strategic planning. References to a strategic planning case study will be discussed along with the description of the purpose and components of strategic planning.

**Annotated Bibliography**

Arbab Kash, B., Spaulding, A., Johnson, C. E., & Gamm, L. (2014). Success factors for strategic

change initiatives: A qualitative study of healthcare administrators’ perspectives. *Journal of Healthcare Management*, *59*(1), 65–81. Retrieved from<https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.umary.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=107883213&site=ehost-live>

In Success Factors for Strategic Change Initiatives: A Qualitative Study of Healthcare Administrators’ Perspectives, the authors discuss that while success factors related to the implementation of change initiatives are well studied and discussed in management literature, they are not studied in healthcare organizations that are engaged in multiple strategic change initiatives (Kash, Spaulding, Johnson, & Gamm, 2014). It is for this reason the study focused on figuring out the key success factors related to implementation of change initiatives at two large healthcare systems that implemented multiple change initiatives (Kash et al., 2014). Interviews were completed with 61 healthcare leaders to recognize factors that lead to successful implementation of change. The results were summarized into the top ten success factors, some of which included; culture and values, business processes, and people and engagement purpose (Kash et al., 2014). This information is reliable because it was gained from internal validity where data triangulation was utilized, strong data had been collected, and the results are confirmable. In addition, the information was gathered in 2014 and is current to the study. A limitation did arise as the study had the inability to spread across all healthcare systems due to sample size. This study was helpful to other healthcare leaders as the analysis of the interview questions brought valuable insight into key factors for success of strategic change initiatives in healthcare organizations.

Cummings, T. G. (2006, February). Execution: The discipline of getting things done. *Academy of Management Perspectives, 20*(1), 129-132. doi:10.5465/AMP.2006.19873416

This article is a review authored by Cummings (2006) on the book *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done.* The review begins by outlining the foundational principle of the book which is execution. Poor execution is considered the biggest pitfall facing organizations today, often because conjuring up strategies is much easier than the execution. Further, the book pinpoints social interaction as the vessel for which execution occurs, this is because for a coordinated response to occur, i.e. execution, all team members must have a similar mindsight. Thus, if social interaction is poor appropriate execution becomes impossible.

The last merit Cummings (2006) extrapolates is the integral role leaders play in the execution process. This indicates that leaders must be deeply involved and passionate about the execution process, while also maintaining a clear vision. Moreover, the leader’s role in execution is to constantly stress executions importance, provide clarity, and both model and reinforce requisite behavior.

Cummings (2006) acknowledges several weaknesses in the book indicating that the authors attempt to make connections between execution and other outcomes like productivity, morale, cash flow, and revenue, all while offering little evidence for any causal connection between these outcomes. Further, the books heavy reliance on senior leadership role in execution raises a key concern that it may not be sustainable with any sort of turnover at the senior level. Making execution more of a fad instead of an organizational behavior.

Falk, N. L., Garrison, K. F., Brown, M-M., Pintz, C., & Bocchino, J. (2015). Strategic planning

and doctor nursing practice education: Developing today’s and tomorrow’s leader. *Nursing Economics, 33*(5).

Falk, Garrison, Brown, Pintz, and Bocchino (2015) explain in this article why strategic planning is a critical component in DNP educational programs. Specifically, Falk et al. (2015) find that this is to ensure these programs are producing confident, knowledgeable nurse leaders whom ensure the best outcomes to patients and society. Typically, strategic planning has been emphasized to nursing leadership and administration programs, but these skills are necessary for all nurses to actively participate in decision making with other professionals and to allow them to practice to the full extent of their education (Falk et al., 2015). All nurses, not just those in leadership, practice with more expertise, strategy skills, confidence, and have the potential to be more influential when exposed to strategic planning education.

Falk et al. (2015) recommend that there needs to be a specific emphasis on organizational configuration, environment, business context, staff expertise, culture, and interpersonal relationships because these are all elements of strategic management that all nurses can benefit from. This article presented a lot of points supporting their belief on the addition of strategic planning components to DNP programs. The evidence could be stronger if they would have analyzed more than just the one DNP program, but overall, with the specific example and the review of literature this article can be considered good quality.

Zuckerman, A.M. (2014). Successful strategic planning for a reformed delivery system. *Journal of Healthcare Management, 59*(3), 168-172.

The healthcare environment requires strategic planning to occur continuously and be integrated throughout the organization. Zuckerman (2014) explores the concept that healthcare reform requires shifting the focus from the immediate needs of the organization and recognizing the need for strategic management*.* By using a strategic planning process, organizations can remain dynamic in their ability to handle “curveballs”, manage change, and deal with threats and developments.

Zuckerman (2014) recommends that due to the lag of reimbursement compared to health cost inflation, the strategic plan should be focused on the financial aspect of care (reducing costs) while remaining competitive. The five imperatives outlined within the article include sufficient scale and scope or niche play, cost-competitive, demonstrated quality, exceptional service, and real integration. These actions are needed to produce value for the patient through the balance of cost, service, and quality.

**Strategic Planning Case Study**

**What lessons are learned from reviewing the strategic plan and progress made in XYZ HS?**

The strategic plan and progress made within the XYZ Health System brought forward the attention that nursing leaders must share their vision with one another in order to pursue a transformational change (Roussel, Thomas, & Harris, 2020). For leaders to reach their strategic goals, leaders must understand the importance of a shared mission, vision, and goals. They must then bring these shared concepts forward to create a focused strategic goal selection and prioritize goals to create a change in culture and improve the future of healthcare delivery. The progress that leaders create stems from the accountability, empowerment, and goals from the systems in which they operate. These organizational strategies allow leaders to demonstrate the progress made within the XYZ Health System, as it is now prepared to face challenges and tackle future issues successfully (Roussel et al, 2020).

**What factors were most significant in driving 47 diverse nurse leaders towards a common vision and strategic priorities?**

Several factors were integral in driving the 47 diverse nursing leaders of XYZ Health System towards strategic priorities and establishing a common vision. One key factor that helped promote this common vision was the promotion of awareness and understanding of the organization's strategic vision. Further, the nursing leaders of XYZ Health System quickly embraced a clear vision of health care that was just, safe, humane, and equitable. Having a clear vision about the future and continuously providing clarity to that vision is an integral role of strong leaders in ensuring swift execution of the vision (Cummings, 2006). Further, these 47 nursing leaders were unified through an appreciative inquiry which allowed for reflective feedback. This promoted a strong sense of cohesion among leadership and promoted clarity of the execution process needed for the strategic vision.

**How does size and scope help and/or hinder strategic success?**

The size and scope of an organization can both help and hinder the strategic process. A large organization can suffer from inconsistent implementation of the strategic plan due to differing ideologies, geographic locations, and/or organizational cultures that vary among locations and scopes. Moreover, large organizations may suffer from fragmentation, especially if the strategic plan does not have a clear vision that is routinely emphasized by leadership. The size and varying scope of an organization can make a unified strategic vision difficult, however, not impossible as the present case study clearly demonstrates. Organizations with varying sizes and scopes often have a wealth of diverse nursing leaders. These diverse leaders can promote innovation, new ideas, and inclusivity which promotes unification to the strategic vision and generates buy-in from front line staff. This diversity can also strengthen the execution process of the strategic plan when it is both a clearly articulated vision and has buy-in from leadership. Both of these together are the gold standard for ensuring strategic success (Cummings, 2006).

**Of the key steps articulated, which do you think was the most important?**

Of the key steps articulated, focus is the most important step in the creation of a common nursing vision and strategic priorities across a system. Focus provides the ability to establish what is the most important and in the specific case study, the focus of the workgroups led to the three strategic priorities which resulted in the promotion of the necessary role of nurses (Roussel et al., 2020). While awareness and understanding are indeed necessary for a strategy to be determined, as Roussel et al. (2020) states, this knowledge of the essential part of healthcare nurses play would have simply stay an idea if it weren’t from the results that were achieved from the focused efforts of the 47 hospitals involved.

**Are there other steps that you would advise employing in this process?**

Beyond the steps already taken by XYZ Health System, it would be prudent to continually evaluate whether the nursing work supports the vision of just, safe, and infinitely humane health care. This is accomplished through the staff members and leaders linking the goals and aspirations of the organization with the organizational vision. Furthermore, the vision needs to be understood and known by both internal and external stakeholders. The dissemination of the strategic plan helps to improve staff engagement (Roussel et al., 2020).

**How do the size and scope help and/or hinder strategic success?**

Strategic planning was difficult due to the size and scope of XYZ Health System. Focus is a key to success in large healthcare systems such as XYZ Health System as it permits the system to recognize what is significant and what is not. They can create a transformational change despite these difficulties if they create a shared mission and mutual values to bond with the healthy systems strategy. XYZ Health System specifically fostered the ability to focus through a commitment of dedicated time and a clear understanding of the current state (Roussel et al., 2020).

**Purpose and Components of a Strategic Plan**

**Purpose**

Strategic plans are created to address organizational goals with methodical, preplanned, and intentional mapping. Organizations encompass several forms, or formats, to create their strategic plans, but the components typically are consistent (Roussel et al., 2020). Within the organizations mission statement the purpose is described for that organization. Typically, this states the organization's specific ethical values, principles, and standards (Roussel et al., 2020). A strategic plan purpose includes the outline in the way the organization should exist. These guide the information, direction, and inspiration in which the organization will move, guide, and deliver the perceived goal (Roussel et al., 2020).

**Components**

An organization must complete data analysis to evaluate areas of improvement and where the highest priority or impact must be initiated. Strategic plans have a basic component of strategic priorities and goals, desired outcomes, and objectives (Roussel et al., 2020). When developing strategic plans areas for improvement should be identified and goals should be set. Organizations need to be specific about their goals and what outcomes they are specifically looking for. The desired outcomes come from gap analysis and reflect desired future states (Roussel et al., 2020).

When reaching for outcomes organizations need to evaluate the objectives to get them there. The objectives need to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and be held accountable to a timeline (Roussel et al., 2020). Many objectives identified evolve around nursing. These include resources, staffing, supplies, equipment, education, innovation, evaluation of care and personnel. Objectives must be relevant to their profession (Roussel et al., 2020). Organizations need to have staff members on their strategic teams that reflect those affected by the goals, these are the staff that understands the flow of the organization and the importance of these goals.

**Perceived Effect on Performance**

Kash, Spaulding, Johnson, and Gamm (2014) have noted there are several key factors to ensure the successful implementation of a strategic plan. Included in these key factors were strong culture and values, and people and engagement. Additionally, these key factors have been evident throughout Sanford Health’s multiple change initiatives. With the organization educating every staff member on key safety behaviors, promoting safety language, and creating engagement and awareness for staff on both safety issues and the need for expansion. This strategic vision has also been reiterated time and time again by leadership through positive feedback as well as the use of safety boards on each unit that serves as a reminder of the organization's success as well as the areas for improvement. Another integral factor in Sanford’s success has been there ability to optimize social interactions among staff members. Instilling in everybody the need for mindfulness and respect among all staff members no matter their credentials. This focus on optimizing social interactions has strongly influenced the organization’s ability to effectively implement its strategic vision. Cummings (2006) notes that social interactions are an integral part of executing a strategic plan. This is because in order for effective execution to occur all members must share a similar vision for the future which can only be accomplished if social interactions are optimal. Lastly, Zuckerman (2014) lays out several imperatives for strategic planning within health care organizations which include the demonstration of quality, cost-competition, exceptional service, and real integration. These imperatives presented by Zuckerman (2014) are all evident within Sanford Health’s strategic vision. The journey towards becoming a highly reliable organization places Sanford Health at the forefront of safe, high-quality, and cost-effective care delivery. Sanford Health has only just begun the execution process of its strategic vision, however, if the current trajectory continues, the literature supports that Sanford Health is well on its way towards successful implementations as well as sustainability in its strategic vision.

**Personal Experiences with Healthcare Strategic Planning**

Our group has a wealth of experience with the differing levels of strategic planning, with roles in nursing leadership, education, travel nursing, and floor nursing. This amounts to a diverse understanding of the strategic process and differing levels of involvement with the strategic planning process. One salient example of strategic planning in action is the current changes undergone by Sanford Health in Bismarck, North Dakota, The organizations is undertaking a massive shift in not only care delivery but also care expansion. The organization is working towards becoming a highly reliable organization while also expanding its current services in the Bismarck area by building a new heart hospital, expanding surgical services, and implementing a surgical ICU. Becoming a highly reliable organization is an organization that utilizes system thinking and imbeds safety strategies into every facet of the organizational culture with the ultimate goal being to ensure zero preventable harms occur to both patients and staff within the organization.

**Role of Complex Adaptive Systems in Successful Strategic Planning**

The use of complex adaptive systems is an important aspect of successful strategic planning since health care is not stagnant or linear (Roussel et al., 2020). Complex adaptive systems recognize how different agents within a system come together and organize, reconstruct, and then modify their schemata (Vogelsand, 2002). The continual environmental scanning needed for complex adaptive systems and strategic planning requires that nursing leadership adapt with the change to remain viable in the evolving healthcare world (Roussel et al., 2020). Strategic planning and complex adaptive systems both rely heavily on communication for their success and require that the relationships be defined, along with requiring engagement from stakeholders (Roussel et al., 2020). The fostering of relationships provides a shift of emphasis from strict information gathering to the organic self-organization of both internal and external stakeholders to build resiliency. Furthermore, both strategic planning and complex adaptive systems require members to use mindfulness while making value and mission-based decisions (Vogelsand, 2002).

**Strategic Supportive Process**

Systems thinking, shared governance, and informatics support strategic planning. Systems thinking requires that nurse leaders think beyond the immediate surrounding to envision how internal and external factors influence the outcomes. This systemic analysis of the interrelationships and patterns helps organizations to move into creative and effective solutions (Roussel et al., 2020). Strategic planning requires systemic thinking with an appreciative inquiry through discovery, dream, design, and destiny. By understanding the diverse viewpoints of the different stakeholders, leaders can see how a facility is performing currently and foresee future projects. Systems thinking and strategic planning require ongoing analysis and adjustments (Roussel et al., 2020). A successful strategic plan requires that the information is distributed and understood at each level of the organization. Shared governance is a culture in which knowledge is communicated from smaller groups (councils) to the larger organization. The focus on communication allows staff members to have their voices heard and highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement and participation (Roussel et al., 2020). Finally, informatics is a key part of a strategic plan since it allows for historical and real-time patient information to be gathered and analyzed. Informatics helps to improve patient outcomes, identify systemic problems, and provide a communication platform, all of which are key factors within strategic planning (Roussel et al., 2020).

**Strategic Planning Challenges, Barriers, and Opportunities**

Strategic planning is not without its challenges, barriers, and opportunities. An important challenge in the beginning of the strategic process is developing the committee. Finding expert members who are able to contribute and represent the breadth of an organization can be a daunting task. Typically, the strategic planning committee is between seven and 16 members. Additionally, if the strategic plan doesn’t have a consensus and understanding of the core values, mission, and vision of the facility, then a strategic plan will not be successful since it relies heavily upon the development of its purpose (Roussel et al., 2020).

Stakeholder input and staff engagement are needed for a strategic plan to be successful. Without this engagement, the strategic plan will never meet fruition. This barrier can be overcome through the active participation of stakeholders from the senior leadership down to the units and departments. A strategic plan requires a commitment from all members of an organization since it may require the changing of structure, process, and/or systems (Roussel et al., 2020).

The development of a strategic plan provides unique opportunities for organizations. Thinking beyond just the immediate needs provides the opportunity to expand and be competitive. By performing gap analyses the organization can identify where current practice is suboptimal and provide strategies to overcome them. The strategic plan also allows for nurse leaders to advocate for resources and provide input into future goals (Roussel et al., 2020).

**Conclusion**

The concept of strategic planning is intended to stimulate, motivate, and join employees to bring valuable contributions to the organization and the future. An annotated bibliography brings together articles related to this concept and presents a discussion including a case study. Strategic planning is an essential factor in health care organizations to uphold the highest quality of care for their patients while being fiscally responsible so that the future of health care can grow and be sustainable.

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