IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING GOALS

Goals list the long-term, strategic priorities of the organization, and should be implemented in order of priority.

Whenever Allah's Apostle was given the choice of one of two matters, he would choose the easier of the two, as long as it was not sinful to do so, but if it was sinful to do so, he would not approach it.

(Narrated by Aisha[1])

Once the SPC has crafted your organization's vision and mission statement, it needs to return to the SWOT analysis to identify those goals or strategic priorities that will add the most value. In general, goals:

1. List the priority areas on which the organization wishes to focus its attention and resources,
2. Are long-term oriented, and
3. Should be implemented in order of priority.

Outlining Goals

For outlining goals, use worksheet #11 (Appendix A, p. 174). A basic rule is that the SPC should attempt to match the most attractive open opportunity to the most powerful strength or competency controlled by the organization. However, as pointed out earlier, an organization cannot always take advantage of the most promising opportunity[2] if it lacks the competency or internal discipline necessary to pursue it.

Another problem that may arise during the goal selection process is that emotions may hijack the choice and ranking of strategic priorities. Organizations are *boundedly rational*,[3] and therefore are likely to choose the first goals that meet minimum criteria and upon which everyone can agree. In contrast, Thomas Edison, the inventor of the electric light bulb, initially came up with several dozen filaments for his bulb. He proceeded to test them to find out which one, given certain criteria, would work the best. But he did not stop at the first filament that worked; rather, he selected the one that best met his criteria. Similarly, stopping at the first agreed-upon goal may be dysfunctional if additional potential goals are not searched for and examined within the time allocated for this stage of strategy formulation. In a worst-case scenario, the SPC may succumb to groupthink and give credence to only those goals proposed by the leader or a very charismatic SPC member.

One of the better ways to resolve such a distortion is to gauge the relative impact of implementing each goal and then choose a selective set of goals based on the Pareto Rule. Briefly stated, the Pareto Rule states that 20 percent of the causes are responsible for 80 percent of the effects associated with any problem. Hence, choosing and implementing the top four goals from a potential set of 20 may achieve 80 percent of the organization's strategic plan.

To help select the top four goals in a relatively conflict-free manner, you could ask the SPC to use the green dot balloting process mentioned in chapter 3. Have each participant announce his/her top two goals and then go around the room until you have written down on an easel pad a list of unique, non-duplicated goals (each goal being identified by a letter, as shown in exhibit A). Next, distribute a fixed number of green dots to each participant using the 1/5 ratio (i.e., if there are 20 goals listed, give each participant 4 dots). Ask them to allocate the dots among the goals and write the letter(s) associated with the "most important" goal on the dot. Thus, if goal E is considered most important, it may receive 3 dots; if goal A is considered the next most important, it may receive 1 dot; and the other goals would receive no dots at all. Ask participants to stick their green dot(s) on the easel pad next to the goals they chose. The resulting ballot should look similar to exhibit A, and a quick visual count should tell you the goals' order of priority.

According to the Pareto Rule, addressing 20 percent of the causes may take care of 80 percent of the effects associated with any problem.

Illustration Capsule 4

Examples of Goals

IMRC's Goals

- To provide health care to Indians in general, and to Indian Muslims in particular.

Ameen Housing Co-op

- Foster Islamic investment practices which benefit economic, religious and social aspects of a member's life and the Muslim community at-large.

- Help members purchase homes with an interest-free alternative to the society's demands.

- Assist in establishing Muslim Communities across North America.

Muslim Community Association of San Francisco Bay Area

- To live and share our faith with all of God's people.

- To teach Islamic beliefs and values in the context of deepening spirituality and community involvement.

- To inspire leaders for stewardship in community service.

- To make our Mosques vital centers for worship and community needs.

- To empower the community to lead an Islamic way of life.