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**Escaping Tunnel Vision:
Wider Horizons in Strategic Planning**

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It was one of those marvelous spring mornings — blue skies, sunshine, cool breezes. The invitation to escape to the out-of-doors became irresistible and I soon found myself strolling through an old apple orchard not far from home. Although the trees were weathered and gnarled, their branches were covered that morning with delicate blossoms, aroma wafting through the air.

It was there in that orchard that I spotted it — a meandering ridge of grass, sure evidence of a mole's underground network of tunnels. In fact, the little creature was at work, just under the surface, prodding along a slowly advancing hump of grass.

Abruptly, and rather atypically, the grass parted and a small, dusty head popped into view. The little creature looked around, blinked, and then disappeared back into its tunnel — as suddenly as it had emerged.

I stood there, looking at that small, ragged hole in the grass. *You poor little mole. There you are — creeping through dark, dismal tunnels, bumping into rocks and roots — when here, just above you, a wonderful world awaits you. A world of sunshine and breezes, of color and fragrance, of new horizons and opportunities.*

The Classical View

Over the past few decades, a dominant approach to strategic planning seems to have emerged. This perspective maintains that success is almost never the mere result of chance (Crossan, Lane, White & Klus, 1995). Rather, it results from careful planning. This, of course, makes sense, both intuitively and experientially. Design is ultimately more effective than chaos in helping us reach desirable outcomes.

Based on this premise, strategic planning poses certain fundamental questions, such as the following: Where is the organization headed? Why are we going there? How will we get there? How will we evaluate how close we have come? These questions, of course, are useful. They help clarify our mission, our *raison d'être*, our methodology, and our assessments.

In the classical approach to strategic planning, there are certain core concepts. One of these is that ends determine means (Rouse, 1998). This is reasonable. We

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must decide where we will go, before we can decide how we will get there. We must agree on desirable ends (outcomes, products, and attainments) before we can ever hope to define the means (procedures, vehicles, and resources) by which we will achieve those ends. In education, for example, desirable ends might include good final grades, program completion, and employment for the graduate. Means to these ends could include personnel, facilities, and funding, as well as teaching models, curricular materials, and leadership style.

A second core component of strategic planning is the concept that there must be a progression of ends. In essence, macroplanning must precede microplanning. Or to state it another way, planning at the unit or program level must be derived from planning at the institutional or organizational level. This is also sensible, otherwise departments and programs start to scatter in a swarm of often contradictory directions, rather than pulling together toward an overarching purpose, a shared destiny. Consequently, the classical cycle for organizational improvement (see Figure 1) begins with mission clarification (Caruthers & Lott, 1981; Jones, 1996).

Figure 1. Cycle for organizational improvement



The bottom line is that this traditional approach to strategic planning is reasonable and useful, clearly much better than haphazard planning or no planning at all. But the classical approach is also limited and confining. What is needed is a broader view, a wider horizon.

The Wider View

It all begins with an ideal vision — a panoramic perspective, a megadream (Belgard, Fisher & Rayner, 1988; Hopkins, 1986; Ozbekhan, 1969; Ries, 1996). As Martin Luther King declared, "I have a dream..." Or as Walt Disney maintained, "If you can dream it, you can do it." This dream is a vision of the world that we wish to create, of the future that we wish to build for the children of tomorrow (Kaufman & Watkins, 1999). But before we can create that future, we must *identify* it, *define* it, and *plan* for it.

To be useful, this ideal vision must point to the future (Barna, 1992; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Collins & Porras, 1997), without tying itself down with negative thinking about the past or present. It must communicate hope, energy, and destiny, rather than discouragement, distrust, or desperation. It must portray a clear set of desirable conditions (Maznevski, Rush & White, 1993), expressed in terms that are at least observable, if not measurable.

But isn't this concept of an ideal vision, too idealistic (Hendricks & Ludeman, 1996), too far removed from reality? Well, if you don't hope to be drawing ever closer to the ideal, where are you headed? In essence, we must propose the ideal so that we will know the *direction* in which to move, as well as to determine our *progress* toward that desirable future (Albrecht, 1994; Mapes, 1991).

In this wider view of strategic planning, we use the ideal vision, the shared dream, as a "North Star" to guide the entire planning process (Kaufman, Herman & Watters, 1996). If we stop to think about it, the ideal vision is simply an expression of our most cherished values, of our most deeply held beliefs. It is, in essence, the type of world that we, along with others, wish to create.

Beyond MacroPlanning

From this concept of an ideal vision emerges a new dimension, a new layer in strategic planning. Megapanning, in fact, focuses on the question: What type of future society do we wish to help create? It has to do primarily with finding direction — where should we be headed, and why do we want to go there

(Kaufman, 1997, 2000b; Kaufman & Lick, 2000; Nanus, 1992; Watkins & Kaufman, 1999).

Frequently, we engage in educational planning at the microlevel, endeavoring to ensure that learners have grasped knowledge, mastered skills, and internalized attitudes and values. Consequently, we develop lessons, units, and even entire subjects, along with activities, materials, assignments, and examinations — all geared to this end. The focus on individual competency is, of course, important. But of what lasting value is it to pass a course, if this does not ultimately contribute to success in life?

At times, we broaden our horizons a bit and engage in planning at the organizational level, the macrolevel, seeking to provide quality assurance for our product, the graduate in this case. Here, in fact, is where we typically begin strategic planning. We hope to achieve measurable results, such as diplomas, certificates, awards, and high ratings on national or regional examinations, as well as graduates that find employment or enter higher educational levels. All of this, in an endeavor to ensure that the school is recognized as an effective educational institution, thus contributing toward its long-term survival. One must ask, however, whether the institution's survival, as important as this may be, is of paramount importance. Or could there be a greater, all-encompassing dimension to which the organization itself must contribute?

Megapanning proposed that this dimension is the societal level, which must be the starting point for a more comprehensive approach to strategic planning. This perspective, in fact, takes society itself — rather than the school, teacher, parent or student—as the primary client, the primary beneficiary of the educational system. Megapanning thus commits the educational system to participate in creating the ideal world of the future. It seeks to achieve this dream through alumni who are self-sufficient, productive, and ethical, contributing positively to their community, their nation, and the entire world.

In essence, megapanning at the societal level must come first. Only then can we engage in macroplanning at the organizational level, and subsequently in microplanning at the program level. And only after we have defined desirable outcomes at each of these three levels, can we define the processes and resources that will be required to reach those ends (Kaufman et al., 1996). It should be noted, however, that mega-, macro-, and microplanning must be closely linked. Strategic planning, as a whole, will not be effective if planning that occurs at these three

levels is disjointed or merely overlapping. Rather, the mega-, macro-, and microlevels must be synergistically nested — interrelated and integrated.

Formulating the Vision

So how does one go about identifying and defining an ideal vision? Strategic planning itself cannot take place within a cubicle, the design of a single individual. How much more the megaview, the creation of an ideal vision. Rather, strategic planning partners must be invited to participate in formulating the vision (Fogg, 1994; Quigley, 1993; Van Der Heijden, 1993). In an educational system, this should include all sectors that have a vested interest in the educational process, and should be representative of the constituency in terms of demographics, including the learners themselves (Newberry, 1992). It is also helpful to locate and include both key communicators and influential molders of opinion.

Once the planning partners have gathered, brainstorm. What world do we really want? Be sure to focus ideas at the societal level, rather than merely at the organizational or program levels. If elements are proposed that are not at the megalevel, ask, "If we were to obtain this result, what contribution would it make to the society?" (Kaufman et al., 1996). Then incorporate the megaconcept. Sometimes, there is also a tendency to get caught up in defining means, whether processes or resources, rather than targeting ends. When this happens, you might ask, "If we successfully utilize this means, what will result?" Those societal ends might include no suicides, no deaths from substance abuse, positions of civic responsibility held in the community, and the like.

There are two issues, however, that we should address. The first is the issue of reality. In formulating the ideal vision, we must be careful not to dwell on whether something is feasible or not (Sashkin, 1995). If we do, we will soon limit ourselves to that which we are already achieving or that which we know that we can quite easily achieve. Rather, we must propose the ideal in order to define the direction wherein we should head, as well as to assess our progress toward that ideal and determine what is working and what isn't.

The second issue is that of rivalry. A vision must focus on the ideal, not simply on being better than others (Kaufman et al., 1996). Thus, an ideal vision should avoid statements that aim at obtaining the top place in a certain competition, better results than another institution on the national exam, or fewer dropouts than other schools in the region. These targets are relative and shortsighted. Our world

is a global community and a shared destiny and appeals to be simply better competitors than others are insufficient.

What might an ideal vision look like? Although statements of ideal vision may vary, depending on the philosophy and control beliefs of an institution or educational system, an ideal vision might be something like this:

Figure 2. Statement of ideal vision for an educational institution

Citizens of our nation will be productive, approaching their work with skill and innovation. They will be loyal to our country, committed to the principles of democracy, and participate thoughtfully in the democratic process. Their lives will evidence ethical behavior, as well as tolerance and respect for those from different ethnic, cultural, religious backgrounds. They will form caring, supportive communities that value each member of the society. These citizens will be lifelong learners, who in turn share their learning with others.

In essence, as you seek to develop an ideal vision for your organization, ask yourself: Who are our primary clients? These may be the local community, a religious denomination, a state or province, the nation, or the entire world. Then ask the second question: What future society do we want for them?

It should be noted that the institution or educational system cannot, by itself, achieve all aspects of the ideal vision (Kaufman et al., 1996). In some cases, it may have a direct responsibility. In others, there may be a shared responsibility, along with business, church, government, or other social entities. The point, however, is simply this: If the organization is not contributing toward the attainment of the ideal vision, then that organization is most probably superfluous, and the time, energy, and resources invested in sustaining it are pointless, needless, and wasted.

And Now?

We have identified and declared our ideal vision of the future. What now? Based on this ideal vision, we will propose strategic goals (Oster, 1991) at the macro and microlevels that will bring our reality ever closer to the ideal. Some of the microoutcomes may be visible by the conclusion of a course, or at the end of a year. Macroproducts may be evidenced after several years, at the end of a

program of studies, for example. Megacontributions at the societal level may begin to be seen after five or ten years. The ideal vision? We hope to be significantly, observably, and measurably closer, perhaps in fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years (Kaufman et al., 1996).

To complement our ideal vision, we will conduct a needs assessment in order to identify and document any discrepancy between what is and what should be, with a view to generating interventions. Furthermore, there will be an ongoing evaluation process that will compare the achievement of the system and its various components with the targeted ends, for the purpose of continual quality improvement (Kaufman, 1996; Kaufman & Swart, 1995; Watkins, 2001; Watkins, Leigh, Foshay & Kaufman, 1998).

We take the needs assessment process to briefly illustrate how this might take place. A need is defined as a difference that we find when we compare the current status with our concept of desirable results. Note that a need is a discrepancy in results, not merely in resources or procedures. This comparison then, of the "is" and the "ought," occurs at all three levels — societal, organizational, and unit/program (Kaufman & Watkins, 1996).

At the megalevel, it is an external needs assessment (Kaufman & Watkins, 1999; Leigh, Watkins, Platt & Kaufman, 2000; Watkins, Leigh & Kaufman, 1998), comparing current and desired conditions, perhaps of employer satisfaction, ethical conduct of the alumnus, or civic responsibilities held. At the macro- and microlevels, it is predominantly an internal assessment. In terms of organizational product, one might compare current and desired conditions in terms of the ratio of dropouts to graduates, acceptances to higher educational levels, or professional licenses obtained. At the department or program level, there might be an assessment of current and desired conditions in terms of grades obtained, proportion of absences to class, and achievement on standardized tests.

The point, however, is that there must be direct connections between the needs identified, documented, and agreed upon at the mega-, macro-, and microlevels (Kaufman, 2000a). Satisfying needs identified in terms of outcomes at the program level must contribute to the satisfaction of needs at the organizational level, and ultimately at the societal level. In sum, internal and external needs assessments must be linked (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Multilevel needs assessment matrix

Type of Results	What Is	What Should Be
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Contributions (Megalevel)		
Products (Macrolevel)		
Outcomes (Microlevel)		

Fitting It Together

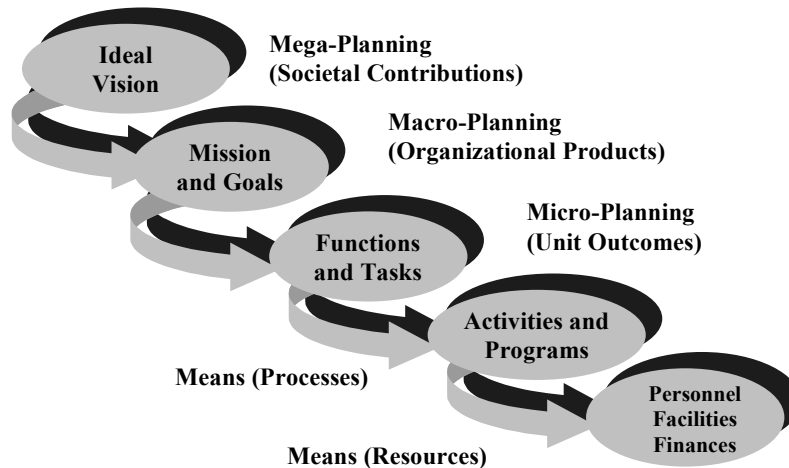
How do all these concepts fit together? First of all, there is a progression, from megapanning at the societal level, to organizational macroplanning, and ultimately to microplanning at the unit or program level. To state it another way, it is the ideal vision (finding direction) that defines the mission and goals of an organization (achieving direction), which in turn leads to the attainment of excellence through quality management.

Notice that in this expanded view of strategic planning, mission is based on vision (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Relationship of ends and means in strategic planning

An organization's mission statement is thus that portion of the ideal vision that the educational institution or system commits itself to contribute to the larger society (Kaufman et al., 1996).

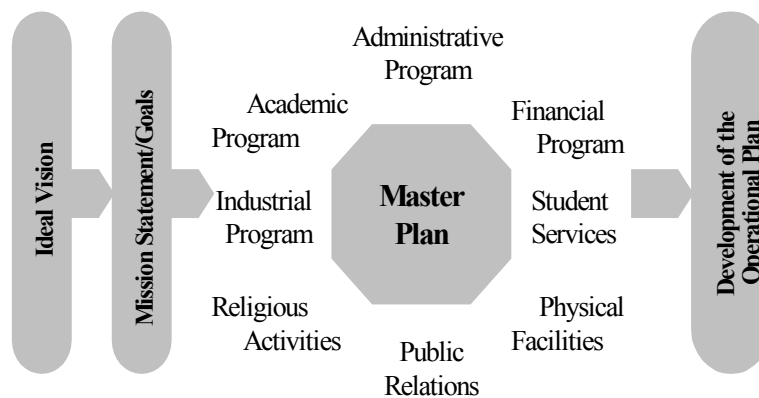
The expanded view of strategic planning also changes the way we approach



both institutional planning and total quality management (TQM). In institutional planning, for example, the entire process flows from the ideal vision. The annual operational plan is derived from the institutional master plan, which in turn is driven by the institutional mission and goals, which are anchored in the ideal vision (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Institutional planning - from ideal vision to operational plan

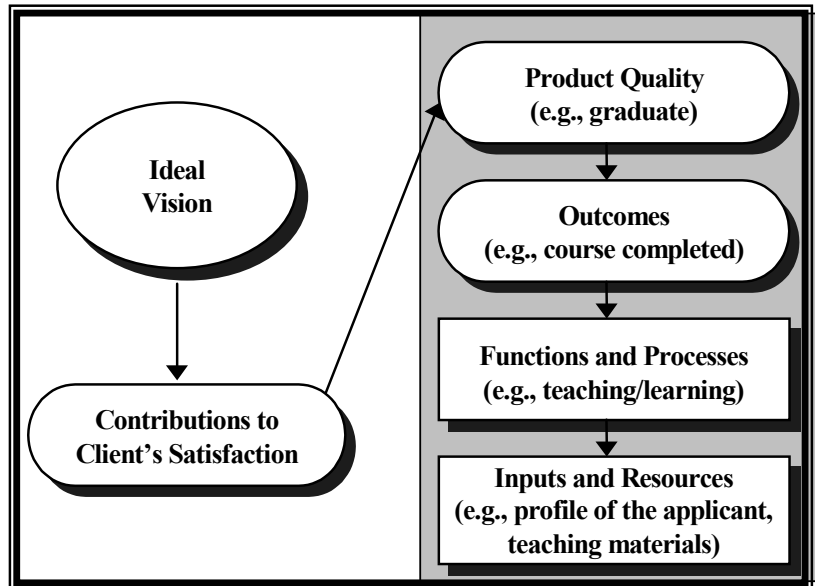
A similar change takes place in total quality management, where we take an outside-in approach, rather than insideout (Kaufman et al., 1996). Again, it is the ideal vision that defines our contributions to total client satisfaction, which in turn determines the product that the organization will offer (see Figure 6). We should



note, however, that the ideal vision adds an ethical dimension to client satisfaction. It is not enough to simply make the client happy at the moment; we must also do what is ethical, that which contributes to ultimate satisfaction at the societal level. Moving students along efficiently to a subsequent grade level, for example, without having mastered basic skills, may make parents and students happy, at least for the short term, but is not socially responsible. In essence, doing what is correct is more important than merely doing things correctly. Social effectiveness, hence, is ultimately more important than internal efficiency.

Figure 6. Total quality management - outside in

Changing Paradigms



By taking the wider societal view, we have changed the way we approach strategic planning (Householder, 1993). Beyond being proactive at the organizational level, we must be forward thinking in envisioning the ideal world of the future. Beyond systematic, we must be systemic, setting the organization within the larger society. In essence, this expanded view of strategic planning is a long-range perspective (Morrisey, 1996) that defines and seeks to achieve an ideal vision of the future that we truly desire, before setting out to evaluate present and future realities and opportunities. It is a plan for total client satisfaction *and* ethical responsibility, with society as the primary client.

There are three crucial factors required for this to happen. First, we must break out from our "comfort zones" (Kaufman, 2000a) and use new and broader paradigms to think, plan, act, and evaluate. In essence, we must focus on the megalevel. Second, we must utilize this ideal vision of the future as the basis for all subsequent planning. Finally, we must make sure that we link all three levels involved in the strategic planning — societal contributions, organizational products, and program outcomes.

As planners, this implies that we must change the way that we think about strategic planning (Hendry, Johnson & Newton, 1993; Kaufman, Stith, Triner & Watkins, 1998; Kaufman, Watkins, Triner & Stith, 1998; Lick & Kaufman, 2000). As educators, it implies that we must change our educational paradigm (Barker, 1992 & 1993; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Dolence & Norris, 1995; Kaufman, 1997).

Some traditional paradigms may need to be abandoned: that all learning takes place in the school, that teachers are the primary agents of education, that the curriculum is defined by the textbook, that more time in class will result in better learning, that more money, much more, is required to achieve desired results. There may need to be a shift toward new paradigms: from mastering content to success in life; from correct behavior to ethical attitudes and motives; from increasing efficiency to attaining effectiveness — in essence, obtaining quality results that contribute to the well-being of the larger society. We must create a new vision of the educational institution as a subsystem of the wider world, one that returns the human resource with added value.

To succeed, then, we must first *define* the world that we want to help create. Then we must *align* everything we do, use, and produce with that ideal. As the environmentalists say, we must think globally and act locally. To create this better future, however, requires change. It requires an escape from tunnel thinking. The challenge is to create the future, not merely mourn the past. Remember, if we don't create the future, someone else will.

So what can we expect in education as a result of vision-oriented strategic planning? We expect learners that will enthusiastically accomplish academic work that they view as useful for their lives. We expect schools that will be places of community, of joy and challenge, both for students and teachers. We expect a curriculum that views learning as something that extends beyond the walls of the classroom. We expect graduates who take control of their lives, engage in lifelong learning, and make positive contributions to society. We expect an educational system successful in creating a brighter tomorrow.

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