Hi, I am Scott Regan the founder and chief execution officer of AchieveIt, and today we are going to talk about non-profit strategic planning. There is this belief that non-profit organizations approach strategic planning differently than for-profit organizations. That belief is wrong. Strategic planning is strategic planning; the methodology is the same, and the processes are the same. We may not use all the same tools or have the same type of quantitative research, but we go through the same process in a scaled-down approach, depending on the size of the organization.

There are different sizes of non-profits: we have big non-profit hospitals that are $1 billion and $2 billion organizations, and then we have your local Red Cross or the local United Way, which are much smaller. In this video, we are addressing those smaller non-profit organizations. However, regardless of whether you are big, small, non-profit, or for-profit, you will go through what we call the execution flywheel methodology – the six-stage process used to develop a great strategic plan. How you approach each phase as a small non-profit may be a bit different.

The first stage is focus. This is where we look at the future and set our vision for where you want to be in four, five, six years from now. During this phase, we gain consensus, buy into what the future looks like, and make strategic decisions about where we want to be. The big difference between small non-profits and a larger organization is that big companies usually devote a lot of time and energy to data analytics. These organizations have access to more market intelligence, whereas a smaller non-profit is probably more likely to base strategy on gut instinct than data analysis. Nonetheless, you are still going to collect data through things like a basic SWOT analysis and interviewing key stakeholders in the organization about future needs.

Once we have that information, we go to phase two: Plan. This is where we take our market information and put it into a strategic plan with goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics. During the align phase, we take everything in the plan and cascade it to people in our organization. As a smaller non-profit, you may not have a big plan, but it’s important that everything in the plan is assigned to somebody. Those assignments will have due dates, so you can continue to make progress toward your targets. This is phase three: Align.

Then we will do some forecasting – which is phase four – and figure out what it is going to take in terms of resource allocation to complete the plan. We ask questions like, “How is this going to impact our annual operating budget? Our capital budgets? Do we need to invest a little more money in volunteerism? On opening new services to meet the needs of our clients?” By answering these questions, we figure out how the forecasting impacts our budget process and our ability to raise additional philanthropy.

Once we finish in the forecast phase, we move into execution, which is the monitor phase, or phase five. This is where we execute the plan and monitor results – phase six. If we are not getting the results we want, we ask, “Why not? Did we have the wrong strategies and tactics? Did we not execute well?”

We continually report back to our stakeholders on our results, and get additional feedback, which takes us back into the focus phase. We are constantly evolving through this process in order to understand where our organization needs to go to deliver the services that are required in our community. It is the same process that for-profit organizations use, but a little more robust at the for-profit level than you may go through at a smaller non-profit level.

If you follow the execution flywheel – focus, plan, align, forecast, monitor, and report – you are going to get very good, reliable results that will help you accelerate the growth of your non-profit organization.

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