

Module 2. Building the strategic planning team

Building a strategic planning team is relevant for sports organizations that want to create and implement effective strategies for achieving their goals and objectives. To achieve that, it is necessary to construct a great team.

This module aims to equip you with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop effective strategic plans that drive organizational success. The first step in strategic planning is to assemble a team of individuals who possess the necessary expertise and skills to develop robust and actionable plans. This section emphasizes the importance of understanding the organization's goals, values, and future aspirations.

The involvement of the board and directors in strategic planning is crucial for guiding the organization's long-term strategy. This section explores the tasks and responsibilities of the board, including approving the strategy, monitoring progress, and initiating the planning process.

Effective communication is essential for achieving the goals and objectives of sports organizations. We will discuss the importance of clarity, alignment, collaboration, informed decision-making, and successful implementation of strategic initiatives. Then comes the section about team dynamics and decision-making in strategic planning where it highlights the impact of team dynamics on collaboration, synergy, and decision quality.

Unit 2.1 Great things in business are never done by one person

In 1990, during an interview with PBS, Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple Inc. said: "Great things in business are never done by one person. They're done by a team of people" (2003, cited in Griggs, 2016, para. 12). This quote emphasizes the importance of teamwork and collaboration in achieving great things. It suggests that no matter how talented or capable an individual may be, it takes a group of people working together to achieve truly remarkable results. By acknowledging the value of teamwork, this quote encourages leaders to focus on building strong teams and fostering a culture of collaboration and cooperation.

To create a strong strategic planning team, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of the company's goals, values, and future aspirations. Paul Polman and



Andrew Winston (2021) mention that companies need to bring together a cross-functional team of experts who can work collaboratively to identify opportunities for creating shared value.

Their book emphasizes the importance of adopting a long-term perspective and considering the broader societal and environmental impacts of business operations. It promotes the idea of businesses going beyond traditional notions of corporate social responsibility and instead striving to have a net positive impact on society. This mindset aligns with the goals of strategic planning, as it encourages organizations to think beyond short-term gains and consider how their strategies can contribute to sustainable growth and value creation. By incorporating the principles and concepts presented in the book, a strategic planning team can develop strategies that not only benefit the organization, but also address societal and environmental challenges, enhancing the team's ability to create meaningful and impactful plans.

Net Positive offers a compelling framework for organizations to create a strong strategic planning team. By incorporating the principles of long-term thinking, courageous leadership, and stakeholder collaboration, the book provides guidance on how organizations can develop strategies that go beyond financial success and contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive future. Integrating these principles into the strategic planning process can empower teams to think strategically, make bold decisions, and create value for all stakeholders, driving the organization towards long-term success.

A strategic planning team can help a company to be more proactive, agile, and effective in achieving its goals and objectives.

Here are some guidelines to help you establish a strategic planning team:

- **Define the purpose and objectives of the team:** Determine what the team is expected to achieve, and what specific areas of the business it will focus on.
- **Identify the Key Players:** Identify the individuals who will be involved in the strategic planning process. This may include executives, department heads, and other key stakeholders.
- **Develop the Team Structure:** Determine the team's structure, including the number of members, roles, and responsibilities. The team should have a mix of skills and expertise, including strategic thinking, financial analysis, and project management.
- **Establish a Timeline:** Create a timeline for the strategic planning process, including key milestones and deadlines.



- **Establish Communication and Collaboration Protocols:** Establish communication and collaboration protocols for the team, including regular meetings, status updates, and feedback mechanisms.

- **Develop the Strategic Plan:** The team should work together to develop the strategic plan, which should include a mission statement, vision statement, goals, and objectives.

- **Monitor and Evaluate Progress:** Once the strategic plan is developed, the team should monitor and evaluate progress regularly. This involves tracking metrics, identifying areas of improvement, and adjusting the plan as needed.

Figure 1: Guidelines to help you establish a strategic planning team

GUIDELINES TO HELP YOU ESTABLISH A STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM	
Define the purpose and objectives of the team	Determine what the team is expected to achieve, and what specific areas of the business it will focus on.
Identify the Key Players	Identify the individuals who will be involved in the strategic planning process.
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Establish a Timeline	Create a timeline for the strategic planning process, including key milestones and deadlines.
Communication & Collaboration Protocols	Establish communication and collaboration protocols for the team, including regular meetings, status updates, and feedback mechanisms.
Develop the Strategic Plan	The team should work together to develop the strategic plan, which should include a mission statement, vision statement, goals, and objectives.
Monitor and Evaluate Progress	Once the strategic plan is developed, the team should monitor and evaluate progress regularly.



Source: Own source.

Unit 2.2 Selecting the team

Selecting the right people for a strategic planning team is crucial for bringing diverse perspectives, possessing strong skill sets, effective communication, collaboration, and long-term vision, all essential for developing successful strategic plans that help the company achieve its goals.

Richard Rumelt (2011) states that the strategic planning team should include individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise who can bring different perspectives to the problem at hand.



Good Strategy Bad Strategy offers a framework for distinguishing between genuine strategic thinking and mere wishful thinking or superficial goal setting. By understanding the principles outlined in the book, organizations can identify team members who possess the necessary strategic acumen to develop robust and actionable plans.

The book gives valuable insights that can inform the process of selecting a strategic planning team. By understanding the principles of good strategy, diagnosing the organization's challenges, focusing on action and resource allocation, and considering leadership capabilities, organizations can assemble a team that is equipped to develop and execute effective strategies. Incorporating the concepts from the book into the team selection process can enhance the likelihood of creating a strategic planning team that is capable of driving organizational success.

Here are some steps you can follow to ensure you select the right people:

- **Look for diverse perspectives:** Seek out individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This will bring a range of ideas and viewpoints to the team.
- **Consider the team dynamic:** Think about how the team will work together and how their personalities and work styles will complement each other. Look for collaborative, open-minded individuals who can work well in a team environment.
- **Look for leadership potential:** Select individuals who have leadership potential and can help drive the team forward. They should be able to motivate and inspire others to achieve the team's objectives.
- **Evaluate past performance:** Look at the candidate's past performance and track record. Have they demonstrated success in similar roles or projects? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- **Conduct interviews:** Conduct interviews with the candidates to evaluate their fit for the team. Ask questions that assess their skills, experience, and ability to work in a team environment.
- **Use objective criteria:** Use objective criteria to evaluate the candidates, such as their education, certifications, and relevant experience. Avoid making subjective judgments based on personal preferences or biases.

Unit 2.3 Select the Project Leader

A project leader plays a crucial role in establishing direction, promoting accountability, facilitating communication, managing risks, and providing leadership to the team. The absence of a project leader can result in a lack of direction, communication, and



leadership, adversely affecting the project's success. McChesney, Covey and Huling (2012) say that effective leaders are those who can align the objectives and principles of the organization with the individual goals and values of their team members, fostering a shared sense of responsibility and dedication towards the organization's triumph.

While the profile and responsibilities of a project leader may vary based on the organization and project, here are some recommendations on the profile:

- **Leadership skills:** A project leader should have strong leadership skills and be able to inspire and motivate the team to achieve their goals.
- **Project management skills:** A project leader should have experience in project management and be able to manage the project timeline, budget, and resources effectively.
- **Communication skills:** A project leader should have strong communication skills to effectively communicate with the team, stakeholders, and other project members.
- **Technical expertise:** Depending on the project, a project leader should have the technical expertise to guide the team and make informed decisions.
- **Problem-solving skills:** A project leader should be able to identify and solve problems that arise during the project.

The next figure shows the Project Leader's responsibilities.

Figure 2: Responsibilities of the Project Leader

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROJECT LEADER	
Planning	The individual in charge of the project develops the project plan, which includes defining the project scope, timeline, budget, and necessary resources.
Team management	The person overseeing the project ensures effective management of the project team, guaranteeing that each team member fulfills their assigned tasks.
Communication	The designated person facilitates communication among the team, stakeholders, and other project members, providing updates on the project's status, progress, and any identified issues or risks.
Risk management	The designated person identifies and handles potential risks associated with the project.
Quality control	The person overseeing the project ensures that the project meets the predetermined quality standards and objectives.
Project reporting	Regular reports on the project status and progress are provided to stakeholders and project sponsors by the assigned person.



Source: Own source.



Believe me, choosing the Project Leader and ensuring the Project Leader will have the time necessary for the project are key. It is not something anecdotal, it is strategic and deserves the right attention.

Examples of team members

To make it even more concrete, let me share with you some examples of team members in the next table.

Table 1: Examples of team members

Role	Description
Team Leader	The team leader leads the strategic planning team and ensures the team achieves its objectives.
Financial Analyst	The financial analyst analyses financial data, and identifies financial trends and opportunities.
Marketing Expert	The marketing expert analyses market trends, identifies target markets, and develops marketing strategies.
Operations Expert	The operations manager ensures the organization's operational processes are efficient and effective.
Human Resources Expert	The human resources manager ensures the organization has the right people with the right skills to achieve its objectives.
IT Specialist	The IT specialist identifies and implements technology solutions to support the organization's objectives.
Project Manager	The project manager manages specific projects and ensures their alignment with the organization's strategic objectives.
Research Analyst	The research analyst conducts research on industry trends, competitors, and other factors that may impact the organization's strategic plan.



Risk Expert	The risk manager identifies potential risks and develops strategies to mitigate them.
Legal Counsel	The legal counsel ensures the organization's activities comply with legal and regulatory requirements.
Sport roles	In the case of sports organizations, you may want to involve the sports department, from high performance to mass participation depending on the needs.

Source: Own source.

These roles can be adjusted and combined depending on the specific needs and objectives of the organization. For example, in the case of big leagues, a Strategic Planning Committee can be created and could consist of team owners and executives who are responsible for developing long-term strategies and initiatives to help grow the league and improve the game.

Unit 2.4 The role of the board and directors in Strategic Planning

The primary responsibility of a board and its members is to provide guidance and assume accountability for the management of the organization. They play a crucial role in facilitating discussions and debates on various key strategic matters that shape the long-term business strategy.

It is essential for the board to ensure a comprehensive corporate and strategic plan is developed or reviewed each year, spanning at least three years, with a strong emphasis on thoroughness and discipline.

In the context of strategic planning, the board's tasks may include:

- Approving the developed strategy,
- Regularly monitoring progress against the strategic plan,
- Debating strategic issues,
- Guiding and initiating the strategic planning process,

- Designing and generating the strategic plan,
- Producing the strategic plan.

The extent of the board's involvement in strategic planning will primarily depend on the organizational management structure and available resources.

2.4.1 The role of directors

Since a strategic plan is crucial for the financial viability, effective management, and continuous improvement of an organization, directors have a vital role to play in deciding its strategic direction.

As a director, your responsibilities regarding strategic planning may involve:

- Participating in the development of strategies based on the organization's structure and available resources.
- Being responsible for implementing or supporting the management team in implementing the strategies
- Monitoring and evaluating the progress made in relation to the strategic plan.

Unit 2.5 Building effective communication within the team

Building effective communication within the strategic planning team is crucial for sports organizations, as it plays a significant role in achieving their goals and objectives. Effective communication ensures that everyone involved in the strategic planning process is on the same page, understands the organization's vision, and works towards a common purpose. It fosters collaboration, enhances decision-making, and successfully implements strategic initiatives. Let us delve into four key reasons why building effective communication within the strategic planning team is relevant in sports organizations.

- Effective communication promotes clarity and alignment: When all team members clearly understand the organization's strategic objectives, they can align their efforts accordingly. By communicating the vision, mission, and goals effectively, sports organizations can ensure that each member of the strategic planning team understands their role and responsibilities in achieving those objectives. For example, in the context of a football club, the strategic planning team needs to communicate the club's long-term goals, such as winning championships or building a successful youth academy, to all relevant stakeholders, including coaches, players, and staff members.



- Effective communication facilitates collaboration and teamwork: Sports organizations are complex entities that involve various departments, such as coaching, marketing, finance, and operations, working together towards a common goal. By fostering open and transparent communication within the strategic planning team, organizations can enhance collaboration between these departments. For instance, effective communication in a sports agency consultancy ensures that agents, scouts, and analysts share information and insights to identify promising talent, negotiate contracts, and provide comprehensive services to their clients.

- Effective communication enables informed decision-making: Strategic planning involves analysing data, evaluating options, and making informed choices to steer the organization towards success. By establishing effective communication channels, sports organizations can ensure that decision-makers have access to relevant information and insights. For example, in the context of a basketball team, effective communication within the strategic planning team enables coaches and management to share and discuss player performance data, injury updates, and scouting reports, leading to well-informed decisions about game strategies, player acquisitions, and roster management.

- Effective communication enhances the implementation of strategic initiatives: A well-crafted strategic plan is only effective if it is executed efficiently. By fostering effective communication within the strategic planning team, sports organizations can ensure that the plan is effectively communicated to all relevant stakeholders and that everyone understands their role in executing it. For instance, in the case of organizing a major sporting event, effective communication within the strategic planning team ensures that event logistics, marketing campaigns, ticket sales, and volunteer coordination are aligned, leading to a successful and well-executed event.

Building effective communication within the strategic planning team is crucial for sports organizations. It promotes clarity, alignment, collaboration, informed decision-making, and successful implementation of strategic initiatives. By ensuring that all team members are on the same page, understand the organization's vision, and work together towards common objectives, sports organizations can maximize their chances of achieving success both on and off the field.

Unit 2.6 Team dynamics and decision-making in Strategic Planning

Team dynamics and decision-making play a crucial role in the strategic planning team of sports organizations. The success of strategic planning relies not only on individual



capabilities, but also on how team members collaborate and work together. Positive team dynamics foster collaboration and synergy by allowing diverse expertise and perspectives to contribute to the development of comprehensive strategies. For example, a soccer club's strategic planning team may consist of individuals from coaching, analytics, and marketing backgrounds who can leverage their strengths and insights to address various aspects of the club's operations.

Effective team dynamics influence the quality of decision-making in the strategic planning process. Sports organizations need to consider multiple factors, such as market trends, financial implications, player performance, and fan engagement, when making strategic decisions. Through open discussions and healthy team dynamics, team members can bring different perspectives, challenge assumptions, and engage in constructive debates to make well-informed decisions. In a basketball franchise, the strategic planning team might have to decide whether to trade a player or invest in player development. By considering the implications from different angles, they can arrive at a decision that aligns with the organization's long-term goals.

Positive team dynamics within the strategic planning team contribute to a sense of shared ownership and accountability. When team members feel valued and included in the decision-making process, they are more likely to take ownership of the strategic initiatives. This shared responsibility fosters commitment and motivates individuals to contribute their best efforts towards the successful execution of the plan. For instance, in an Olympic committee, involving representatives from different sports disciplines in the decision-making process ensures that each sport is represented, increasing the overall commitment and dedication to achieving success at the Olympic Games.

Furthermore, effective team dynamics and decision-making promote adaptability and agility. Sports organizations operate in a dynamic environment where competition, technological advancements, and fan preferences constantly evolve. By fostering a culture of open communication, trust, and flexibility within the strategic planning team, organizations can respond swiftly to changes and adjust their strategies accordingly. This adaptability allows them to stay ahead of the curve and seize new opportunities. For example, a sports marketing agency's strategic planning team needs to be adaptable to changing media landscapes and consumer behaviours to develop effective marketing campaigns that resonate with the target audience.

Team dynamics and decision-making are essential for the success of the strategic planning process in sports organizations. Positive team dynamics enable organizations to leverage diverse expertise, leading to comprehensive strategies. Effective decision-making within the team ensures well-informed choices. Moreover, positive team dynamics create a sense of shared ownership, accountability, and adaptability, enabling sports organizations to execute their strategic plans successfully and navigate the ever-changing landscape of the sports industry.



Conclusion

Building a strong strategic planning team is vital for sports organizations to effectively achieve their goals and objectives. This calls for a focus on teamwork, collaboration, and clear communication. Understanding the company's goals and values is crucial in forming a cohesive team with a shared purpose.

Selecting the right individuals for the team is paramount, considering their diverse perspectives, strong skill sets, effective communication, collaboration, and long-term vision. The project leader plays a crucial role in providing direction, facilitating communication, and ensuring project success through their leadership skills and expertise in project management, communication, and problem-solving. Identifying key stakeholders is essential for effective management and decision-making, tailoring strategies and communication efforts to meet their needs and expectations.

Effective communication within the team is crucial, promoting clarity, alignment, collaboration, and informed decision-making. Positive team dynamics and decision-making processes are crucial for synergy, comprehensive strategies, and shared ownership and accountability among team members.

In conclusion, building a strategic planning team, selecting the right team members and project leader, and establishing effective communication within the team are all critical aspects for sports organizations aiming to develop and implement successful strategies. By emphasizing teamwork, collaboration, and clear communication, organizations can enhance their ability to achieve remarkable results and stay competitive in the sports industry.

Case Studies

Time For Change: The FA Strategy 2020-2024

The Football Association (FA) is the governing body for football in England. In 2018, the FA recognized the need to build a strategic planning team to help achieve its long-term goals (The Football Association, 2020). The FA's leadership team believed that a strategic planning team would be essential in helping to create and implement strategies to improve the organization's performance.



Figure 3: The FA Strategy



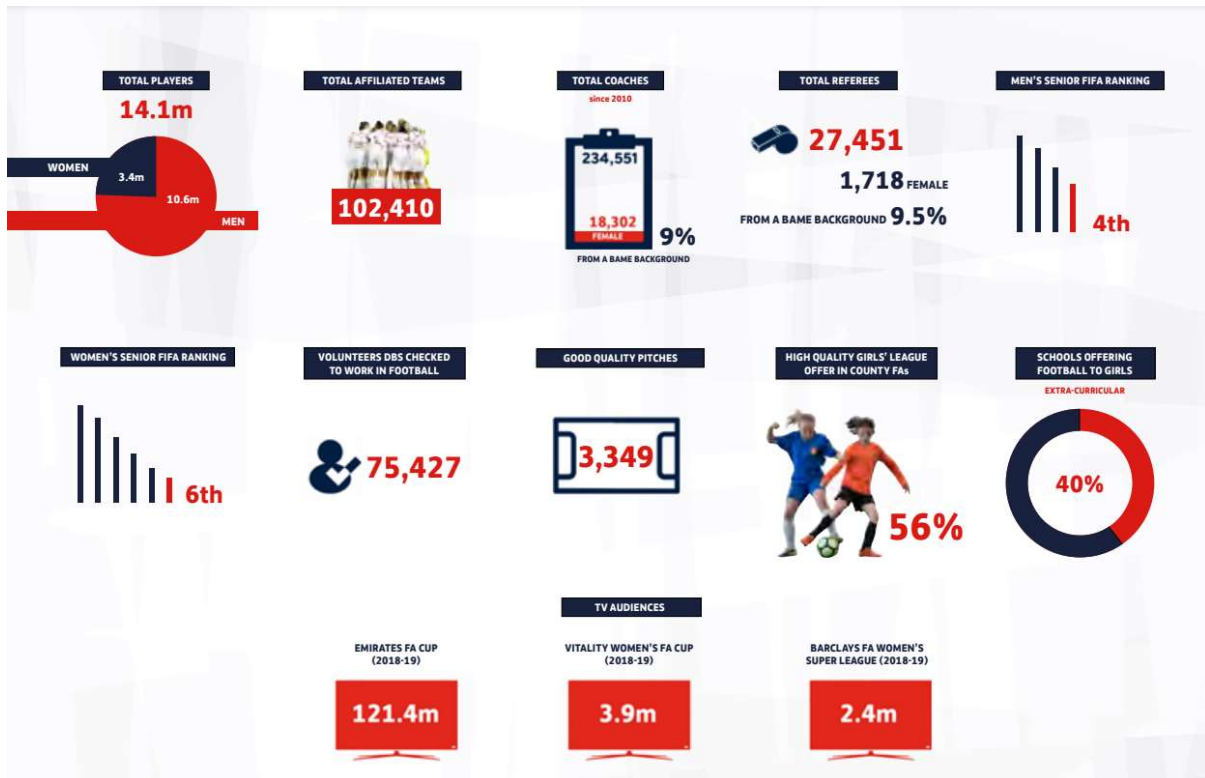
Source: The Football Association, 2020, p. 1

To build the strategic planning team, the FA first conducted a needs assessment to determine the skills and experience required for the team members. These are the steps they followed:

1. The FA identified individuals with expertise in strategy development, project management, and data analysis. The team members were also required to have a deep understanding of the football industry and the FA's role within it.
2. The FA then recruited a team of six individuals to form the strategic planning team. The team was led by a Head of Strategy who had previously worked in strategy consulting and had experience in sports strategy development. The other team members included individuals with expertise in project management, data analysis, and football operations.
3. The FA provided the team with a clear mandate to develop and implement a long-term strategic plan for the organization. The team's first task was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the football industry and the FA's role within it. The team reviewed data on fan behaviour, football revenue streams, and the competitive landscape of football in England and globally.
4. The team then developed a strategic plan that included specific goals and objectives for the organization. The plan included initiatives to improve the FA's

engagement with fans, increase revenue, and enhance the performance of the English national football team. The team also developed a detailed action plan that outlined specific steps to achieve each of the strategic initiatives.

Figure 4: The stats of the game



Source: The Football Association, 2020, p. 8

The FA embarked on a needs assessment process to identify the specific skills and expertise required for the strategic planning team. This is the description of the process they followed:

Strategic Planning Process: The strategic planning team was entrusted with the responsibility of developing and implementing a long-term strategic plan for the FA. Their first task involved conducting a comprehensive analysis of the football industry and the FA's position within it. Through the review of extensive data on fan behaviour, football revenue streams, and the competitive landscape, the team gained valuable insights to inform their strategic decisions.

Development and Implementation of the Strategic Plan: Building upon the analysis, the strategic planning team crafted a strategic plan that encompassed specific goals and objectives for the organization. The plan aimed to improve fan engagement, enhance revenue streams, and elevate the performance of the English national football team. To ensure effective execution, the team formulated a detailed action plan, outlining specific steps and milestones required to achieve each strategic initiative.

Collaboration and Implementation: The implementation of the strategic plan involved close collaboration with various departments within the FA, including marketing, communications, and football operations. The strategic planning team established communication channels to provide regular updates on the plan's progress and gather feedback from stakeholders. This iterative process allowed for adjustments and refinements to be made based on the evolving needs and expectations of key stakeholders.

Outcomes and Impact: The strategic planning team's efforts have yielded positive results for the FA. By implementing the strategic plan, the organization has successfully generated new revenue streams, including digital media rights and sponsorship deals, contributing to increased overall revenue. Additionally, the FA has witnessed improved fan engagement through initiatives such as the digital fan hub and enhanced communication strategies.

Figure 5: Vision



Source: The Football Association, 2020, p. 12.

To implement the plan, the strategic planning team worked closely with other departments within the FA, including marketing, communications, and football operations. The team provided regular updates on the progress of the plan and adjusted the plan as necessary based on feedback from stakeholders.

The strategic planning team's work has already begun to yield positive results. The FA has increased its revenue by developing new revenue streams, including digital media rights and sponsorship deals. The organization has also seen an increase in fan engagement through new initiatives, such as introducing a digital fan hub and improved communication with fans.

The Football Association recognized the need to build a strategic planning team to help achieve its long-term goals. The team was recruited based on their strategy development, project management, data analysis, and football operations expertise.

New Zealand Rugby, Strategy 2025

Another case study of a sports organization building a strategic planning team is the New Zealand Rugby (NZR) organization. NZR is responsible for the administration, promotion, and development of rugby union in New Zealand. In recent years, they have undertaken a strategic planning initiative to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the sport in the country.

The organization recognized the need for a clear vision and strategy to address the challenges and opportunities in rugby, both domestically and internationally.

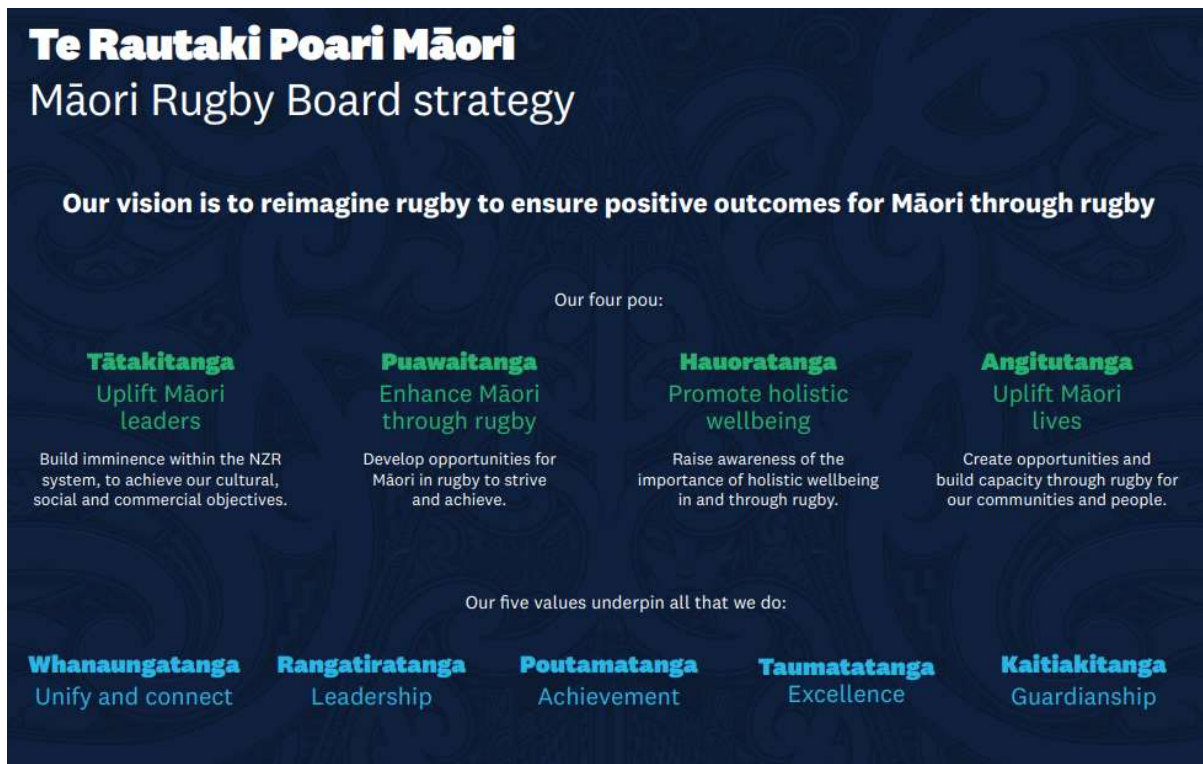
To build their strategic planning team, NZR appointed a Strategic Transformation Group (STG) consisting of both internal and external experts. The STG internal members included senior NZR staff, such as the CEO, General Manager of Rugby and High-Performance teams, Head of Participation and Development, and Head of Professional Rugby. External members were experts with backgrounds in strategic planning, governance, and sports administration. The STG was responsible for leading the strategic planning process and developing the NZR 2025 plan (NZR, 2019).

The STG was led by NZR's CEO, Steve Tew, and comprised senior NZR staff members, including the General Manager of Rugby and High-Performance teams, the Head of Participation and Development, and the Head of Professional Rugby. They were joined by external experts with expertise in strategic planning, governance, and sports administration.

The team conducted extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and analysis to understand the current state of rugby in New Zealand and identify key priorities and focus areas. They also sought input from rugby stakeholders, including players, coaches, administrators, and fans, to ensure a collaborative and inclusive approach. The research likely included reviewing performance data, market trends, financial analysis, and benchmarking against other rugby organizations.



Figure 6: New Zealand Rugby Strategy

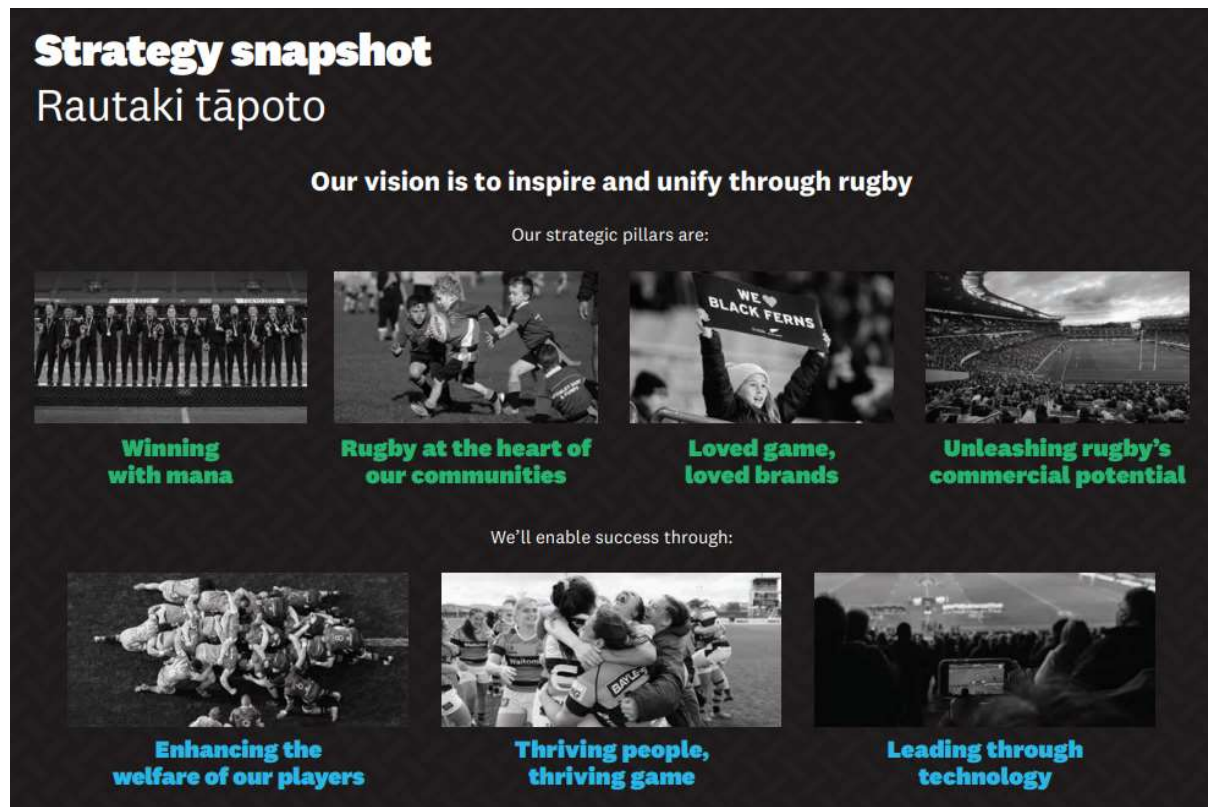


Source: New Zealand Rugby, 2019, p. 7.

NZR emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement throughout the strategic planning process. Stakeholders involved in the process included players, coaches, administrators, and fans. Engaging stakeholders ensured that their perspectives, needs, and aspirations were considered when shaping the strategic direction. The input from stakeholders likely came through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and consultation sessions.

The NZR 2025 plan was structured around five key pillars: High-Performance, Community, Commercial, Fans, and Global. Each pillar represented a strategic focus area for NZR, and specific goals and action plans were developed for each pillar. The High-Performance pillar focused on maintaining New Zealand's success in international rugby and developing elite player pathways. The Community pillar aimed to increase participation, engagement, and inclusivity in rugby at all levels. The Commercial pillar focused on generating revenue and building strong partnerships to support the sport's sustainability. The Fans pillar aimed to enhance the fan experience and grow the fan base. The Global pillar focused on expanding New Zealand's presence in international rugby markets.

Figure 7: Strategy snapshot



Source: New Zealand Rugby, 2019, p. 5.

The result of their efforts was the NZR 2025 plan, which outlined the strategic direction and key initiatives for the organization over the next six years. The plan focused on five key pillars: High-Performance, Community, Commercial, Fans, and Global. Each pillar had specific goals and action plans to drive growth, sustainability, and success in those areas.

This case study of NZR building a strategic planning team demonstrates the importance of involving both internal and external expertise in the strategic planning process. It also highlights the significance of engaging stakeholders to ensure their perspectives are considered and incorporated into the final plan.

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