

## **Mission and Strategy**

### **Critical Questions**

In the first segment, we presented some common characteristics that successful leaders have. Although these characteristics often help leaders achieve results, it's also important for leaders to know what's going on. In other words – leaders need to know where the organization is and where it needs to go. It's hard to get people to follow you when you don't know where you are going. The critical questions that leaders need to ask are as follows:

- What is our mission?
- What are our objectives?
- What is our current status in achieving our mission?
- In what kind of environment do we now exist?
- What can be done to better achieve our objectives in the future?

Through out this series you will be asked to consider these questions, and reflect on how your role as a leader affects TOPS' ability to succeed in accomplishing its mission.

### **Our Mission**

Our mission is “to support our members as they take and keep off pounds sensibly”. Since 1948, hundreds of thousands of TOPS members have lost millions of pounds while pursuing a healthier and longer life. Over the years, TOPS has partnered with the American Medical Association and other organizations to ensure that the basis for its program is sound, and the obesity research that has been funded through the contributions of TOPS is saving lives. The mission of TOPS has not changed, and it remains a vital and life saving mission. One way to look at your mission as a TOPS leader is that you are in the “life saving business”! Looking at the mission this way should help to inspire you.

### **Changes, Changes, Changes**

Although our mission has remained the same, in the last few decades, we have witnessed significant changes in technology, our life styles and the economy. Statistics show that in America we are experiencing an epidemic in obesity in all age groups, races and genders, and so TOPS has an opportunity to play a vital role in the battle against obesity and the diseases it causes.

As a leader, you need to be aware of the current environment, and how you and those that you lead can “spread the word” about TOPS. Your challenge is to determine how to get new members, and how to keep current members, while maximizing technology and benefitting from the current economic environment. As a leader, you also need to inspire those you lead.

## SWOT Team

Whenever you are considering making a change, you need to review your current status. A common type of analysis in the business world that helps to determine current status is called a **SWOT** analysis. SWOT is an acronym for an organization's **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** and the organization's environment's **Opportunities** and **Threats**. This kind of analysis is a strategy development tool that reviews organizational strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats.

To help you understand this concept, here is an example of a high level SWOT analysis for TOPS.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Non Profit Organization.	Decreasing Membership.	Low membership fees during this recession.	Other weight loss organizations that aggressively market their programs.
Over 60 years of experience.	Website could be enhanced for online members.	Partnering with wellness experts.	The economy.
Partnering with Medical Organizations provides validation of benefits of programs.	Website could be enhanced for leaders.	Conducting workshops.	Staff training and retention issues.
Support Oriented.	Strategy could be revisited and enhanced.	The obesity epidemic is receiving a lot of press.	
Robust Reward and Recognition System for Members.		Technology makes tracking member activity easier.	

## Your Assignment

Please review the SWOT analysis, and based on your experiences, provide additional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Consider TOPS at an organizational level and also consider your role as a leader. You can perform a SWOT analysis for your individual status by thinking about your own strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats that affect your role. While you do this exercise, please remember that you are in the "life saving" business!