

## **Vision and Strategy**

### **Life Saving Business**

In the previous section we asked you to consider the mission of TOPS, which is “to support our members as they take and keep off pounds sensibly”, and to reflect on the influence you can have in helping people to achieve a healthier and a longer life. We reminded you that you’re in the “life saving” business, and that’s a very noble profession!

You were asked to review our mission and objectives, our current environment and to think about opportunities for improvement. Whenever you want to make a change in anything, you need to understand where you are starting from, so you need to do this in order to take the next steps to determine where you would like to see TOPS go in the future, and what your role will be in that journey.

In this section we will review the next steps to take after you have a full understanding of your current situation. Leaders need to know where they are going in order to inspire others to follow them. They are often viewed as guides, and in order to be a successful guide, you need a road map.

### **Gap Analysis**

In the business world, when something needs to be changed, the analyst looks at the current situation or state, and compares it to the ideal situation and identifies the “gap” between the two states and then plans a strategy to build a bridge over the gap to get to the ideal state. You can look at this practice as “minding the gap.”

So – your first step is to imagine what your role would be like if you were “leading and influencing” to your full potential, and you also need to imagine what TOPS would be like if it was as successful as it could be. Although as children you were probably yelled at for day dreaming – it’s been proven that in order for valuable change and progress to occur, that individuals need to be relaxed and “shoot for the stars” when envisioning progress or an ideal state. So we encourage you to take some quality time to think about what the TOPS organization could be like if it exceeded your expectations and those of its members. Please make sure that you include thoughts on how TOPS can help you be a more effective leader, and please write down your ideas.

### **Brainstorming and Collecting Feedback**

Although we all have experience and lots of great ideas, it’s also important to collect information from others who have experience and knowledge, so your next step should be brainstorming with others. If you already lead others, you can brainstorm in person at a team meeting, or you can share ideas through email or phone conversations with your team. You can collect their ideas and then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the ideas.

It’s important to remember when brainstorming that regardless of how you collect the information, you need to initially consider all ideas as valid points, and not be critical of any ideas. Since we are encouraging you to “shoot for the stars” it’s realistic to assume that some of the ideas will not be practical and will therefore not be able to be considered, but if you immediately discount any ideas, people will be less likely to share ideas in the future. If you don’t have a team that you lead, you can brainstorm with other individuals who hold similar positions.

## **Don't Forget the Customer!**

The main goal of any organization is to survive, and most businesses want to do more than that - they want to thrive so that they can leave a lasting legacy for their community or even the world. In order to do this, companies need to meet, or more often exceed their customer's expectations. This means that companies need to be adaptable to a changing environment, and to accomplish this – we need to listen to our customer!

Our world is rapidly changing. Technology and our stress filled lives where our time is severely limited have dramatically changed our day to day lives. In addition, the current economic environment has also influenced our customer, so TOPS needs to address these factors and the changing customer needs in order to thrive. Think about ways you can collect information from our members to address their needs and to help make TOPS the weight loss and weight maintenance organization of choice!

## **Your Assignment**

Please take all of the steps discussed in this segment:

- Identify the current state and the ideal state
- Determine the “gap”
- Record your thoughts on how to cross the “gap”
- Brainstorm with others for additional ideas and record these ideas
- Collect information from members and record these ideas
- Summarize your findings and submit the information to your TOPS contact person

## **Tip**

Please do the above while reminding yourself that you are in the “life saving” business!