



performance hub

Tools for strategic planning: What works best

October 2007

A Performance Hub Report
Annabel Jackson and David Irwin

The Performance Hub works to help third sector organisations (TSOs)* achieve more.

(*charities, voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises)

Our vision is of high performing TSOs having a positive impact upon the lives of millions.

Our overall aim is for improved third sector performance, and performance to be an integral part of the third sector's agenda.

Four specific aims contribute to this overall aim:

- To increase TSOs' awareness of the benefits of focusing on performance and improve their ability to use performance tools and approaches.
- To increase and improve the performance support offered to frontline organisations by local, sub-regional, regional and national infrastructure of all types
- To develop a more relevant, more effective and more accessible knowledge base about third sector performance.
- To strengthen the two way relationship between funders and TSOs on performance issues.

For more information, see our website at www.performancehub.org.uk

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The Performance Hub is funded by Capacitybuilders through the ChangeUp programme.

FUNDED

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NCVO, Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

Registered charity no: 225922

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Executive Summary

This paper presents the findings from a survey of strategic planning in third sector organisations carried out by Annabel Jackson and David Irwin for the Performance Hub in Summer 2006.

Our methodology involved a web survey of third sector organisations, with follow-up telephone calls and case studies, and a brief survey of those who support organisations with strategic planning.

We found some wonderful examples of strategic planning:

- A developer of social enterprise using a strategy map to link the organisation's activities to a clear vision for the future
- Organisations using mind-mapping software or web-tools to capture and communicate strategic ideas and ambitions
- Organisations engaging their trustees in their strategic planning, with trustees leading on analysing their organisation's environment and competition
- A student union committee using scenarios as a way of visualising possible futures and focusing the committee on practical changes it can make
- A federated organisation using force field analysis to systematically examine different aspects of their organisation.

We interviewed some very strong proponents of strategy. We found, for example, organisations that had produced a strategy jointly with their partners; organisations that had used strategic planning to bring themselves back from the brink of closure towards strong financial health; and organisations that were using strategic planning to steer large scale growth. Everyone we interviewed over the telephone thought that strategic planning had been useful to the organisation.

The main barriers to strategic planning mentioned by the interviewees were lack of time, staff being absorbed in the detail, short term funding, and lack of expertise. There were also comments about the difficulty some people have thinking conceptually, and resistance to, or resentment of, the professionalisation of the sector's practices that might be implied in strategic planning.

Interviewees were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to strategic planning. Their comments suggested that the value of any approach depends on how it is used, especially how much preparation is done to undertake the analysis needed for each technique, whether the organisation focuses on the few important points rather than getting caught up in the detail, and whether the organisation links the different points arising from its strategic planning to give itself a coherent direction.

The survey findings also suggest that the following principles are key to the successful use of all the profiled techniques:

- Involve people
- Consider the implications of your ideas and findings
- Translate plans into action
- Reflect your organisational culture and circumstances in the process.

Many of the surveyed organisations benefited from using a facilitator or consultant because they brought fresh thinking and expertise.

The survey also found that there is nothing particularly different about strategic planning for small organisations, compared to larger ones. Indeed, strategic planning can be more straightforward for small organisations because everyone can be easily involved.

Many of the surveyed organisations have taken an organic, incremental, iterative approach to strategic planning, opting to use techniques such as SWOT, PEST and stakeholder analysis to begin with, and then adding other techniques according to their size or culture.

Our survey provided insight into the nature of strategic planning as well as the way it is practised in the third sector. Strategic planning involves:

- A way of thinking: high level, focused, probing, integrated and contextual
- A set of beliefs: the organisation can control its destiny rather than being a victim of circumstances
- A way of acting: responding rapidly, managing risk, pre-empting problems, obtaining and acting on feedback/evaluation, not chasing funding.

As strategic planning requires a certain way of thinking, in future, more tools might come from psychology, evaluation or personal growth canons, rather than management literature.

There is strong support for the Performance Hub and other support bodies to provide further help on strategic planning to complement existing support services. Both experienced and inexperienced strategic planners wanted further support.

1.0 Introduction

Setting the scene

The third sector is undergoing a massive shift. On the one hand, there may be opportunities presented by the sector's growing role in local service delivery, by the growth of social enterprise and in the greater emphasis on regional working. Third sector organisations can benefit from longer term commitments in these areas from some funders, and have scope for growth. On the other hand, there are threats from the decline in local authority and Lottery grant funding, and increased competition for resources (funding, trustees, staff etc). Looking beyond service delivery, changes in government policy and technology are occurring at an increasingly rapid rate.

Third sector organisations, even extremely small ones, need to set a course so that they know which opportunities to take up and which to pass by. Strategic planning helps to build capacity in the organisation so that it is resilient.

Strategic planning begins with thinking about the desired future that an organisation wants to help to create, often called its vision, and how it intends to achieve it, often called its purpose or mission. Turning the thinking into a plan requires that the organisation agrees its direction, gathers information and makes choices.

The research

The objective of the research was to identify the tools and techniques that are being used by third sector organisations to help them with their strategic planning.

Our methodology had four elements:

- A web survey of the Performance Hub active network members, NCVO members and other third sector organisations. We received 248 replies
- A brief survey of those supporting organisations with strategic planning
- A telephone survey of 48 respondents to the web survey
- Case studies of ten respondents to the web survey that demonstrate the use and value of strategic planning.

The sample was not random. We made contact with potential respondents through three sources:

- The electronic mailing list of the Performance Hub active network
- The electronic mailing list of NCVO members
- Referral through three charities with which we have contact (Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and Friends Provident Charitable Foundation) and an enterprise agency that provides training and strategic support to voluntary organisations (Project North East).

Generally interviewees fell into four groups:

- Those who are just starting up and need initial guidance
- Those who are most of the way through a cycle of strategic planning, possibly rather mechanically, and now need to find ways of engaging the rest of the organisation and putting theory into practice.
- Those who have done one cycle of strategic planning and would like a peer mentor or guide to tell them if what they have done is good ("right")

- Those who have done more than one cycle of strategic planning and would like new tools to keep the process fresh.

The questions in the survey were intended to build a picture of the respondents' organisations (in terms of size, age, aspiration for growth etc), the way in which they go about their strategic planning, and the tools and techniques that they use to help them.

Our analysis below generally shows results for these survey components separately, demonstrating broad agreement between the three. The three vary in their spatial concentration (the first being concentrated in London, the second in the east and south east, the third in the north east).

Organisations on the Performance Hub list and organisations supported by Project North East can be expected to be already interested in strategic planning. It is likely therefore that this survey will be biased towards organisations who already know something about the topic.

Given that the objective, however, was to identify approaches and lessons that might be of use to the whole sector, this bias is seen as a strength rather than a weakness. We intended that the survey should reveal organisations worthy of more in-depth discussion through the telephone interviews, so it was important to secure sufficient responses from organisations that could be followed up. A detailed analysis of the background of respondents to the web survey is provided in Appendix 1.

2.0 Views on the value of strategic planning

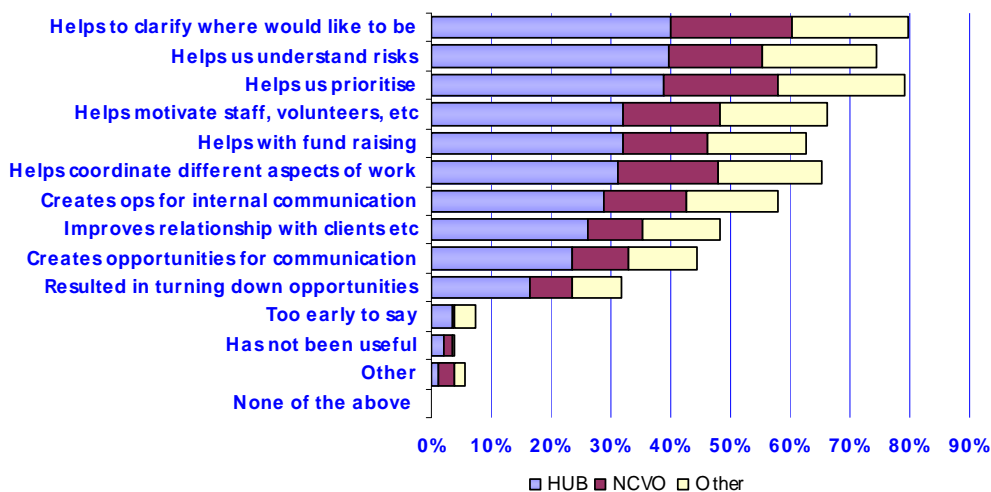
All the organisations we interviewed emphasised that strategies are no longer optional. They were adamant that without a strategy a third sector organisation will not survive. More than half our interviewees were planning for more than three years ahead, typically for five to eight years.

Respondents from the web survey stated that they had benefited from strategic planning. Strategic planning had helped them to:

- clarify where they would like to be in the future
- understand the risks facing the organisation
- prioritise.

A significant number, nearly a third, said that strategic planning had encouraged them to turn down opportunities that were not compatible with their long term goals.

Figure 1: Usefulness of strategic planning



Source: Survey results

Benefits

Interviewees from the telephone survey made these comments about strategic planning:

“If you don't know where you are going, how do you know you are going to get there?”

“We can concentrate on our mission and be really good at that, rather than having our fingers in so many pies that we forget where we are going.”

“We have had the same services for many, many years. Strategic planning is helping us to ask if there is something that is better.”

“We are providing a better service to the people we represent. We have a much higher profile. We are asked to take on work because we are perceived to be effective. We are surviving where others closed. Strategic planning has empowered us, made us more proactive.”

“Strategic planning has opened our eyes to some possible disastrous scenarios. We are ahead of the game on some of the issues.”

“Before we introduced strategic planning it ran in people's heads. Now our plans are written down and less dependent on the individuals.”

“The board is more involved, there is less a feeling of ‘them and us’ than there was before the strategic process. We are facing these changes together rather than moaning about them and waiting for someone else to do something about them. There is joint responsibility.”

“Strategy is the lubricant in an organisation. It gets you moving. It stops inertia.”

“Strategic planning creates a real excitement. Staff come to work thinking that they might be doing something different next week; they have the chance to create or develop new services.”

"Strategic planning has reduced our staff turnover. People don't feel the organisation is wavering and wobbling around. They know that their jobs will still be here in three years' time."

Problems

More than half our interviewees said that people in the organisation found strategic planning to be difficult and more than half mentioned barriers: time, logistics, money for support, lack of information on approaches, and differences in opinion between trustees and funders each with their own agendas about the organisation's direction. There were also psychological barriers: difficulty in thinking conceptually, being uncomfortable with change, or a fear that professionalisation would threaten the community values of the organisation. However, all interviewees thought that these barriers could and must be overcome.

"Staff tend to think of their own project. The organisation is then just a collection of projects."

"Users say they are happy with the service. They don't see themselves as stakeholders and don't want to be involved in strategy because they see it as administration – which is our job."

"Trustees don't get the point in the first place. They think that we will get money because 'everyone loves us'. They think things are fine the way they are."

"Strategic planning is difficult because of our history. We have always existed from hand-to-mouth. The culture of the organisation is to live in the here-and-now, working in a panic."

"Local authorities talk about full cost recovery but don't really want to fund it."

"Strategic planning is difficult because we don't know what is out there. We don't know what will happen in government policy. We don't know the future strategies of our funders or competitors."

We also surveyed advisers on strategic planning, who highlighted the following barriers in the third sector sector:

"Lack of confidence about who the organisation is and what it is trying to do."

"Thinking that lots of activity equals being effective."

"The urgent driving out the important."

"Having to deal with short term funding cycles."

"Taking on more than their resources can support."

"Deceiving themselves about what is really motivating them."

"Being overly negative about other organisations in the field."

"Doing things how they have always done them."

"Thinking that because they care about the clients, whatever they do is good."

"Not integrating strategy with operational plans and practices."

"Trustees not having the time to input into the process."

Lessons learned

Interviewees were asked what advice they would give to other third sector organisations thinking about whether to engage in strategic planning. Their answers were highly positive. Typical comments were:

"You have to bite the bullet. Just decide to do it. You're never going to be 'not busy'."

"Don't do it just to get a grant."

"If you don't do strategic planning you might not be here in 12 months' time."

"It's a lot of work to get through but it's better than fire-fighting. In the end, strategic planning will save the organisation energy and time."

"Make sure you get the structure of the strategic planning process right, right from the beginning. It's easy to start without having thought through what you want to achieve."

"Don't be afraid to get outside help: get some training or information on how to make use of strategic planning."

"Reflect on what you have achieved so far, but don't let that restrict what you do in the future."

"Don't be afraid to share problems and doubts as you go along and don't be frightened by the results, which are not always what you expected."

"Work in partnership."

"Get involved in influencing the strategies of others as well."

"Don't just leave the plan on the shelf gathering dust. Strategic planning is a continual process."

Many interviewees emphasised the importance of clarity, simplicity and brevity in presenting their strategic plan. This is consistent with the role of strategic planning in focusing thought and action.

The survey also found that there is nothing particularly different about strategic planning for small organisations, compared to larger ones. Indeed, strategic planning can be more straightforward for small organisations because everyone can be easily involved.

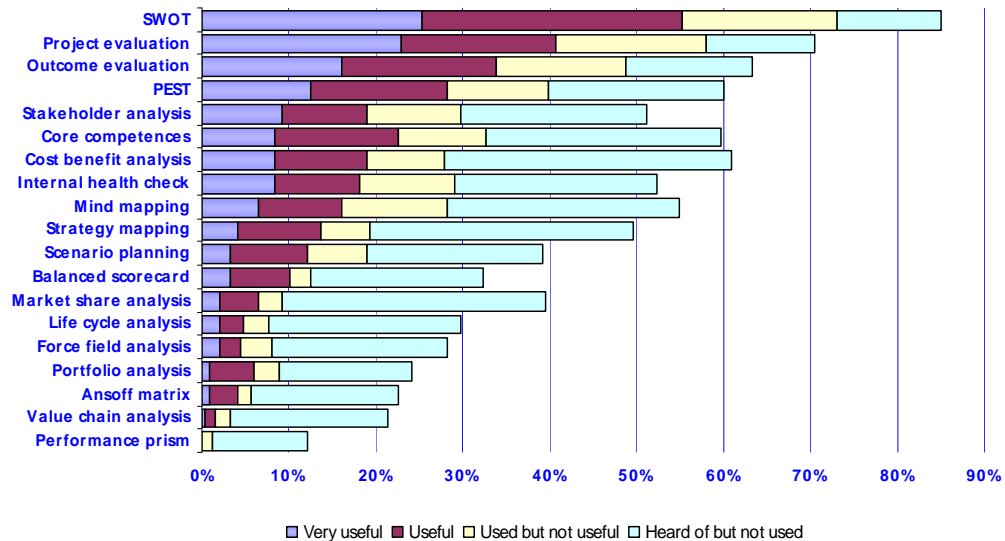
3.0 Views on different strategic planning approaches

We asked respondents about their views on a number of approaches to strategic planning. The results are summarised in the chart below.

(Note: all percentages in this section refer to the entire sample of 248 unless otherwise stated.)

The approaches were chosen because they had a possible link to strategic planning, not because we thought that third sector organisations should use them. We included evaluation because of its complementary role in providing feedback on strategy, although it is not strictly speaking a strategic planning tool. We included mental maps because we wanted to think about and explore the use of personal development tools in organisational development and also to link to issues around the communication and depiction of strategy.

Figure 2: Approaches to strategic planning



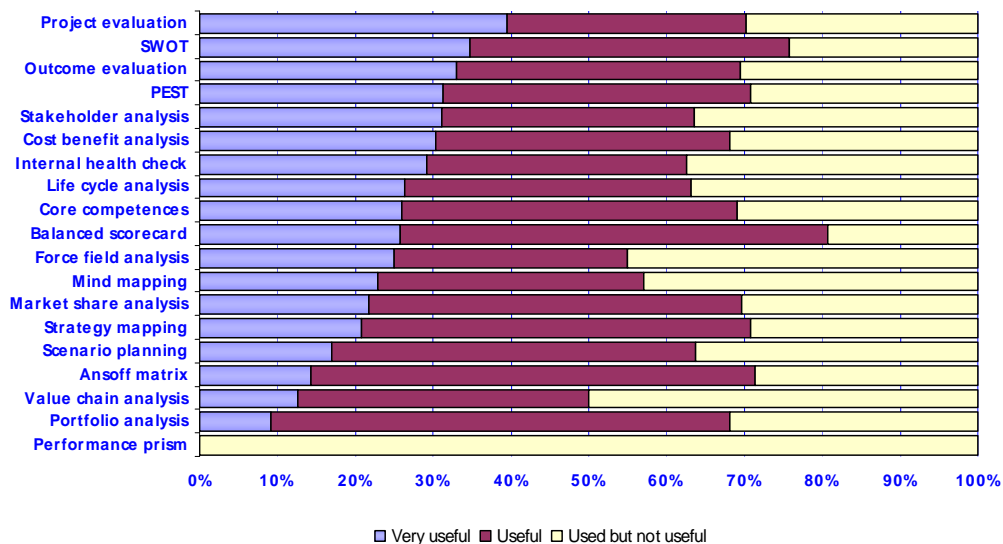
Source: Survey results

This chart suggests a tendency to use easier to grasp techniques such as SWOT and PEST rather than more complicated approaches such as value chain analysis. It also demonstrates that third sector organisations recognise the importance of project and outcome evaluation.

Many of the surveyed organisations have taken an organic, incremental, iterative approach, reflecting the idea of strategic planning as a dynamic, evolving process. There is a broad pattern of organisations beginning with core techniques such as SWOT, PEST and stakeholder analysis, and then adding techniques such as market share analysis, scenario analysis or risk analysis, according to their size or culture, and closing the feedback loop with evaluation.

The chart below shows how many organisations had found the techniques useful or very useful as a percentage of those that had used the technique.

Figure 3: Usefulness of approaches



Source: Survey results

4.0 The 12 most commonly used approaches

In the rest of this section, we consider the 12 most commonly used approaches, offering in turn, a summary of survey responses on the pros and cons of each technique and our own reflections.

4.1 PEST

PEST is an acronym of the four main categories that can be used for analysing an organisation’s environment: political, economic, social and technological. Some third sector organisations refer to PESTLE instead, adding two extra categories for legal and environmental issues. These categories are used to think through the external trends and issues that could have an impact on an organisation in the medium to long term, otherwise known as ‘external analysis’.¹

Some 60 per cent of respondents had heard of PEST and 40 per cent had used it. Of these, 31 per cent thought it was very useful and a further 39 per cent thought that it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of PEST were:

“Many staff and trustees recognise and feel comfortable with the method.”

“It provides a framework, covers important areas.”

¹ For more on PEST, visit NCVO’s Third Sector Foresight website: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/3sf/strategy/?id=2250. This Performance Hub publication explains external analysis and how to do it: Copeman C and Griffiths M *Looking Out: how to make sense of your organisation’s environment* (NCVO, 2007) www.performancehub.org.uk/lookingout.

"It is useful if you focus on the three or so most important subjects for your organisation rather than trying to be all inclusive."

"It focuses thinking. It breaks big problem down into smaller manageable chunks."

"It is needed because the external environment is always changing."

"It works well with SWOT."

Interviewees said that the weaknesses of PEST were:

"The quality of the analysis depends on the quality of the information that the organisation has about the environment."

"The tool might look simple, but the process of compiling the background information is complex and time consuming."

"Some areas such as education span all the categories, making these more difficult to analyse."

"Organisations might interpret the categories too narrowly e.g. technology as only referring to ICT."

"If people aren't used to using it, they can get too hung up on which box to use."

"It can be a bit automated if you have used it a lot, so you say: 'These are the factors that fit in that category'."

"You tend to end up with short catch phrases that summarise bigger ideas. It is easy to remember the catchphrases and forget the bigger ideas."

"It is crystal ball gazing. Government policy changes so much that even with PEST you won't be completely prepared."

Further thoughts

At the minimum, PEST gives an organisation some understanding of the complex and changing influences on its future. More precisely, it can give early warning of opportunities and threats of major significance to the organisation. Ideally, this should link to scenario planning, which focuses on the critical uncertainties and their potential impact on the organisation (see section 4.7).

A key requirement of a PEST analysis is that the organisation makes the effort to gather appropriate information prior to undertaking the analysis. As the quotations above illustrate, although simple in design, a PEST analysis can be deceptively challenging to do well. Some of the responses suggest that users do not always place sufficient emphasis on the importance of preparation. There is a danger with PEST that organisations simply compile a list of factors and then ignore them in preparing their strategy.

4.2 SWOT

SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. SWOT analyses are used to provide a structure for ideas about an organisation's internal state (strengths and weaknesses) and the external elements which might affect the organisation (opportunities and threats). SWOT analyses are often conducted as

group discussion and recorded in a two-by-two matrix with a box for each of the four categories.²

Some 85 per cent of respondents had heard of SWOT. Of these, 35 per cent thought that it was very useful and a further 41 per cent thought that it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of SWOT were:

“It is flexible, simple and clear. Staff at different levels can contribute.”

“It is generally familiar to people, which makes it less threatening.”

“It is very visual, good for different groups of people such as deaf people.”

“It is good at representing a lot of background information on one or two pages.”

“It is insightful. It is easy for people who are busy to get into it quickly. When you get a few people doing it together, you get a real result.”

“SWOT allows comparison over time. The organisation can see where weaknesses have been overcome and where threats have been translated into opportunities.”

“It helps organisations to understand what is special about their way of working.”

“It gives a balanced view. Some organisations naturally focus on their strengths, others naturally think about their weaknesses. SWOT encourages you to think about both.”

“It gives an implicit understanding of trade-offs. You can't be good at everything and sometimes your weaknesses are just the other side of your strengths.”

“It can be used to apply to personal planning as well as projects and organisations.”

Interviewees said that the weaknesses of SWOT were:

“The value depends on the depth of analysis. SWOT can produce catchphrases rather than insight. It always needs padding out, especially the bits that don't fit the boxes and identifying what is realistic”

“Without an external facilitator it can reflect the optimism or pessimism of the people who do it.”

“Opportunities are easy to confuse with threats. Weakness is a bad word because it can imply blame.”

“SWOT doesn't make the connections between the different boxes”

“You only get the views of the people participating on the day.”

² For more information on SWOT, try the American Management website: www.mftrou.com/support-files/how-to-do-a-swot-analysis.pdf

Further thoughts

SWOT encourages organisations to stand back and look at their work critically, beyond the prevailing culture in the organisation, whether pessimistic or optimistic. It can provide new insights into the sources of the organisation's strengths and the vulnerabilities of these strengths. SWOT looks simple, but can have far reaching implications. These implications should be systematically considered in the organisation's strategy. One useful approach is to prioritise the issues that arise from the SWOT and address them in the draft strategy produced.

4.3 Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis identifies the groups of people that affect, are affected by, or have an interest in an organisation's work. Stakeholders can be both inside and outside an organisation, including those who may only have an indirect connection with an organisation. Stakeholder analysis often involves mapping out who the organisation's stakeholders are, prioritising them by importance to the organisation and gathering their views and feedback on the organisation such as what it does well, what it could do better and suggestions for collaborative working.³

Stakeholder analysis is often undertaken in a semi-structured manner so that answers can be probed if necessary. It is usually done face to face, either at a one-off event or when staff visit a stakeholder.⁴

Just over half the respondents (51%) had heard of stakeholder analysis and not quite a third (31%) had used it. Of those that had used it, 31 per cent thought that it was very useful and a further 32 per cent thought that it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of stakeholder analysis were:

"Organisations can tend to focus on just one or two areas of operation. Stakeholder analysis helps to broaden their views and see how activities inter-relate."

"It is essential to understand the needs and priorities of those the organisation exists to serve."

"It showed that there are more people with interests in the organisation than you might think."

"It is an essential recognition of power dynamics."

"Stakeholder analysis shows the different roles one stakeholder can play e.g. a city council that is funder, client, regulator and policy maker. This can lead into an analysis of the organisation's relationship with each of these elements."

"Involving stakeholders can increase their commitment to the organisation. They feel they belong to something, they are contributing to something."

"Stakeholder analysis raises expectations of the organisation."

³ The CPHP website has a useful information sheet on stakeholder analysis www.cphp.uk.com/downloads/GN%20Stakeholder%20Analysis%20Form.pdf

⁴ The Performance Hub's Achieve More magazine, issue 2, contains an article on how to run a stakeholder workshop; www.performancehub.org.uk/achievemore2

Interviewees said that the weaknesses of stakeholder analysis were:

“Opinions might be coloured by whether recent projects have gone well or badly.”

“The value of the information depends on the stakeholders’ knowledge of the organisation.”

“Consultees get ends and means mixed up e.g. they say they want x when they mean they want something that does y.”

“You can't engage in real dialogue. Some responses will reflect partisan interest.”

“The results depend on who you talk to. It is easy to select people who are known to the organisation and likely to give positive feedback. They might not be representative.”

“You can end up looking at the powerful groups when the most important stakeholders are the beneficiaries.”

“If you focus on people whose opinions you value or those you want to influence, other stakeholders might feel left out.”

“Some service users don't think they are stakeholders. They don't want to have a say.”

Further thoughts

In our opinion, a stakeholder analysis can be one of the best techniques for an effective strategic review. It helps organisations to understand how they are seen by others, what expectations others have of them, and where there are conflicts of interest. In practice, stakeholders make all sorts of assumptions about your organisation: about what it does, the quality of your work, the kind of organisation it is, based on incomplete information filtered through their own perspectives. An effective strategy needs to be able to understand and perhaps challenge these perceptions.

It appears from the telephone interviews, however, that, in many cases, interviewees were referring to stakeholder surveys aimed at identifying service improvements rather than a systematic gathering and analysis of the views of stakeholders about the organisation at a strategic level. Stakeholder analysis is distinct from competitor analysis (see section 4.6).

4.4 Core competencies

The core competencies technique focuses on an organisation's internal resources. It involves reviewing the organisation's skills, competencies and expertise, both as a whole staff team and as individual team members. The aim of the exercise is to analyse the specific elements that makes an organisation distinctive or different from others in its sector. Core competencies are those which are central to an organisation's ability to deliver its services and mission and its capability to know and meet the needs of its users beyond the generic skills required by any professional organisation.⁵

⁵ For more on core competencies, try the Tutor2u website:
www.tutor2u.net/business/strategy/core_competencies.htm

Some 60 per cent of respondents had heard of core competencies and 33 per cent had used it. Of those, 26 per cent thought that it was very useful and a further 43 per cent thought that it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of core competencies were:

“It makes a link between staff recruitment and development, and strategic objectives.”

“It improves staff communications.”

“It encourages the organisation to play to its strengths.”

Interviewees said that the weaknesses of core competencies were:

“It doesn't stretch you enough to think about what could be.”

“It is hard work to establish what core competencies are.”

“Staff members can feel a bit pigeon holed.”

Further thoughts

Identifying an organisation's core competencies can be quite hard. They are not the same as the amalgam of competencies of all the staff, though clearly an organisation's core competencies will be reflected in the staff competencies.

Thinking about core competencies can help to highlight the areas at which an organisation excels. It can also help organisations to ensure these key competencies are developed in staff so that they continue to be able to deliver the organisation's purpose. Understanding core competence is important not only in setting an organisation apart but also in institutionalising its learning.

4.5 Cost benefit analysis

Cost benefit analysis is an assessment of the potential costs of an action relative to the potential benefits of that action. In its simplest form, cost benefit analysis is carried out using only financial costs and financial benefits (e.g. the resources needed to run a fundraising campaign compared with the potential income that might be generated by it). More sophisticated models of cost-benefit analysis (e.g. the Social Return on Investment methodology) aim to take into account social or environmental benefits as well. These benefits are usually translated into a financial value to enable a comparison with cost.⁶

Nearly two thirds (61%) of respondents had heard of cost benefit analysis and 40 per cent had used it. Of those, 30 per cent thought it was very useful and a further 38 per cent thought it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of cost benefit analysis were:

“It forced people to say why the organisation does things. They were forced to put their sacred cows on to the table. It distracted people from just promoting their own pet services. It is a form of zero based strategy. Some

⁶ See Aeron-Thomas D et al *Social Return on Investment: Valuing what matters* (New Economics Foundation 2007)
www.neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_PublicationDetail.aspx?PID=180

of the extreme scenarios were quite compelling in terms of their contribution to objectives.”

“It showed services that were far too expensive in terms of their contribution to the organisation’s objectives.”

“At an operational level it made staff and managers more aware of ways to cut costs and increase income for each service.”

Several interviewees identified one general weakness of elementary cost benefit analysis (where only financial elements are considered):

The political and social costs of programmes should be considered, as well as the financial.

Further thoughts

In most cases, organisations had carried out an informal version of cost benefit analysis rather than translating each facet into units such as financial values. This approach is certainly useful for its ability to quantify the relative gains to be made from an action. It is objective, allowing the user to see quickly and easily, whether an activity is worth doing or not (or at least whether it makes financial sense to do it).

On the other hand, it can be difficult to attach financial value to social or environmental benefits. Users have to use a proxy value for these factors which is often based on estimates, or even total guess work! The approach can be criticised for being over-simplistic because it reduces all the value or impact of an organisation or project to a single financial figure.

4.6 Market share and competitor analysis

Market share analysis is used to assess how well an organisation is doing in relation to other organisations which it sees as its competitors. Usually, the analysis involves looking at several different elements including turnover, number of potential users, and services offered, and reviewing their strengths and weaknesses in these areas, as well as their strategies.

Some 40 per cent of respondents had heard of market share and competitor analysis, though just 9 per cent had used it. Of those, 22 per cent thought that it was very useful and a further 48 per cent thought that it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of market share and competitor analysis were:

“Far too many organisations are introverted and assume that trends affect them uniquely, whereas in fact they might be less affected or weaker in their response than their peers (view of a grant making foundation).”

“It can provide ideas and insights to learn from at an operational level.”

“There will be amalgamations and mergers in the voluntary sector because of the funding cuts. Competitor analysis puts your organisation at the centre of this, rather than the margins, active rather than reactive.”

Several interviewees identified one general weakness of market share and competitor analysis:

The quality of analysis depends on the quality of information available. For example, you may not have access to other organisations' strategies and will only be able to take a view about their position based on their past practice.

Further thoughts

Market share and competitor analysis gives organisations the means to benchmark their performance and assess their comparative advantage, while also throwing up potential opportunities for collaboration or new partnerships.

Depending on the nature of their work, it may be easier for some third sector organisations to conduct a market-share analysis than others. For those offering niche services, it may be harder to make useful comparisons.

Given the third-sector's focus on social change, the language of 'market-share' and 'competition' is not universally appealing to all staff and volunteers. However, market share and competitor analysis is a healthy antidote to the frequent assumption that organisations are unique.

4.7 Scenario planning

Scenario planning is the systematic identification of pre-determined elements and critical uncertainties that affect the environment in which the organisation is operating, in order to investigate two or three versions of the future. These are not predictions, but possible futures based on the different ways that the critical uncertainties might emerge, linked to preparation of possible responses, depending on which future unfolds. Scenario planning can be used both to look generally at what might happen in the environment (for example, the effect on the economy if the government changes) and to help think specifically about how an organisation might fare within that particular environment.

Some 39 per cent of respondents had heard of scenario planning and 20 per cent had used it. Of those, 17 per cent thought it was very useful and a further 47 per cent thought it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of scenario analysis were:

"What if contingency planning helps you to think outside of the box - to think through implications in advance."

"It forces imaginative future thinking."

"It can work as a catalyst and justification for necessary change."

Several interviewees identified one general weakness of scenario planning:

It can be a lot of work for little return.

Further thoughts

It is possible that some organisations may not fully understand the power and strength of scenario planning. Preparing scenarios may require only a small leap from a PEST analysis if the latter is undertaken comprehensively and can be very useful for the many organisations that acknowledge that their environment is changing rapidly and in unpredictable ways. Perhaps the Performance Hub could take a lead here preparing some general scenarios for the third sector.⁷

⁷ The Performance Hub provided four scenarios for the advice sector in its report *Advice in the Future*, www.performancehub.org.uk/adviceinthefuture

Scenario planning helps organisations to build models of the future which reflect the real world and which are shared and accepted by the organisation's management team. It helps to add a framework to the process of strategic planning.

Scenario planning is a way of helping organisations consider what they already know or can easily discover about the environment in which they will be working, say, five years ahead. Preparing scenarios can be particularly helpful in identifying key features of the external environment, including opportunities and threats. Whilst changes may be obvious, especially demographic changes, the implications of those changes may be rather less so. Developing scenarios will assist in the process of understanding the dynamics of change. The thinking process will highlight factors which are highly uncertain but which could have a high impact on an organisation. When an organisation understands the possible changes, and can put them in context, it is in a far better position to protect itself against possible threats.⁸

4.8 Risk analysis

Risk analysis is the identification of the potential risks facing an organisation (e.g. loss of core funding) along with an assessment of both (a) the likelihood of the identified risk occurring and (b) the impact it would have on the organisation if it was to occur. This assessment is then used to prioritise the action needed to manage these risks, either by developing plans to reduce the likelihood of the identified risk occurring (where possible) or by developing contingency plans to reduce the negative impact on the organisation if it was to occur.

Some 84 per cent of respondents made an effort to gather information on the possible risks facing the organisation.

Interviewees said that the strengths of risk analysis were:

"It makes you focus on things that are a bit uncomfortable. Then you can plan for or avoid problems."

"Risk analysis is a good way of linking operational matters into strategy. Risk management protects the individual and helps them to provide better services."

Several interviewees identified one general weakness of risk analysis:

It can add pressure and anxiety. No matter how many contingencies you may have, there is always likely to be something you haven't planned for.

Further thoughts

Risk analysis is an essential part of everyday planning. It is not something that should only be done during a formal strategic review. It is something that all staff should do as a matter of course when planning a new project, event, programme or budget. It is important to identify possible risks and to understand the appropriate actions necessary to prevent or mitigate problems.

Risk analysis is partly an extension of the 'threats' element of SWOT and PEST analyses (both of which relate to changes and threats from the external

⁸ For further reading about scenario planning, we recommend Schwartz P *The Art of the Long View* (Century Business 1992) or try NCVO's guide to scenario planning, Copeman C *Picture This* (NCVO 2006) www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/picturethis

environment) and partly a consideration of the possible risks from taking a particular course of action. At its most basic, this is simply asking the 'what if' questions.

It can help prevent crisis and fire-fighting and can facilitate decision-making in the strategic planning process by helping organisations to choose between different options.

Too much emphasis on potential dangers however, might dissuade organisations from being innovative and willing to test out new ideas.

4.9 Mind mapping

Mind maps are diagrams that show the relationship between key issues, words or ideas. Usually, a mind map will begin with a phrase or word placed in the centre of the page, and then other phrases or words will be arranged around this. The purpose of a mind map is to arrange often complex ideas into a diagram so that it is possible to see the relationship between them. Mind-maps are usually drawn on paper but software to create them on screen is also available.

Some 55 per cent of respondents had heard of mind mapping and 28 per cent had used it. Of those, 23 per cent thought it was very useful and a further 34 per cent thought it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of mind mapping were:

"This really helped staff to see how the objectives, activities and indicators all fitted together and that they shouldn't do things that are not linked to mission. Now, if you asked staff what the organisation does, they would all say the same thing, in the past they would not. It is on one page of A4."

"You can add on to mind maps at any time at any place. Mind maps order the normal fragmented conversation while doing justice to the different points that arise at different times."

"Mind maps are visual and many people are visual."

"Mind maps concentrate on the ideas rather than on where they came from. Meeting minutes give the impression that subjects are closed. Mind maps allow different people to add ideas."

"It is accessible. It is not threatening to people who do not like reports. It is useful for dyslexic people and people with language barriers"

Interviewees said that the weaknesses of mind mapping were:

"Mind maps can be affected by the mood of the group - they are not very robust or scientific."

"Mind maps might be difficult to explain to those not involved in producing them."

Further thoughts

Mind mapping can be used at any stage of the strategic planning process. It is not a strategy tool in itself; rather it is used to depict information and ideas vividly and simply. Mind maps can be particularly helpful in presenting a picture of the complete strategy when it is finalised.

Creating a mind map encourages a brainstorming approach and may also aid recall of key points. Mind-maps can be particularly helpful when people have a learning disability, as they are highly visual ways of capturing information.

4.10 Balanced scorecard

There are three distinctive elements of the balanced scorecard approach. Firstly, it is an approach to management that is based on measurement. It encourages setting a limited number of objectives, measures and targets, and using these to drive up performance. Secondly, it insists that organisations measure a *balance* of information and identifies four key areas to ask questions about: learning and growth, internal processes, user/customer feedback, and finance. Finally, it emphasises the importance of producing a visual, one page summary (the scorecard) of the objectives, measures, targets and achievements against them. This can often involve images or charts that indicate progress.

Thirty two per cent of respondents said they had heard of the balanced scorecard and 12 per cent had used it. Of those, 26 per cent thought that it was very useful and a further 55 per cent thought it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of the balanced scorecard were:

“It is easy to read.”

“It gives an holistic view of the performance of the organisation, acknowledging trade offs.”

Several interviewees identified one general weakness of the balanced scorecard:

It is difficult to identify predictive indicators, and these are what gives real value to a balanced scorecard.

Further thoughts

The balanced scorecard was developed to encourage businesses to put vision and strategy, rather than control, at the centre of their activities, by focusing on other factors as well as financial measures.⁹

The balanced scorecard can help organisations focus and agree on the strategic objectives necessary across four key areas to achieve their goals. The four elements of the balanced scorecard are set out in a hierarchy. For third sector organisations, it makes sense to start with the customer or client perspective to ask what the needs of customers are, that they want fulfilled.

Using the balanced scorecard in the voluntary sector requires some level of adaptation and customisation, and this seemed to be beyond the resources of many of the small and medium-sized organisations that predominated in our survey. One criticism of the balanced scorecard is that it underplays the importance of strategy. Strategy mapping was introduced to transform the balanced scorecard into a strategic management system (see section 4.11).

⁹ Kaplan R and Norton D *The Balanced Scorecard - measures that drive performance* (Harvard Business Review Jan-Feb 1992)

4.11 Strategy mapping

A strategy map is a diagram that describes how an organisation creates value by connecting together different parts of its strategy. In particular, it shows the relationships between different elements, and how these connect up to an overall goal. It uses the four perspectives of balanced scorecard (learning and growth, internal process, customer focus and finance).

Some 50 per cent of respondents had heard of strategy mapping though just 20 per cent had used it. Of those, 21 per cent thought it was very useful with a further 50 per cent thinking it was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of strategic mapping were:

“You can see how everything contributes to the greater goals. And how some things don’t!”

“It gives a clear reasoning for the chosen direction of the organisation.”

Several interviewees identified one general weakness of strategy mapping:

There isn't necessarily a linear link between each customer need and an individual process to meet that need. Analysis of each need and process can take too long and involve duplication.

Further thoughts

It was slightly surprising to find that more respondents had heard about strategy mapping than the balanced scorecard (see section 4.10), given that strategy mapping is an extension of the scorecard approach.

Strategy mapping is an excellent technique for helping organisations to think about how their strategy hangs together and then to summarise it – succinctly and coherently – on a single page.

4.12 Project or outcome evaluation

Evaluation involves making judgments about what went well in a project, what didn't go so well, and what could be done differently in the future. It is usually based on a range of data, such as observation, records, surveys, and interviews. It is possible to evaluate the management of a project, and also its outputs (the products or services it delivers) and its outcomes (the effects and benefits of these outputs). You can self-evaluate, or you can pay someone else to do it – there are costs and benefits of both approaches.

We asked about project evaluation and outcome evaluation separately. Some 63 per cent of respondents had heard of outcome evaluation and 70 per cent of project evaluation. Some 49 per cent had used outcome evaluation but 57 per cent had used project evaluation. Of those that had used them, 33 per cent thought outcome evaluation was very useful and 40 per cent though project evaluation was very useful; a further 36 per cent though outcome evaluation was useful and 31 per cent thought project evaluation was useful.

Interviewees said that the strengths of evaluation were:

“Evaluation helps track the strategy. There is no point in having a strategy and then not checking if it is being achieved.”

“We know what we do is useful. This is also a big strength in fund-raising.”

“We have recent information and quotes, which makes the programme real.”

“Evaluation is central to organisational learning.”

Interviewees said that the weaknesses of evaluation were:

“There is a danger of doing it for the wrong reasons – to appease funders – rather than to really learn as an organisation.”

“It is not easy to know if you are asking the right questions, of the right people. Evaluation is a technical skill.”

“Measuring some non-financial outcomes is not easy.”

“Sometimes it tells you what you don't want to hear, but this is not really a weakness.”

“As goals are often revised during a project, often for good reasons, it can be hard to devise an evaluation project that is flexible enough but also allows analysis over time.”

“Learning from one project should inform the next but often organisations carry out evaluation too late for this to happen.”

“Statistics do not always come easy.”

Further thoughts

Evaluation is not a strategic planning tool but has been included in this survey because indicators, targets and measures are essential to the strategic planning process.

Evaluation can be of major value in helping organisations to understand the conceptual basis for what they are doing (the link between means and ends), and their performance (the difference between what they expect and what they achieve).

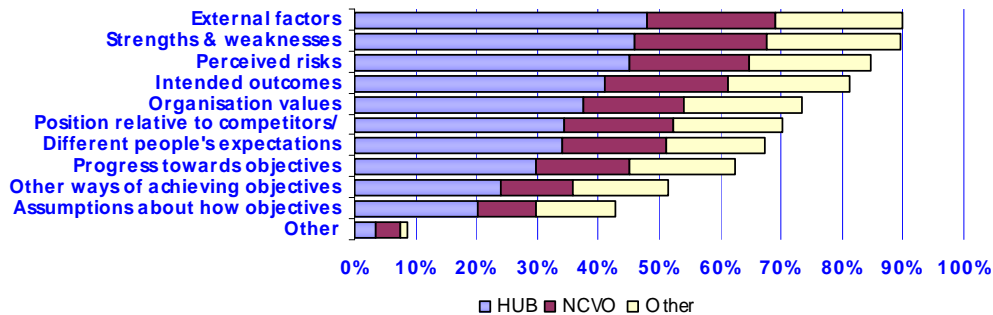
The best evaluation is clearly conceived, seriously administered, uses carefully worded questionnaires and analysis that interprets findings in context. Poorly conceived evaluation that is vague, not well explained to interviewees, uses loaded or ambiguous questions and biased samples, can lead to a vicious cycle whereby evaluation results are seen as uninspiring and therefore given a lower and lower priority in the organisation.

Evaluation is a technical skill and it is to some extent unreasonable to expect third sector organisations to be able to get the most from it without training or other support to improve their ability to undertake self-evaluation. There might be a role for the Performance Hub, in addition to its existing training programme for development workers to support frontline organisations with monitoring and evaluation, in organising training for frontline organisations and to help infrastructure improve their own practice, or to help them audit their existing evaluation systems.

5.0 Gathering information

Most organisations made some effort to gather information from a range of sources before starting the process of strategic planning, though the interviews suggested that some organisations did this informally and with insufficient rigour.

Figure 4: Sources of information used in strategic planning process



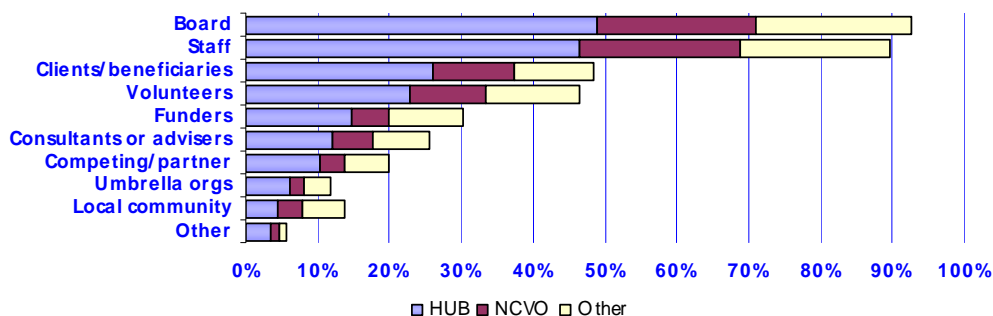
Source: Survey results

The 'other' category included theories of change, reviewing the work of similar organisations elsewhere in the UK, quality standards and opportunities for collaborative working

6.0 Involving people

Some organisations took a highly participative approach, involving everyone in the organisation - or everyone who was interested in strategic planning. Some organisations planned by having one person or a small group produce the analysis and then consult on it. Either can work, depending on the size of an organisation and its culture.

Figure 5: People involved in strategic planning



Source: Survey results

The 'other' category included member centres, mentors, local authorities and, in one case, a team of young staff volunteers from Goldman Sachs.

7.0 Getting external help

Some 26 per cent of respondents said that they had some form of support with their strategic planning from consultants or advisers.

Advisers tended to act as facilitator or mentors rather than writing strategic documents themselves and this is consistent with the need for ownership. We had relatively few cases where interviewees mentioned support from infrastructure bodies or other parts of their own organisation. The most frequently mentioned source of information and guidance was NCVO.

Interviewees were generally positive about the value of having an external adviser:

"Having external facilitators allows all staff to participate."

"It was marvellous. It allowed everyone to have an input without having to disagree with anyone. We were working together. It was a huge step forward. If we could get the money we would do it more frequently."

"Having a mentor gave me confidence and direction. Otherwise I might have waded in and got lost. The mentor broke the work down into manageable steps with a structure."

"We approached a big local company to ask for help with strategy. Three staff came over and advised on techniques to use as well as acting as facilitators. They brought ideas and skills the organisation does not have."

"Consultants are critical friends. They can provide expert advice and present criticism in a positive way that motivates change."

"Advisers can be helpful in saying things the staff can't."

However, interviewees emphasised the need to choose and brief advisers well:

"You have to be clear what you want from them. Otherwise they will give you what they want to give you."

"Facilitators need to know about the organisation, know what they are talking about, and avoid threatening the CEO on the day."

"The adviser didn't understand the scale of the organisation. He kept suggesting things that were not practical and de-motivated staff by telling them that they could not do planning in the short timetable allocated, when small organisations just have to."

"Consultants can take you off message, coming up with ideas that are not realistic."

"They are people with human foibles. One facilitator undermined people in the meeting."

"The advisers were working voluntarily so we have to wait for when they are available. Work has not progressed as quickly as we would have liked. It has been stop-start."

There were four examples where advisers had been imposed externally, for example, to do health checks, and this tended not to work. Organisations felt that the work was rushed, insufficiently participative and insufficiently tailored to the needs of the specific organisation.

8.0 Using resources

Interviewees were asked if there were any specific resources that they had used in strategic planning. The NCVO guide, *Tools for Tomorrow*¹⁰, was mentioned several times, but interviewees were generally unable to name other specific resources. The strong impression was that interviewees took a 'pick and mix' approach. Learning tended to be informal and iterative. One point that stood out, however, was the number of interviewees who were inspired by books about personal development and planning rather than the business literature.

Respondents varied widely in the kind of support in strategic planning that they valued:

"I tend to read things and then form my own thoughts."

"I like conferences because I pick up lots of idea. It is not necessarily what I hear but how comments generate my own thinking."

"A workshop would be good. It would be helpful to meet other people tackling the same issues, but we are ahead of the game, so it would have to be organisations who are also experienced in strategy."

"I would like training, a seminar carried out in-house for service managers. I attend seminars but I do not then feel confident enough to present the learning back to the organisation."

"We need training in strategic planning at every level: volunteers, staff, managers, trustees."

"I prefer case studies or issue-based workshops. Conferences are too general. You want the real thing."

"I would like a peer mentor. It is difficult to know how much is enough. I would really like someone to read the strategy and give me comments on it."

"Written materials are good because you can re-read them enough times for it to sink in."

"I want written stuff that I can put in front of trustees. This is what I am doing and why."

"A step-by-step guide is helpful because I tend to go off at a tangent. It keeps you focused."

"I would like money for facilitators."

¹⁰ Copeman C et al *Tools for Tomorrow* (NCVO 2004) www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/tools

9.0 Top tips from interviewees

Interviewees were asked what advice they would give other third sector organisations about to engage on strategic planning.

Comments included:

Take a participative approach. "Involve everyone within the organisation. Don't just have one person in an office write the plan. At critical times open the process up so that you take everyone with you."

Be focused. "Keep it simple: where are you? Where do you want to be? How can you get from one to the other?"

Interrogate the analysis. "Do not take it at face value." "Think about structures and linkages. Relate the different analyses that you do."

Learn from best practice. "Have a look around. Don't reinvent the wheel."

Think big. "Have fun with it. Don't be bound by risk. People can become too risk averse. Don't limit your options."

Be realistic: "The most useful plan has a good balance between what is realistically achievable and what is more ambitious."

Recognise that it is an evolving process. "Start small. Strategic planning can be carried out step-by-step." "It is not an exact science. You need to embed strategic planning in the organisation. You don't reach an end point. It is very important to get the process right. It will excite and motivate people. Then in a year's time they will be better at it and contribute more even without training."

Use an external facilitator. "External support can be a big help because consultants ask questions that you don't ask because you assume you know the answer." "You need to look beyond the obvious."

Use a variety of techniques: "Use different techniques to add interest and variety."

Keep it fresh. "Use different techniques each year. Stop it being predictable."

The way a technique is used might be more important than the choice of technique. An adviser said that: "My feeling is that almost any approach that's fresh will help an organisation reach useful conclusions."

10.0 Key findings and conclusion

Our survey provided insight into the nature of strategic planning as well as the way it is practised in the third sector. Strategic planning involves:

- A way of thinking: high level, focused, probing, integrated and contextual
- A set of beliefs: the organisation can control its destiny rather than being a victim of circumstances
- A way of acting: responding rapidly, managing risk, pre-empting problems, obtaining and acting on feedback/evaluation, not chasing funding.

The survey suggests that there are good and bad applications of each technique. Some principles apply across all techniques:

Be prepared. A number of the techniques require research internally or externally to provide a source of information to underpin the analysis – and several of the techniques can be used as preparation for others.

Involve people. This is not only about ownership but also about the great value of understanding different perspectives, assumptions, values and experiences.

Focus. The value of individual techniques often derives from being able to see the key points rather than attempting to be comprehensive.

Link. The strategic analysis as a whole should make sense. Different elements should be internally consistent and mutually reinforcing.

Consider implications. Analysis is more than lists and labels. It needs to be rooted in an understanding of where points come from and their practical implications.

Translate into action. Analysis should be followed by a clear programme of action that is consistent and complete response to the issues identified.

Reflect organisational culture and circumstances. Not every technique works for every organisation, so organisations should experiment to explore what works for them

The survey shows the need to broaden awareness of some strategic planning tools. Respondents provide a ready audience with considerable support for Performance Hub guidance.

It is perhaps worth noting that the responses to the survey also suggests that third sector organisations focus more effort on the detailed planning side of strategic planning and insufficient effort on gathering information and thinking about strategy.

As strategic planning requires a certain way of thinking, in future, more tools might come from psychology, evaluation or personal growth canons, rather than management literature.

The survey was set up to explore issues around approaches and processes in strategic planning. However, it is important to end with a comment on content. The

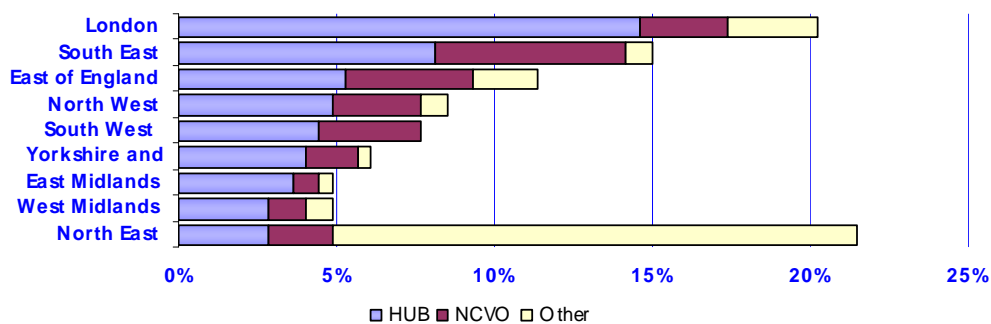
techniques themselves will not provide the vision and wisdom to set an organisation's direction: vision needs to come from the organisation's leadership.

Appendix 1: The findings

The evaluation sample

The location of the respondents reflected the source of their invitation to participate, with responses from the Performance Hub and NCVO having a concentration around London and the South East and responses from Project North East being concentrated around the North East. Despite this spatial variation, the results from the survey are similar across the three components.

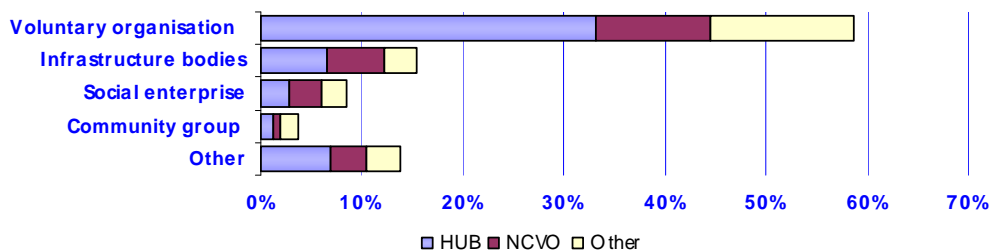
Figure 6: Region



Source: Survey results

For the telephone interviews, we attempted to achieve a good geographical coverage, interviewing organisations as shown in the table below: Most organisations described themselves as voluntary organisations though there were a number that thought of themselves as infrastructure bodies (such as a council of voluntary service) or social enterprises.

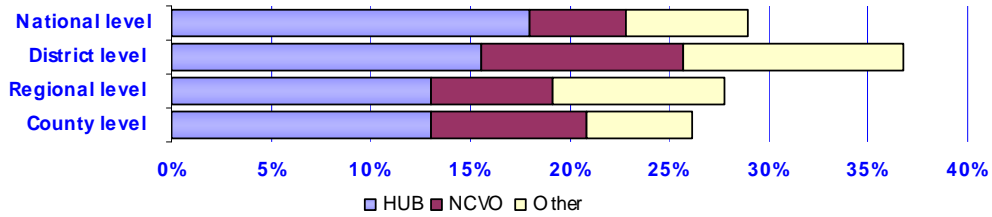
Figure 7: Organisation's structure



Source: Survey results

There was a fairly equal spread of organisations working at national, district, regional or county level.

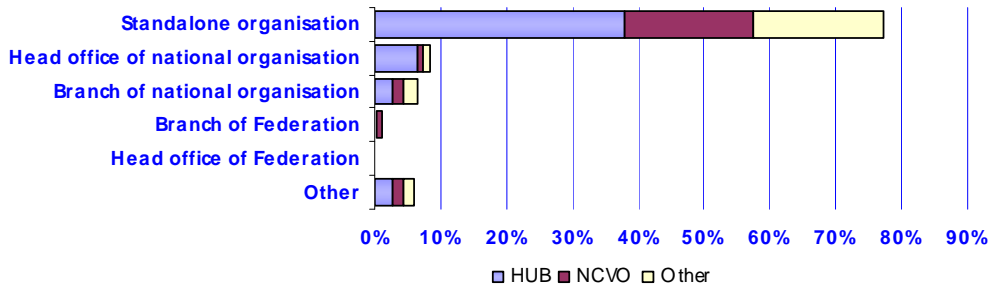
Figure 8: Level at which organisation works



Source: Survey results

We asked respondents to tell us about the structure of their organisation. Most described themselves as standalone organisations rather than branches or federations.

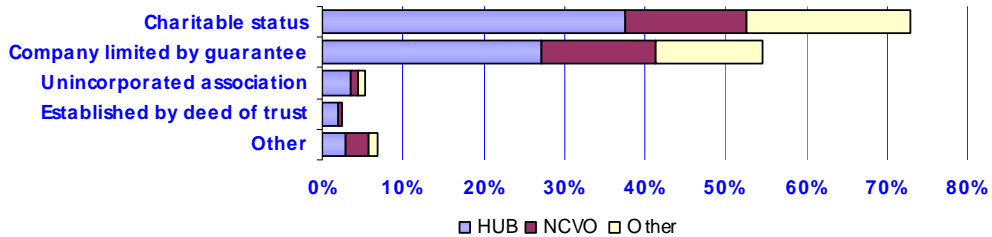
Figure 9: Part of the organisation responding to survey



Source: Survey results

Most of the respondents had charitable status. A little over half were incorporated as a company limited by guarantee.

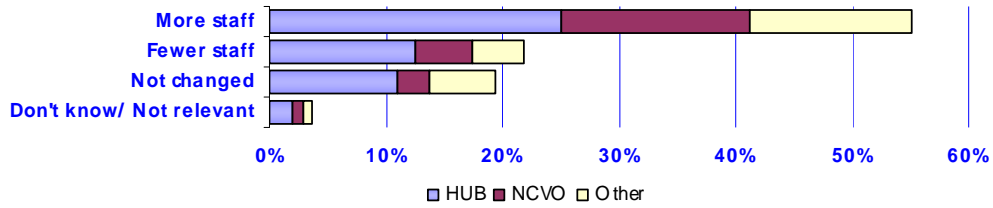
Figure 10: Organisation's legal status



Source: Survey results

We asked some questions about growth and aspirations. Rather more than half the organisations said that they had taken on more staff in the last three years. About a fifth said that they had contracted.

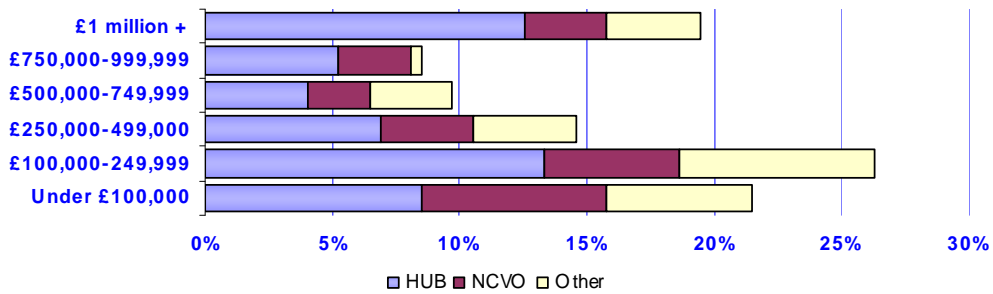
Figure 11: Change in staff numbers over last three years



Source: Survey results

There was a wide spread of income. Most organisations had an income of £100,000-£250,000, though a significant number had a turnover of more than £1m.

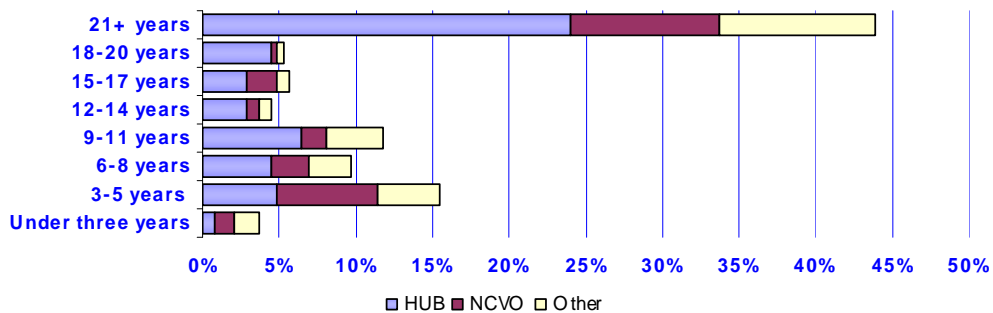
Figure 12: Organisation's income for 2005



Source: Survey results

There was a wide spread of ages, with the largest number of organisations being more than 21 years old.

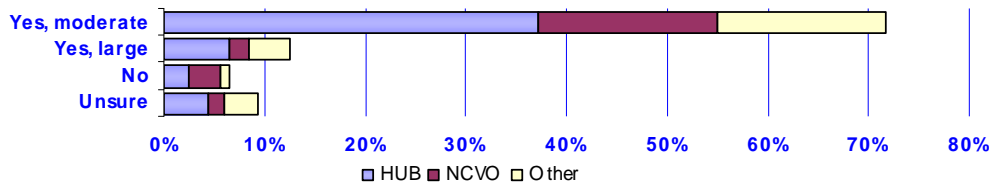
Figure 13: Organisation's age



Source: Survey results

Most organisations said that they intended to grow. Most said that they were seeking moderate rather than large scale growth.

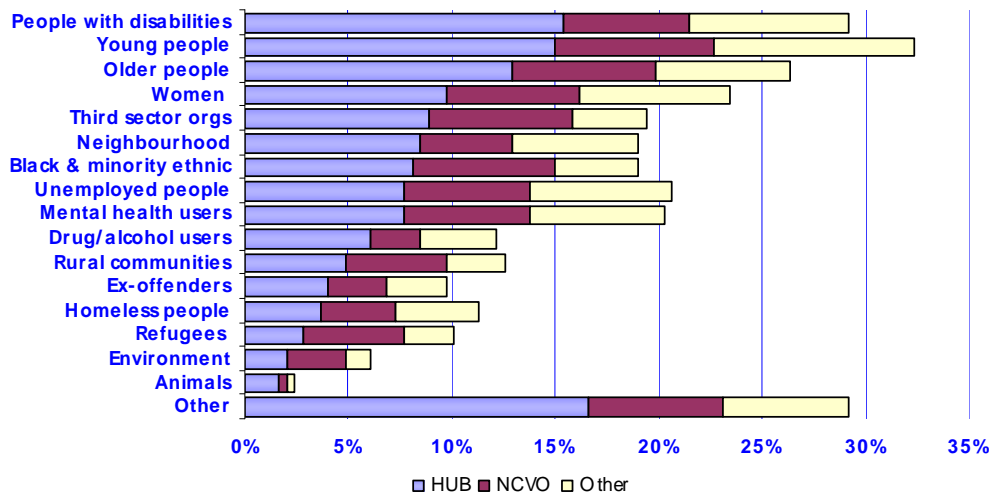
Figure 14: Intention to grow over next four years



Source: Survey results

As might be expected, there was a wide spread of target audiences.

Figure 15: Primary target audience

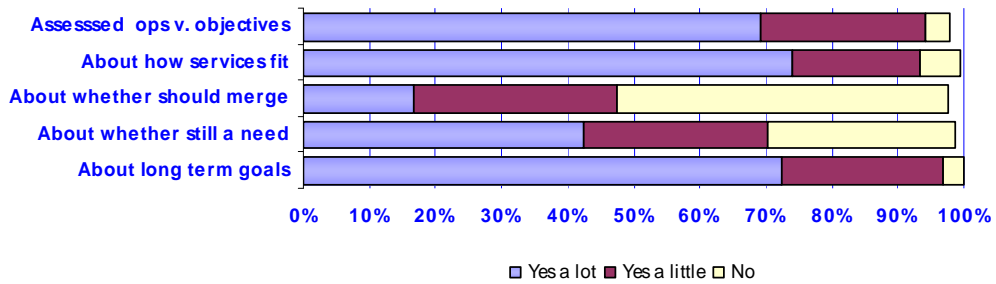


Source: Survey results

We specifically asked about organisations’ strategic thinking as part of their strategic planning process in the previous year. Note that this chart is not split by source of respondent, but on the basis of whether they have thought a lot, a little or not at all in a number of areas.

Most (96%) organisations said that they had thought about their long term goals. Most (94%) had assessed new opportunities according to their consistency with their strategic objectives. Most had also thought about how their different services fit together. Some 70 per cent had thought about whether the organisation was still needed. And nearly a half had considered whether they should merge with another organisation working in the same area.

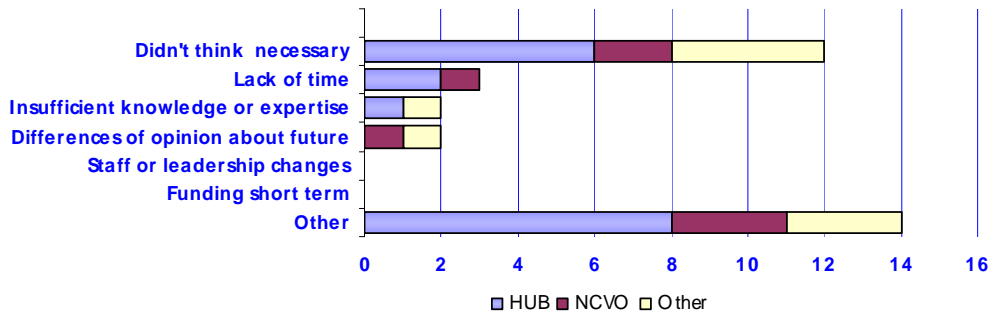
Figure 16: Strategic thinking during previous year



Source: Survey results

The few respondents who hadn't engaged consciously in strategic thinking were asked to say why not. Note that the chart below uses absolute numbers, rather than percentages, to emphasise the small number of respondents to this section of the questionnaire. The biggest reason cited was a feeling that strategic thinking wasn't really necessary.

Figure 17: Inhibitors to strategic thinking



Source: Survey results

Appendix 2: The questionnaire

Name

Job title

Name of organisation

In which region is organisation based?

What is the organisation's structure?

At what level does the organisation work? (Local, District, County, Regional, National)

For which part of the organisation are you responding?

What is your organisation's legal status?

How many paid staff (FTE) does your organisation employ?

Has the number of staff in your organisation changed over the last three years?

What was your organisation's total income for 2005?

Is your organisation intending to grow over the next four years?

Who are your organisation's main client groups?

How old is your organisation?

Over the last year, has your organisation

- Thought about the long term goal for the organisation

- Thought about whether the organisation is still needed

- Thought about whether the organisation should merge with other organisations working in the same area

- Thought about how the organisation's different services fit together

- Judged new opportunities according to their consistency with the organisation's strategic objective

If you answered no to all of the above please say why

- Didn't think was necessary

- Lack of time

- Funding is short term so no point in looking long term

- Insufficient knowledge or expertise of approaches to strategic planning

- Staff or leadership changes

- Differences of opinion about the future of the organisation

Who has been involved in your strategic planning?

What information, if any, did your organisation use as part of the process of strategic planning? Information on:

- The external factors affecting the organisation

- The strengths and weaknesses of the organisation

- Different people's expectations of the organisation

- The value of the organisation

- The position of the organisation relative to competitors/ partners

- The assumptions the organisation makes about how it achieves its effect

- The intended outcomes from the organisation's work

- Alternative ways of achieving strategic objectives

- The risks facing the organisation

- Ways of measuring progress in reaching objective

How has strategic planning been useful to your organisation?

- It has not been useful

- It has helped us clarify where we would like to be in the future

- It helps us prioritise

- It helps us coordinate different aspects of our work

- It creates opportunities for communication among stakeholders

- It creates opportunities for communication between staff within the organisation

- It improves our relationships with our clients/users/beneficiaries

- It helps with fund raising

- It has resulted in us turning down opportunities that are not compatible with our long-term goals

- It helps us understand risks facing the organisation
- It helps motivate staff, volunteers or board members
- None of the above
- Too early to say

Which, if any, of these approaches to strategic planning have you heard of or used?
For those which you have used in your organisation, which were useful or very useful?

- Strategy mapping
- Ansoff matrix
- Stakeholder analysis
- Core competencies
- Internal health check
- SWOT
- PEST
- Market share and competitor analysis
- Value chain analysis
- Life cycle analysis
- Force field analysis
- Cost benefit analysis
- Scenario planning
- Portfolio analysis
- Balanced scorecard
- Performance prism
- Mind mapping
- Project evaluation
- Outcome evaluation

Do you know of any approaches to strategic planning relevant to the voluntary and community sector that are not listed in the table above?

If you answered yes to the previous question, please list those approaches here

Would you find additional guidance on strategic planning helpful?

If you answered yes, please describe the sort of assistance that you would find helpful in terms of subject and format:

May we phone you if we need to check or amplify what you have said in this questionnaire?

Your phone number (both landline and mobile please - any further discussion will be entirely confidential)

Would you like an emailed copy of the results from our survey?