



WHITE PAPER

Strategic Planning: A Lasting Competitive Advantage

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly hit practices hard. We have many physician clients that have either closed their practices temporarily to non-urgent patients or have gone the route of putting most of their patients on telemedicine visits. But the business of medicine is not taking a break, and as the world gets a better grasp on the virus, your clinic will once again be busy as you gear back up with treating your patients. Consequently, physicians are taking this opportunity of decreased patient load and less clinic hours to focus on strategic business initiatives they have been putting aside. Along those lines includes strategic planning, and if you have not done strategic planning in the past two years, then your practice is long overdue. The strategic plan, to be of long-term value, must be treated as an ongoing business process. It must evolve and change to reflect changing market and industry conditions.

As a physician owner, you are busy. You have an endless to-do list, a full calendar, and many people to talk to, making you wonder how you are going to get it all done. However, as the practice grows and the healthcare environment becomes more complex, the need for strategic planning becomes greater. Creating a strategic plan and thinking strategically are not about doing more. They are about focusing how you spend your time so that you are more effective in reaching your goals and getting to where you want to go. That said, no physician practice has an unlimited amount of time, money, or people resources. Strategic planning can help you make the most of the resources you have, allowing you to have more enjoyment in your work while you are doing it.

Here are eight reasons for getting your team together for a strategic planning session.

Vision. You will create a clear vision for what success looks like in the future. If you don't know where you're going, how are you going to get there?

Priorities. You'll identify priorities for the short and medium term. You can't do everything at the same time, so focus on what needs to be done now and then do it well.

Alignment. You'll get alignment and buy-in around direction and strategy. Having these conversations will move your team from implicitly being on the same page to explicitly being on the same page. The clarity will energize the whole team.

Identify Challenges. You'll create an opportunity to talk about key issues facing the business (competition, changing trends, etc.). You want to ride the waves, not get smashed by them. Being reactive throws off your plans, and takes your eye off your goals.

Direction. You'll create a clear roadmap for the rest of the organization. Your staff wants to know where the practice is going and how they can contribute. An engaged staff is 20% more productive than one that is neutral (or, worse, disengaged). Your staff wants to win and this is how you can help them.

Open Communication. You'll create space for people to share what's going on with them and what they want to see as the future of the organization. It will open lines of communication and improve teamwork.

Empowerment. You'll empower others to take on tasks that will move the practice forward. As a physician owner, that means less firefighting and more focusing on what you do best: patient care, leading, and executing.

Values and Culture. You'll create the culture, values, and behaviors that you want to foster within your practice. When your values are clearly articulated, your team will understand what you expect from them on a day-to-day basis. Culture and values are the glue that keeps a strategic plan together.

Strategic planning doesn't need to take a lot of time away from the practice. The focus and the results will speak for themselves. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, we conducted a lot of strategy discussions with physicians onsite. Recently, we have shifted to doing these discussions virtually. The key is to have an outsider facilitate the meetings to avoid confirmation bias. Furthermore, the facilitator will be able to ensure your meetings stay focused, allow everyone time to share their thoughts, and ultimately leave you with a clear plan on how to move forward.

Medical practices which consistently apply a disciplined approach to strategic planning are better prepared to evolve as the local market changes and as the healthcare industry undergoes reform. The benefit of the discipline that develops from the process of strategic planning, leads to improved communication. It facilitates effective decision-making, better selection of tactical options, and leads to a higher probability of achieving the physician owners' goals and objectives.

Strategic planning can be a challenging process, particularly the first time it is undertaken in a medical practice. With patience and perseverance, as well as a strong team effort, the strategic plan can be the beginning of improved and predictable results for the business. At times when the practice gets off track, a strategic plan can help direct the recovery process. When strategic planning is treated as an ongoing process, it becomes a competitive advantage and an offensive assurance of improved day to day execution of the business practices.

Use of a consultant can help in the process and in the development of a strategic plan. As an outsider, the consultant can provide objectivity and serve as the "devil's advocate," as well as a sounding board. In the end, however, the plan must have the authorship and ownership of the physicians and managers who must execute and follow the strategic plan. It must be their plan.

Strategic planning, when treated as a work in progress, rather than as a binder on a shelf, or a file in a computer, provides a medical practice with a real and lasting competitive advantage. A living strategic planning process will help direct the business to where you desire it to be. Strategic planning is your medical practice's road map to your vision.

ABOUT ABISA

ABISA offers advisory services to help clients formulate strategic direction and advance healthcare business initiatives. As a trusted source for strategic healthcare initiatives, ABISA enables physicians to concentrate more of their time on patient care. For more information about our services, visit www.abisallc.com.



P.O. Box 1465

Valrico, FL 33595

www.abisallc.com

info@abisallc.com