

## CHAPTER

# 1

# Program Planning for Athletic Program Administrators

## OBJECTIVES

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- To introduce the concept of planning as it relates to athletics.
- To delineate the pros and cons of athletic program planning.
- To identify the types and levels of planning.
- To provide a sectional structure to program planning.
- To elucidate the importance of the following components of a program plan:
  - Executive summary
  - Mission statement
  - Program chronicled description
  - Program structure
  - Goal setting
  - Rules and operating actions
  - Human resource systems
  - Marketing formation
  - Financial reporting
  - Supplementary information

## INTRODUCTION

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While planning is conceivably the most significant ingredient in the management process, it is undoubtedly the one element that triggers the most frustration and anxiety. One often hears the expression “the future is uncertain.” As human beings, we try to



avoid uncertainty while attempting to prolong the established and known. However, the essential makeup of athletics forces program administrators to proactively recognize and take hold of the future. Planning is that practical managerial function that deals with strategies to minimize the impact of the unknown arising from the future. Planning also provides the athletic organization with a tangible shared vision that all stakeholders (people involved with the athletic program) can reference and follow. This collective focus reduces the unproductive use of time, materials, manpower, and finances.

The number of reasons that athletic programs can fail is tremendous. Factors such as

- a lack of a coherent vision;
- poor recruiting and a subsequent deficiency in athletic talent;
- underfunding of athletic program strategic initiatives;
- intense competition and an absence of a sustainable competitive advantage;
- poor internal communication;
- insufficient coaching competency (both athletically and administratively);
- an operational philosophy that stresses reactive management versus proactive management;
- a disjointed athletic program structure and minimal athletic program organization; and
- negligible leadership and internal motivation

are just a select number of elements that could contribute to an athletic organization's malfunction and breakdown. While some of these factors would seem insurmountable, they are not. To overcome these issues (and others like them), a program administrator must construct an athletic program plan that aggressively combats them.

## **WHY PLAN? PLANNING PROS AND CONS**

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The following lists detail the positive elements as well as the drawbacks of athletic program planning.

### **Pros/Positive Elements**

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- Formalized planning provides a framework to look strategically into the future.
- Planning furnishes a structure for resource allocation and financial stability.
- Planning can enhance internal operational focus as well as enhance the program's efficiency.
- A well-constructed program plan can develop strong inter-organizational cooperation between various departments/divisions.



- Appropriate program planning can be used as a strong controlling element ... program administrators can compare how well a program is doing with how well it was projected to do.
- Planning can generate optimistic beliefs concerning organizational citizenship, teamwork, and loyalty.
- Formalized athletic program planning can present a sustainable competitive advantage over athletic programs that do not have a planning system in place.
- Planning can be a way to tangibly unite individual program members' personal goals with the overall athletic program goals.
- A solid athletic program plan conveys a sense of professionalism and legitimacy for internal athletic program staff and athletes, as well as external supporters and administrators.

## Cons/Drawbacks

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- Planning accurately takes time and energy; with salaries typically being an athletic program's largest expense, time spent is money spent.
- The planning process has an enormous misconception: that administrators should take completed plans as inflexible documents. This, in turn, creates "tunnel vision" on goals and actions that may have become irrelevant or even counter-productive.
- Planning involves demanding, difficult choices. Some of these alternatives can influence the program's survival and everyone involved.
- Planning deals with the indeterminate future. This uncertainty can trigger program-wide apprehension and anxiety.

## TYPES OF PLANS

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The planning concept can go from wide ranging and all inclusive to distinct and specific. Plans can be generated by top-level administrators as well as individual coaches. As an athletic program administrator, one's task is to determine which plan is the most appropriate for the program and level of competition.

### Single-Use and Standing Athletic Program Plans

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The two primary types of plans are single-use plans and standing plans. "Single use plans are developed to achieve a set of goals unlikely to be repeated in the future. Standing plans are ongoing plans used to provide guidance for task performance repeated within the organization" (Daft & Marcic, 2006, p. 169). From an athletic program vantage, standing plans need to be established for long-term operational goals. Single-use plans are project specific with terminal time frames. It should be noted that the depth of a single-use plan will be determined by the importance of the project to the athletic program. Additionally, all external and unique projects outside the program's standing plan need some type of single-use plan (from a one-page synopsis to a detailed step-by-step blueprint) that all individuals in the program can utilize.



## Strategic Levels in Planning

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The strategic levels of planning for athletic programs parallel the three central levels in the corporate world. “The three strategic levels (for the corporate environment) are corporate, business, and functional ... corporate level is the plan for managing multiple lines of businesses ... business level strategy is the plan for managing one line of business ... functional level is the plan for managing one area of business” (Lussier, 2006, p. 151). One example of how these three echelons of planning equate to athletics would be in college/university athletics. The corporate-level plan would be the college/university institutional-wide educational plan. The business-level plan would consist of each division in the college/university (medical, business, education, athletics, etc.). The functional-level plan would be the individual athletic programs within the business-level athletic department plan. To recognize which plan one will need, the program administrator should identify the hierarchical plane in which the particular program operates.

The coordination in all three levels of planning relates to the concept of unity of planning. From a priority and timing perspective, top/corporate-level plans must take precedence and precede mid-level business plans. Consequently, business-level plans must take primacy and come before functional-level plans. This progression ensures that major organizational strategies will work together and become critical factors in lower-level plans. In his text *Manager's Guide to Business Planning*, Capezio (2010) constructs a “Catchball Process” which illustrates the flow of goals and feedback throughout different levels of the organization.

The idea is centered around moving or throwing a ball to various parts of the organization. The ball represents the major goals of the organization and can be used to develop more detailed plans as the ball is passed throughout the organization.

### Management

Sets goals to provide competitive advantage . . . allocates goals through company network

### **Passes ball to next level**

### Function and Departments

Review and give feedback on goals

### **Passes ball to next level**

### Individual and Teams

Review goals and begin to develop action plans

At the end of the Catchball process, the management team has received feedback from its functions and confirmed the viability of its key goals. As the feedback loop is closed here, the information is passed down to



the next level for more detailed planning and confirmation. This becomes the deployment point for action plans, which are linked to the top of the organization. (Capezio, 2010, p. 35)

By employing this strategic planning flow, an athletic organization can minimize miscommunication and goal ambiguity while focusing its resources on achieving all levels of athletic program objectives.

### **Internal and External Athletic Program Plans**

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The type of plan can also be classified by the end-user of the document. An internal athletic program plan is used by all program personnel who have functional responsibilities within the operation. An external athletic program plan is reviewed by all outside stakeholders who have an interest in the athletic program's operation, but not necessarily in its functions.

An internal athletic program plan is:

- extremely detailed;
- focused on all internal stakeholders;
- the foundation of the operation; and
- definitive in providing future direction to the operation.

An external athletic program plan is:

- broader based;
- a synopsis of the internal athletic program plan; and
- for use by athletic organization executives, financial institutions, and interested community and business leaders.

A key to the relationship between an internal and external athletic program plan is that the external plan is extrapolated from and completed after the comprehensive internal athletic program plan. The external, by being broader in scope, is a summation of the major highlights for readers who want an abridgment rather than the “nuts and bolts” of the operation.

### **UNIVERSAL FACTORS OF PLANNING**

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The planning function ranks among the most significant in thriving corporate settings. Athletic program administration can simplify planning into these basic factors:

- Set goals
- Develop commitment to goals
- Develop effective action plans
- Track progress toward goal achievement
- Maintain flexibility in planning. (Williams, 2000, p. 127)



These five components are found in virtually every type of business planning process. The configuration and interpretation of each of these items, as well as their utilization, change from organization to organization.

## ATHLETIC PROGRAM PLANNING

The most lucid and understandable way to structure the five factors of planning is through an instrument called a business operational plan or, for the purposes of this textbook, an athletic program plan. Table 1.1 is an illustration of how one could arrange an athletic program plan.

Before a clarification is given to these components of the athletic program plan, it is imperative that one recognizes that program plans are group endeavors and must have everyone's total pledge and commitment. The document cannot be a single person's perspective, but must be the vision

**Table 1.1. Athletic Program Plan Sectional Breakdown**

Section 1:	Executive summary
Section 2:	Mission statement
Section 3:	Program history
Section 4:	Long-term program goals (3–5 years)
Section 5:	Short-term program goals (1–2 year actions)
Section 6:	SWOT analysis
Section 7:	Policies and procedures
Section 8:	Human resource plan
Section 9:	Marketing and promotional plan
Section 10:	Financial projections/fundraising programs
Section 11:	Appendix

of everyone involved with the operation and administration of the program. Whether one is running a junior, high school, college, or professional program, the participatory involvement of coaches, parents, administrators, and athletes is vital for planning and goal fulfillment. See Appendix 1.1 for a sample program plan outline.

The following sections (based on Table 1.1) will help a program administrator assemble an athletic program plan.

### Section 1: Executive Summary

The executive summary is an abridgment of the entire athletic program plan. This overview accentuates key sections of the program plan to provide readers with a summation (characteristically one or two pages) of the plan's core components. "The executive summary of your plan must be a real "grabber;" it must motivate the reader to go on to other sections. Moreover, it must convey a sense of plausibility, credibility, and integrity" (Byrd & Megginson, 2009, p. 146).

The executive summary can be composed of

- a condensed description of the program's sport, services provided, and products produced;
- an abstract view of the competitive market and proposed marketing tactics;
- main points of the operational plan;



- a rundown of the management team (program administrators, staff, and coaches); and
- an encapsulated picture of the financial condition under which the program operates and any new projected budgetary/capital needs.

*When developing an athletic program plan, solicit ideas from all internal members of the program as well as key external associates. If possible, have a yearly “mission retreat” away from the program’s standard working environment. This retreat will furnish an uninterrupted mission and planning focus. As the program’s administrator, be equipped to guide the meeting sessions. Additionally, schedule and arrange downtime recreational activities to keep all participants engaged in the process.*

## Section 2: Mission Statement

A mission statement is defined as “a broad declaration of an organization’s purpose that identifies the organization’s products and customers and distinguishes the organization from its competitors” (Jones & George, 2004, p. 177). In other words, a mission statement is an all-encompassing affirmation that defines the overall purpose, philosophy, and future of the organization and program. “The mission is a clear and concise expression of the basic purpose of the organization. It describes what the organization does, who it does it for, its basic good or service, and its values” (Bate-man & Snell, 2011, p. 136). All objectives, policies, procedures, and actions emanate from the mission statement.

There are countless books and related literature on business planning and the development of a mission statement. Each has its own style and design criteria for a mission statement. The format and wording used is a matter of individual partiality and style. However, in writing the program’s mission statement, answer the following broad but indispensable questions:

- What is our program about?
- What is our principal purpose?
- What is our philosophy in running our program?
- What is our operational environment?
- What is the future of our operations?

A key to a powerful and effective mission statement is the infusion of a definitive, directional vision. In fact, a mission statement’s significance comes from its ability to



### Administrative Tip

Because the executive summary is a synopsis of the entire athletic program plan, it is completed last, after all other plan components are finalized.



communicate and inspire the collective athletic program in a common vision. Because a mission statement's foundational ingredient is its foresight, its vision must (a) be well thought out and studied, (b) stimulate individual and group motivation, and (c) guide the course of all future athletic program efforts and actions. The more focused the athletic program's vision, the better chance the athletic program has of getting it accomplished.

A situation may arise where a program administrator needs to drastically change the direction and vision of the athletic organization, program, and/or team. In these cases, it should be recognized that some athletic program stakeholders (e.g., athletes, coaches, staff, and administrators) might be resistant to "wholesale changes." To get these individuals "on board," it will be important to do the following:

- 1) Show them the benefits of the new vision.
- 2) Make them an integral component of the new vision.
- 3) Reinforce the new vision with strong and consistent communication.
- 4) Have a lead-by-example attitude when it comes to the philosophical changes the new vision has.



#### **Administrative Tip**

Study other athletic program or business mission statements for ideas and inspiration. Annual reports, which contain business mission statements, are available at major public and university libraries.

A mission statement can be as succinct and brief as a few sentences or as lengthy as a multi-paged elaboration. A short, straightforward mission statement could be advantageous if the program plan is to be utilized for external funding and support. A multi-page embellishment could be useful to motivate internal administrators, staff members, and athletes by providing a comprehensive operational rationale and a philosophical course of action.

### **Section 3: Program History**

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Developing a program history section of an athletic program plan might seem unproductive to some administrators. In actuality, this segment furnishes internal and external stakeholders, who are fundamentally defined as people who have any type of existing or future interest in the program (internal are athletes and staff; external are outside administrators and future sponsors), with a point of reference and a progressive framework that they can follow. There are many ways to arrange this section. It can be in narrative form, outline, or even in a timeline style. More importantly, it should be in ascending chronological order from beginning to present to future. The justification for compiling events this way is because a program plan is futuristic in nature. The plan should reflect where the program was, where it is, and where it will be.

### **Sections 4 and 5: Long- and Short-Term Goals**

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The next sections of the program plan deal with substantial, tangible goals and objectives. Long-term goals are the program's aspirations, while short-term goals are the sequence of specific actions that will achieve those aspirations. "A goal, also known as an objective, is a specific commitment to achieve a measurable result within a dated



period of time. The goal should be followed by the action plan, which defines the course of action needed to achieve the stated goal” (Kinicki & Williams, 2003, p. 153). In essence, these two sections are the substance and heart of the program plan. Obviously, long-term goals (three- to five-year projections) will be broader in outlook. Short-term goals will be decisive actions that will be utilized to reach long-term objectives.

The actual makeup of each unique goal is up to the athletic program administrator. However, there are some integral parameters and rules that should be placed on the establishing of goals. They are as follows:

1. All goals should ultimately emanate from the mission statement’s vision.
2. When formulating goals, long-term objectives should be defined first. Subsequently, short-term actions should be formulated that work toward the accomplishing of each long-term goal.
3. It is critical to base all goals in reality. It is necessary to ask the following questions:
  - Do we currently have the resources and funds to achieve our projected goals?
  - Do we have the future potential to acquire the essential resources and funds to accomplish goals?
  - Do we have the staff or the likelihood of acquiring the staff to attain goals?
  - Is the timeframe for the execution of the goals practical?
  - Will there be any internal or external confrontations or resistance to the goals?
4. Goals should be easily comprehensible by everyone in the organization. They should be straightforward, concise, and in common language.
5. Each goal should be distinctive and salient. In other words, are the goals repetitive or are they unique in origin?
6. Each goal should have the absolute endorsement and focus of everyone in the organization. In the athletic program setting, the players/athletes, coaches, staff, and administrators should be involved in the goal-setting process. Without everyone’s input, key internal stakeholders might not take an active interest in operations, which, in turn, may leave goals unattained.
7. Each goal/program objective should be as precise and measurable as possible. The advantage of quantifying goals is to supply athletic program administrators with concrete numbers so that they can compare projected goals with actual results.
8. Goals should be challenging but realistic. Setting goals “beyond the reach” of current resources and capabilities could be profoundly



discouraging to both athletes and staff. Conversely, setting goals that are too easily achieved will depreciate the critical value of goal setting and goal achievement. A program administrator must balance these two factors to maximize the program's potential.

9. In order to be effective, goals need individual and/or group accountability. Simply put, a program goal without individual and/or group accountability will fail because assumptions will be made on who is to work on and accomplish the goal.
10. Goals need to be time precise. While the word "deadline" has a negative connotation in our society, in goal setting and achievement it is tremendously appropriate. Once again, the time frame to achieve a particular goal must be challenging but realistic.

In their text *Management: Skills and Applications*, Rue and Byars (2009) outline 10 possible goal areas that are universal to most businesses. These 10 areas can be adapted to athletic organizations. The following list is a summation of their concepts.

1. **Profitability.** Measures the degree to which the firm is attaining an acceptable level of profits.
2. **Markets.** Reflects the firm's position in the marketplace.
3. **Productivity.** Measures the efficiency of internal operations.
4. **Product.** Describes the introduction or elimination of products or services.
5. **Financial resources.** Reflects goals relating to the funding needs of the firm.
6. **Physical facilities.** Describes the physical facilities of the firm.
7. **Research and innovation.** Reflects the research, development, or innovation aspirations of the firm.
8. **Organizational structure.** Describes objectives relating to changes in the organizational structure and related activities.
9. **Human resources.** Describes the human resource assets of the organization.
10. **Social responsibility.** Refers to the commitments of the firm regarding society and the environment. (Rue & Byars, 2009, p. 135)

Adapting these 10 areas to an athletic program's possible goals can encompass the following points illustrated in Table 1.2.



**Table 1.2. Potential Goal Areas for Athletic Programs**

**Profitability Goals**

- Maximizing and diversifying revenue sources
- Minimizing and controlling expenses
- Strong, adept budgeting
- Fiscal responsibility philosophy

**Market Goals**

*Creating a sustainable competitive advantage over similar athletic programs with:*

- Superior program planning
- Stronger organizational configuration
- Competent and motivated athletes, coaches, and staff
- Sound leadership
- Clear and valid control systems

**Productivity Goals**

- Internal systems design in areas such as recruiting, travel, training, general administration
- More efficient use of resources to produce quality outputs

**Production Goals**

*Addition/deletion of:*

- Sports programs and teams
- Merchandise (athletic organization and sports specific)
- Summer instructional camps
- Fundraising events and activities

**Financial Resource Goals**

*Increasing:*

- Ticket sales (season and individual events)
- Merchandise sales
- TV/radio/media revenue
- Fundraising events, activities, and programs

**Physical Facility Goals**

- New athletic facilities
- Renovation of current athletic facilities
- Capacity utilization of athletic facilities to maximize revenue
- Facility cost controls

**Research and Innovation Goals**

*Researching:*

- New sport-specific training
- New administrative procedures
- New legislative issues
- New technological advances

**Organizational Structure Goals**

*Objectives to assist in facilitating:*

- Effective communication throughout the athletic program
- Resource utilization and focus
- Orderly working environment with clear lines of authority

**Human Resource Goals**

*Objectives to improve:*

- Staffing systems (for acquiring administrators, coaches, and staff)
- Recruiting systems (for acquiring athletes)
- Athletic orientation programs
- Skill, knowledge, and attitudinal training
- Performance evaluation systems
- Disciplinary systems

**Social Responsibility Goals**

- Community involvement and improvement
- Increasing public awareness of athletic program through social responsibility
- Developing a sense of community within and around the athletic organization

## Section 6: SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis, which is the evaluation of an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats, is an essential part of establishing the future direction of the athletic program. The analysis supplies a comprehensive, contemporary picture of the organization. "The elements of S.W.O.T. analysis are included in the general planning model, and in using strategic inventory to size up the environment. Given S.W.O.T.'s straight forward appeal, it has become a popular framework for strategic planning" (DuBrin, 2006, p. 148).