

Great Lakes United

Strategic Planning

January 8, 1994

Steps

1. Introduction
 - the strategic Planning process
 - what has happened to date
 - today's purpose-walk away with clearly specified goals
2. Framework
 - the S curve, an analytical tool
3. Presentation of findings
4. Presentation of Preliminary Goals
5. Discussion and Identification of Goals
6. Limitations
7. Decision Making
 - Place goals in order of priority
 - Place goals in a time horizon
8. Actions
 - plans
 - presentations
 - decision making
 - role of First Nations Director

Executive Summary of Findings: Member Organization Focus Groups

1. There is unequivocal support for Great Lakes United among member organizations. All groups believe that the umbrella role that GLU plays is indispensable and their work would be severely hampered without GLU.
2. There is a need for Great Lakes United to provide recognizable leadership for grass roots issues, without getting mired in the mechanics of organizing them. GLU must establish links and lobby at high political levels, so that pressure can be brought to bear at local levels in support of local groups. GLU should not go in and organize RAPs, but should instead support local groups in their efforts to do so. One of the most beneficial things that GLU can do is to apply its professional credibility behind the scenes.
3. Great Lakes United needs to be a storehouse of easily accessible information. Member organizations have a tremendous need for detailed information on an as needed basis. The newsletter, as it now exists, is far too complex and does not draw in new people. Accessible articles which provide detailed sources, if required, would be more appropriate. An example of a specific information need expressed by member groups is knowledge of environmental groups which are actually fronts for industrial concerns.
4. There is a strong desire among member organizations for GLU to provide education. Specific educational needs include providing training geared to local group concerns and teaching groups how to access information from GLU and from eco-net bulletin boards.
5. Great Lakes United can service member organizations by keeping a variety of issues alive that would be impossible for local groups to do in any ongoing way. This job can best be done by maintaining the issues, keeping information up to date and periodically bringing attention to bear on specific issues. A good example of a pertinent issue is winter navigation.
6. Many groups who are active in environmental issues within the basin do not know about GLU. GLU needs to clarify who it is, define its niche and clearly communicate this information to interested parties.

Executive Summary of Findings: Board Focus Groups

1. Great Lakes United needs to build its membership in order to become a preeminent force in the basin.
2. Great Lakes United has been on the leading edge of issues, but is no longer there. In order to address current basin issues, GLU must define its niche. Is it an activist group, a liaison group or a resource group? Can it be all three?
3. GLU's environmental focus is no longer all-encompassing enough. GLU must link environmental issues with social interaction issues. The organization's audience has become more sophisticated and wants it to provide the analysis to link environmental issues with health, poverty and employment issues, across all cultural and ethnic sectors.
4. Great Lakes United needs to rework the organization structure to more fully and effectively utilize the abilities of Board members and more clearly define the relationship between the Staff and the Board.
5. There are recurring cultural differences among the participants in the GLU enterprise that interfere with the overall effectiveness of the organization. These need to be identified and resolved so that GLU can become a true transnational organization.
6. Great Lakes United must solve the burden of financial scarcity if Board and Staff abilities are to be fully unleashed. Lack of funds is a millstone around the organization's neck and requires some creative problem solving in the immediate future.
7. The question of why GLU exists must be answered.

Executive Summary of Findings: Board of Directors Interviews

1. There is overwhelming support for clearly defining the role of directors. This would necessitate formulating a job description, clarifying expectations and a developing a flexible, supportive process for giving directors feedback on effectiveness in their roles.
2. Great Lakes' financial situation is draining the organization of its will. The current methods of acquiring funding are stale. The current funders are at their limit with Great Lakes United unless their confidence in GLU is restored.
3. There are two key group issues to clear up in order for the Board to become more functional. First, the cultural differences among the Board members need to be identified and affirmed, and a transnational organization created. Second, and related to this, the "old baggage" that many Board members bring to the organization needs to be unpacked and finished.
4. The executive committee needs to meet more often, handle the day-to-day aspects of governance, report regularly to the Board and make Board meetings Basin-wide strategy sessions instead of nuts and bolts sessions.
5. Communication needs to be greatly improved within the organization. In addition, the organization needs to improve the ways in which it disseminates information about issues and about itself to the public.
6. The decision-making process has proven inadequate to the needs of the Board. Some examples of the shortfalls of the current process are that decisions have been delayed or pushed through with strong minority opposition. There is strong support for a modified consensus process, which could facilitate greater unanimity on decisions and shorten the decision-making process by removing the necessity for strong minorities.
7. A significant number of decisions that are made currently are not followed up. This is an issue of scarce resources and poor communication.
8. Great Lakes United needs to be much closer to the grass roots. This involves focussing the organization's energies on the issues that are of concern to members now.
9. There is a wide diversity of understanding among Directors of the belief system that underlies Great Lakes United. This ranges from being unclear about whether there is a belief system to seeing the belief system as very defined and specific.

Preliminary Goals - for Discussion

1. The member organizations consulted indicated that their membership in Great Lakes United significantly increased their ability to be effective. There are many groups concerned about the environment around the basin who are not yet members of GLU. Membership in GLU mutually benefits GLU and member organizations. Great Lakes United will develop a member recruitment program to significantly increase the membership.
2. Great Lakes United will be financially sustainable through developing sources of funding that are highly diverse. This means reducing GLU's dependency on Foundations for funding.
3. The role of directors will be clearly defined. A job description will be developed defining what roles directors will assume, clarifying the organizations expectation of directors and describing an evaluation process of director's effectiveness.
4. Board meetings will be devoted to Great Lakes Basin strategy sessions. Strategic Planning will be a regular part of Board meetings.
5. Great Lakes United will establish a comprehensive communications process that has an external focus and an internal focus. Externally, communication with member organizations will be effective and mutually beneficial. Internally, directors will be fully informed of all relevant information. Staff, particularly the Executive Director, will be fully informed of all Board members activities and reciprocally the Executive Director will keep the Executive and the Board fully informed of staff activities.

Limitations

There are many directions Great Lakes United could go in, there are countless good issues to work on, there are many organizational issues to solve, yet GLU has significant limitations on what it can do now.

There is a scarcity of:

- funds to have the staff to implement many good ideas
- time that directors have to do what staff are unable to do
- morale among all GLU participants to achieve results
- clarity of direction to know where to focus resources