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AMSD Strategic Planning Proposal

Mary Kay Delvo

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## AMSD Request for Proposal INspiring SIGHT

*"Organizations with the desire to evolve, grow & take risks, view me as an asset."*

Mary Kay Delvo

### TIMELINE and PURPOSE OF PROJECT

This proposal is framed around the information discussed during my phone conversation with Scott Croonquist and Andrea Cuene. When working with organizations, my professional goal is to support the leadership team and board of directors in learning how to utilize their strategic plan, so it becomes the litmus test for all decision-making from the break room to the board room.

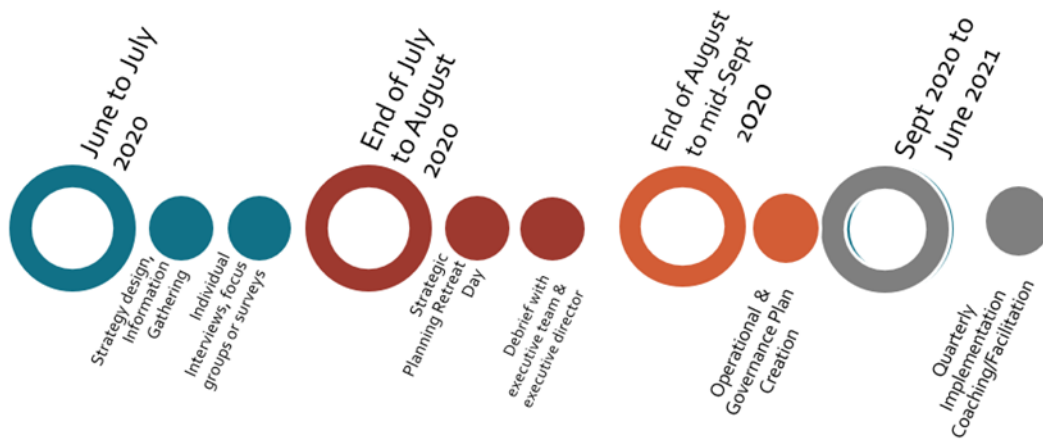
The objective for this proposal is to facilitate a deep-dive strategic planning process resulting in a strategic roadmap relevant for navigating the political, economic, cultural, and social environments facing members of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts. The last full strategic planning process was conducted in 2014 with a refresher in 2019 which began to incorporate the work of Reimagine Minnesota. The timing of a new strategic plan is particularly relevant, given the COVID-19 pandemic situation which is causing adaptation and change in nearly every aspect of society.

Proposal Scope framed around these specified **Areas of Need**:

- Re-articulation of the vision & mission of the AMSD through a strategic planning process which includes internal and external stakeholder feedback
- Determine how to fully integrate Reimagine Minnesota into the AMSD strategic plan
- Explore how to fully optimize the opportunity for change presented by the disruption of the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Determine the appetite for and capacity of AMSD in becoming a thought leader in shaping 21<sup>st</sup> Century educational system design

I have broken my scope of services into phases so you can select the entire proposal or only portions. Should I be awarded the contract, the strategy design session will be utilized to come to agreement on the final scope and investment. I will provide my full contract in advance of that meeting.

## TIMELINE



THE

### INSPIRING SIGHT ADVANTAGE

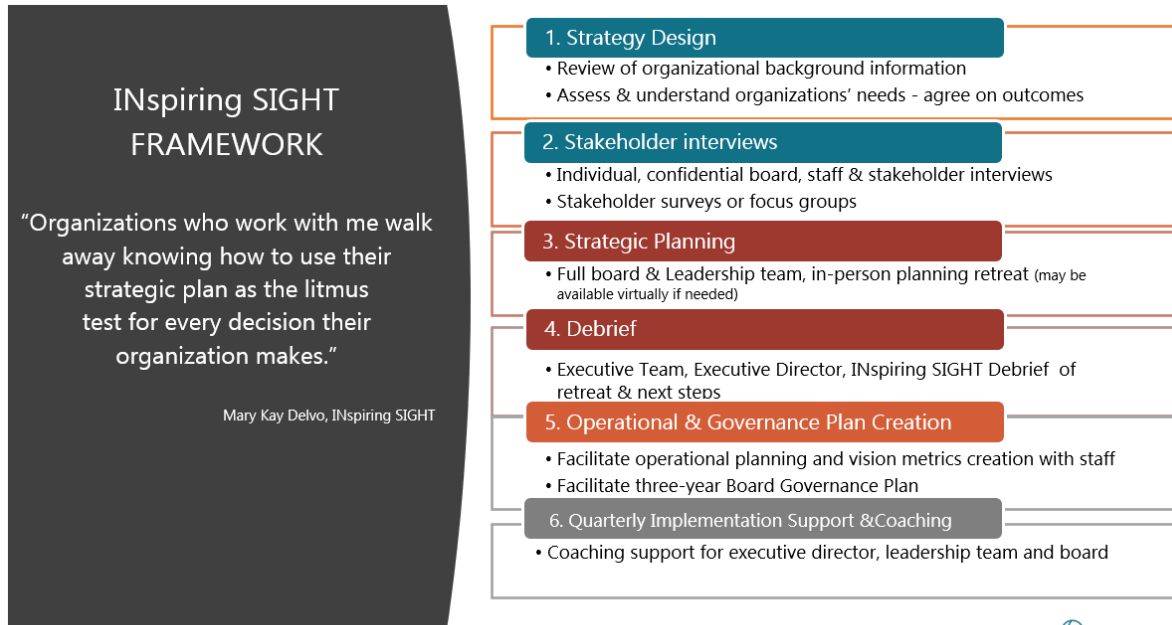
Just because one has a strategic plan, doesn't mean it is the right plan, and certainly doesn't guarantee the organization will follow-it. There are **Five reasons strategic plans don't produce desired results** (full article in proposal addendum). With that knowledge, I have designed a process addressing all five of these barriers so organizations I work with can produce results.

My custom strategic planning process addresses common gaps and linkages between operational plans, strategic plans, and the unconscious and auto-pilot ways employees navigate the world. The INspiring SIGHT strategic planning process is embedded with training on board roles, management roles, how board governance differs from management, the difference between the vision, mission, and strategic directions and how to use vision metrics.

Individual and confidential interviews with all board members, leadership team members and key stakeholders or staff are a standard part of the INspiring SIGHT process. This eliminates many of the barriers commonly embedded into group processes. This allows organizations to create plans based on information that accurately reflects the culture and the way it operates. Just like I was taught in computer programming classes in the 1980's, "Garbage in, garbage out." You'll only get as good a plan as the information you base it on. Using my proprietary strategic alignment map, you'll walk away with a one-page strategic plan that can be used as a litmus test for all decision-making--giving you the confidence that following your plan will move you closer to your mission.

*"Boards, while frequently deeply committed to the organization, often provide little guidance or direction not because they don't want to, but because they don't know how to."*

Mary Kay Delvo



## STRATEGY DESIGN & STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS, June to Mid-July 2020

### Background and Supporting Information

- Strategic Design Session with INspiring SIGHT & Executive Director & Board Chair
- Collection of background information – review of documents and history by INspiring SIGHT
- Individual, confidential interviews by phone conducted by INspiring SIGHT

### Scope:

- Gain multiple perspectives, experiences, and observations in a confidential setting
- Uncover new insights through the use of powerful questions
- Incorporate insights from existing documents and processes
- Strategy Design Session Agenda
  1. Expectations & outcomes for strategic planning project
  2. Articulate AMSD’s interest in learning from partners and stakeholders
  3. Determine stakeholder feedback method: focus groups, survey, or both
  4. Create agreements about timeline and designate key contacts for the project
  5. Select Retreat dates and location

- Background information for AMSD

Mary Kay will review the following available information from AMSD:

- Current planning and strategic documents which guide the organization
- Two most recent executive director reports to the board or any other reporting documents by staff to the board
- Board roles and responsibilities document- (job description)
- Conflict of Interest policy
- Development documents/plans (if applicable)
- Marketing materials, printed and digital
- Bylaws
- Annual Reports – last 2-3 years

AMSD staff are responsible for providing INspiring SIGHT with this information during or prior to the strategic design session.

- **Interviews, Focus Groups and Summary of Findings**

INspiring SIGHT will interview the executive director, 13 members of the Legislative Committee which includes the executive committee, and five staff. Interviews will take place by phone. INspiring SIGHT will create a Doodle Poll with a list of available interview times for members to select from. The interviews will take place over 3-4 weeks and at least 2 weeks prior to the in-person strategic planning session.

Interview questions will be designed after the strategic design meeting which will take place at the beginning of the contract with the executive director and board chair.

Interview content is confidential, and I will synthesize interviews and organize the results into a SWOT analysis and key themes. Interview results will be shared with the board and leadership team during the strategic planning session. Insights from interviews will guide the framework and design of the full board discussion which will take place during the in-person strategic planning session.

Individual interviews improve your results in three ways:

- 1) Provide every person the opportunity to hear their voice in the process, even if they can't be present the day of planning
- 2) Surfaces undercurrents, tension, or "elephants in the room" so your plan can be built on the information reflective of the actual culture and environment the plan will need to succeed in or be successful in shifting.
- 3) Elevates the strategic planning discussion because participants have had reflection time prior to the in-person planning session. This ensure richer discussion and allows for decision making earlier in the day when participants are still fresh.

- **Focus Groups**

- Based on our phone discussion, I recommend two focus groups made-up of 10-12 members from a diverse pool of your membership. You will gain more meaningful input from a focus group than a survey to all members. You may also want to consider a third focus group which includes stakeholder/partners outside of your membership. For examples, legislators, representatives from other education advocacy groups such as SEE, MSBA, MN Department of Education etc. these could be done over a video platform (my preference is ZOOM) to make it easier for others to participate. Focus groups are optional as part of my proposal. I estimated the cost of two focus groups in my proposal. Should I be awarded the contract, we would iron out these details in our strategy design meeting before signing the contract.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT & DEBRIEF, Late July to August 2020**  
**Strategic Planning Session- Full day, In-person with Full Board & Leadership Team**

- Strategic Planning—reassess vision, mission, beliefs, strategic directions
- Create one-year and three-year goals for each strategic direction
- Debrief meeting with Executive Director & Board Executive Committee or staff leadership team (we'll determine who during strategy design meeting)

**Scope and Deliverables**

- Review attributes of good governance
- Rearticulate differences between vision, mission & strategic directions
- Synthesized verbal report of what was learned during interviews, surveys, and focus groups
- Re-articulation of vision, mission, beliefs, and strategic directions
- Redefined values, principles, or beliefs
- One - and three-year goals for each strategic direction
- Facilitate buy-in by board and leadership team about organizational vision & how to get there
- A list of all organizational activities which support the strategic directions
- Detailed written report for organizations records
- A complete one-page strategic plan (see image below)



The Strategic Alignment Map facilitates a process for using the organizations’ strategic plan as a litmus test for all decision-making and will be demonstrated during the strategic planning process.

*"Organizations who work with me walk away knowing how to use their strategic plan as the litmus test for every decision their organization makes."*

Mary Kay Delvo, INSpiring SIGHT

## **CONSULTANTS' REQUIREMENTS for In-Person Session**

### **Equipment and supplies for strategic planning and implementation planning :**

- An exceptionally large whiteboard for use in facilitation (wall-size if possible)
  - Projector and screen
  - Easel
  - Wi-Fi access
  - Easel size post-it note paper
  - A room large enough to move around in. Natural light is always a plus
- \*I will bring my own white erase markers, markers, fidgets, and other miscellaneous supplies

### **Staffing assistance:**

- Key contact for the organization
- Key organizational documents outlined earlier in the proposal for review in advance of in-person session
- Coordinate the scheduling of strategy design meeting with key players
- Printing of any required handouts for group meetings or training
- Assistance with notetaking while I am facilitating the in-person sessions
- Capture photos of our work together

INspiring SIGHT will design the agenda and facilitate the session. AMSD staff and board are responsible for being fully engaged in the process and owning the results.

## **OPERATION & GOVERNANCE PLAN CREATION**

### **Facilitation of operational & governance plan creation; two- half days**

The primary are strategic plans fail is in implementation. Staff get busy with their day to day work and plans often are not written in a way that is accessible in everyday language. I teach the board and leadership team how to ask questions against the plan to create monthly or quarterly check-ins on the plan.

- Facilitate half-day session to create operational plan for staff
- Facilitate half-day session to create three-year governance plan with executive committee & executive director

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## **QUARTERLY IMPLEMENTATION COACHING September 2020 through June 2021**

### **Implementation and alignment coaching**

- Quarterly coaching for executive director, board chair and executive committee
- Coaching can be utilized to:
  - create a coaching culture by incorporating powerful questions into your day-to-day
  - provide productive feedback which encourages growth
  - trouble shoot unanticipated issues
  - regularly assess for alignment of operations & governance with the strategic plan
  - increase the level of conversational intelligence and constructive dialogue
  - learn to use the strategic plan as litmus test for decision-making

### **Scope:**

- Ongoing coaching for leadership and board members to develop coaching culture and powerful questions for constant evaluation of alignment.

INspiring SIGHT's strategic planning process along with implementation coaching ensures organizations get the most from their investment in strategic planning and that they won't return to business as usual once the plan is complete. Coaching provides the board and leadership team real-time support as they work to develop new strategic mindset muscles.

Coaching primarily takes place with executive director, board chair and executive committee through a combination of in-person meetings, phone, email and video-based meetings or conversations, attendance at some staff meetings and executive or board meetings. I've designed the proposal to allow flexibility in delivery so I can provide coaching and consultation around unforeseen challenges. None of us can anticipate now what will come up, but challenges are sure to arise as a matter of the course of business. Together, we will determine how to best utilize my time in ways that make the most sense within the natural rhythms of AMSD. I've scoped my proposal at two hours of coaching per month for nine months. These hours may be divided so they best serve the needs of AMSD as long as they are within the total contracted amount of 24 coaching hours. (Meaning, one month you may only use 1 hour of coaching another you may want me to coach/facilitate a meeting using four yours) This allows me to best meet your needs as they arise.

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## RESULTS OF MY WORK:

**Designed and delivered a 15-month leadership academy for a cohort** of 24 education finance directors from across Minnesota. The program was a combination of in-person academy sessions, coaching groups, and practical application. After just two in-person academy sessions, participants said the following: "I am more aware of how I communicate now and how I can be more effective.", "Managing my inner critic is hard work, requiring a lot of practice, but I am already noticing the difference in how I think and show-up as a result.", "I have always focused on intellect and am seeing now that I have to focus on relationships first.", I have been consciously more open-minded and it has allowed me to take risks I would usually avoid."

**A nonprofit, employing 300 employees**, hired me to facilitate their organizations' strategic plan and board development. Additionally, I did one-on-one leadership coaching with identified staff. This organizations' board had not had turnover in nearly 30 years. Within one year of working with me, nearly their entire board turned over, and they were strategic about who they replaced board members with, they updated and created policies for guiding the board and reassessed skills needed for their leadership staff. The organization is actively seeking funding so they can bring me back to do leadership development with managers and directors so they can growth their leaders from within.

**A small volunteer-run nonprofit engaged my assistance to create a strategic plan and strategies for growing their membership.** Within the first year of putting the strategic plan into place, the organization began operating in the black for the first time in five years, and membership increased by 300%. To this day, the board follows the strategic alignment map designed for them and revisits their strategic plan on a monthly basis through the reporting processes designed specifically for their board

**I facilitated a strategic planning process for two statewide agencies who were** collaborating to create a required statewide plan for a federally funded project. The plan required articulation of their statewide plan, opportunities for public input, and evaluation of their work. They received the funding based on the statewide plan created. This plan became the foundation for the questions I designed for public input sessions which I facilitated across Minnesota in-person and online.



## MARY KAY DELVO PROFILE, MA, CPC, LSW, Vistage Chair



Mary Kay owns INspiring SIGHT, a successful strategy and coaching company that specializes in strategic planning, board and leadership development, coaching, and mindset management. Mary Kay is known for her rare ability to ask just the right question for surfacing the crux of your issue. Organizations with the desire to evolve, grow & take risks, view her as an asset.

Her 25-year multi-sector and systems experience coupled with her broad-based education allow her to adapt to nearly any setting. With experience spanning social services, county and state government, small to midsize businesses, higher education, K-12 education, and nonprofits and member associations, there is rarely a challenge she can't handle. She has regional and national speaking experience and a natural gift for bringing people together

to solve complex problems.

As an organizational coach and consultant, Mary Kay uses humor, vulnerability, and a little dose of reality to help others get out from under the status quo. The result—healthy workplace cultures, organizations which prosper, and employees free to live their best lives.

Areas of specialty include:

- Leadership Development Programs
- Coaching, mindset work, healthy conflict, and multigenerational integration
- Developing High Performance Boards and teams
- Strategic Planning and Facilitation

Mary Kay designed the curriculum for her Master of Liberal Studies in Leadership, Psychology & Spirituality from the University of Minnesota, has two Bachelors, Social Work and Public Relations, from the University of North Dakota, and was trained as a Certified Professional Coach at Learning Journeys International School of Coaching. She has years of board experience including serving as the 2018-2019 Professional Development Chair for the International Coach Federation-Minnesota and has been a multi-time chair of the board during her two-plus terms on the Fridley School Board.

An avid bicycler, Mary Kay also sings the National Anthem at sporting events, loves adventure, stream fishing, hockey and has two sons, 20, and 18. Go to [www.inspiringsight.com](http://www.inspiringsight.com) for a partial client list.

Mary Kay gives back by serving on multiple boards:

- Board of Directors, Fridley District 14 School Board, 2012 to 2021  
Chair-2020,2018, 2015; Teacher Negotiation team, Superintendent Search Chair
- Board of Directors, Northeast Metro Intermediate District 916 School Board
- Board of Directors, Fridley Schools Foundation
- Board of Directors, Former Chair, Professional Development, International Coach Federation, Minnesota Chapter

TIMELINE	SERVICE	INVESTMENT
June to Mid-July 2020	<b>STRATEGY DESIGN &amp; STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS</b>	
	<b>Activities:</b> Strategy design session – 90 minutes Document Review – (documents outlined within the proposal) Interviews, compilation of interview results and strategic planning preparation Individual, confidential interviews via phone - 13 board member, 3 FT Staff, 2 contractors	\$3000
	Member Survey - \$750	optional
	Focus Group (per group)- via ZOOM or in-person \$1500 per 90-minute group	\$3000
	<b>Total based on two, 8 to 12-member focus groups</b>	<b>\$6000</b>
End of July to Aug 2020	<b>STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT &amp; DEBRIEF</b>	
	<b>Activities:</b> Facilitation of strategic planning retreat- planning and full day session (Date to be determined in coordination with Executive Director) Strategic Planning Debrief	<b>\$5000</b>
	<b>STRATEGIC PLANNING TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,000</b>
	<b>ADD-ON</b>	
August to mid-Sept 2020	<b>OPERATION &amp; GOVERNANCE PLAN CREATION</b>	
	<b>Activities:</b> half-day session to create operational plan for staff; \$2500 half-day session to create three-year governance plan; \$2500	\$5000
		<b>\$5000</b>
Sept. 2020 thru June 2021	<b>QUARTERLY IMPLEMENTATION COACHING</b>	
	<b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching for executive director, board chair and executive committee</li> <li>• Coaching can be utilized to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-create a coaching culture by incorporating powerful questions into your day-to-day</li> <li>-provide productive feedback which encourages growth</li> <li>-trouble shoot unanticipated issues</li> <li>-regularly assess for alignment of operations &amp; governance with the strategic plan</li> <li>-increase the level of conversational intelligence and constructive dialogue</li> <li>-learn to use the strategic plan as litmus test for decision-making</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2 hours per month \$1500 per quarter  18 hours total  \$4500 total (\$1500 quarterly)  Option to contract for fewer coaching hours
		<b>\$3600</b>
	Mileage and expenses are built in. There will be no additional charges unless there is an unreasonable and unusual request beyond typical mileage, & meals.	
	<b>COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$19,600</b>

## REFERENCES

### **Jen Theneman**

Partners for Affordable Housing, Executive Director

507-340-1640

[jen@partnersforhousing.org](mailto:jen@partnersforhousing.org)

Jen hired me to conduct strategic planning for Partners for Affordable Housing in September 2019.

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### **Patrick Schulte-Jacobson**

North East 916 Intermediate School District , Executive Director of Finance

651-415-5650

[pjacobso@916schools.org](mailto:pjacobso@916schools.org)

Patrick is in the 15-month leadership academy cohort I am leading.

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### **Gary Schott**

VINE Board of Directors, Strategic Planning Committee

Business Consultant, Small Business Development Center

574-453-6997 M

[glSchott14@gmail.com](mailto:glSchott14@gmail.com)

Gary was on the strategic planning committee of the board of directors responsible for hiring me and coordinating the strategic planning and transition/success planning process for the VINE organization's board of directors.

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### **Heidi Holste**

Former Executive Director, Northeast Residence

612-708-1982 M

Heidi hired me to facilitate her organizations' strategic plan and work on developing her board of directors. I also did one-on-one leadership coaching with some of her staff.

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### **JayIn Havill, Professor at Muscatine Community College**

National PAS Board of Directors , Vice Chair

712-551-6544

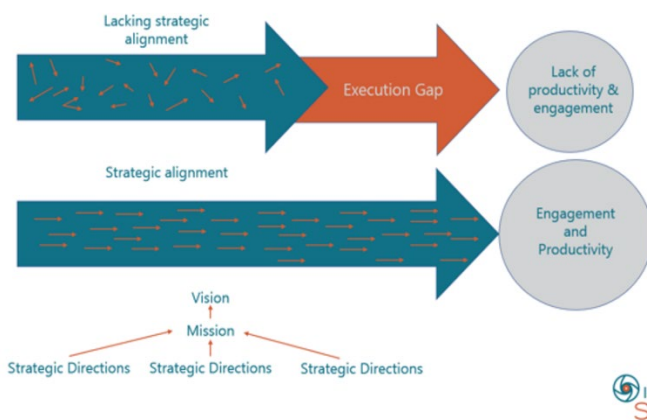
[jhavill@eicc.edu](mailto:jhavill@eicc.edu)

I facilitated the strategic planning process for the National Professional Agricultural Student Organization. JayIn served on the Board of Directors. They went onto hire me to create their marketing materials and eventually serve as their interim executive director.

# Five Reasons Strategic Plans Fail to be Strategic

Meet Roberta. She is the executive director for a mid-size nonprofit organization. She and her staff are passionate about the organizations' work, yet her team isn't producing to the level they are capable of. Most are highly skilled and professional, yet they struggle to really get traction. She hears things from them like, "I'm not sure what we should be doing next", "Every time the board meets, we just get more work" and "I don't feel like we ever really accomplish anything." On top of that, several veteran staff people recently resigned and they are struggling to fill the new positions. She is concerned more will follow.

The board, while deeply committed to the organization, provides little guidance or direction. They tell Roberta to follow the strategic plan they spent all that money on a couple of years ago. But since then, the pace of decision-making has sped-up, and the scenarios are more complicated. Roberta feels alone and not sure what to do next to keep the organization moving in the right direction.



This all-to-common scenario in nonprofit organizations often leads to my poking around about their strategic plan. The executive director or board chair frequently interrupt my questions and tell me, "We have a strategic plan, that's not the problem." However, my experience tells me otherwise.

Over the course of my 25 years of working for and with organizations, I have discovered an interesting phenomenon around the process of strategic planning. Just because one has a strategic plan, doesn't mean it is the right plan, and certainly doesn't mean the organization will follow-it. My experience and observations have led me to the five reasons strategic plans don't produce desired results.

## 1. Strategic plans are rarely based on honest feedback and complete information

When in a room together, board members and staff are often reluctant to be completely forthcoming when talking about the organizational needs or blind spots. Power differentials, politics, territory, pet projects, fear of retaliation and personality clashes often play an intervening role in preventing the reality of the organization's culture from surfacing.

*"It is not possible to solve what we cannot talk about or see, which is why the 'elephant in the room' interferes with an organizations ability to create an effective strategic plan."*

Mary Kay Delvo, INspiring SIGHT

## 2. Inefficient use of the full board's time.

The executive director, who nearly always struggles to get the board in a room together, has so much information that requires discussion, the agenda is over-packed and rich conversation is cut short. Typically, boards spend the morning doing some form of information gathering / SWOT Analysis. By time they get to decision-making, it is afternoon and board members have lost focus and are restless to get back to their paying jobs, resulting in rushed and not very strategic decision-making—resulting in a huge disservice to the executive director and ultimately, the organization.

## 3. Role confusion and blurred lines between vision and mission.

Board members and leadership teams often lack understanding of the difference between governance roles and management roles. Equally confusing is knowing the difference between what vision and mission each mean and how each contributes to the success of the organization. Utilized together, the vision, mission and strategic priorities serve as a guide or 'litmus test' for decision-making across the entire organization from the board room to the break room.

**4. Strategy doesn't align with the organizational reality and lacks the employee voice**

The strategic plan is often created without solid knowledge of how the organization operates. A vision and mission without meaningful connection to the actual work will never be realized.

**5. Staff and board members lack the muscles required to keep the plan alive in their day-to-day.**

Asking strategic and awareness raising questions is a developed skill and mindset which most employees and leadership teams don't possess. Having a plan does little for you if you don't know how and when to ask the necessary questions for digging deeper, assessing, and connecting everyday actions and decisions to broader visions and purpose. This is an essential component of plans that work.

**Bonus Reason:** Vision and mission are the length of an abstract vs a headline—making them uninspiring, not repeatable, and lacking clarity. If you can't visualize it, you can't realize it and if you can't repeat it, you can't live it.

Strategic plans are the map for your entire organizational system. When only understood and discussed at the board and leadership team level, there is a reduced chance of it living out through your staff, organization, and stakeholders. Mary Kay designed a one-page Strategic Alignment Map for organizations to utilize in their everyday decision-making which helps organizations succeed in staying in alignment with what they set out to do.

Mary Kay Delvo is a small business owner with twenty-five years of nonprofit and board experience, including nearly 10 years as a school board member. She owns INspiring SIGHT, a successful coaching and consulting organization that challenges old habits, designs strategy and coaches' organizations to create healthy cultures which help them thrive. For more information, go to [www.inspiringsight.com](http://www.inspiringsight.com).

