

# Are You Ready to Take a Seat at the Table?

A Workbook to Prepare for Your  
Credit Union's Strategic Planning





# Are You Ready to Take a Seat at the Table?

## A Strategic Planning Workbook



***“Don’t think about where you are, think about where you want to be.”***

As the nation’s only credit union-centric strategic planner, [Kathy Darwin](#) has assisted dozens of credit unions in planning, facilitation, and executive coaching over the past twenty years. As Q1 wraps up and we begin to look towards planning season, Darwin would like to share her workbook on preparing for your 2020 strategic plan.

Strategic planning takes time and resources from many people in your organization. If you are making this investment, make the most of it. Many a strategic planning session has resulted in lackluster results and wasted resources simply because the participants didn’t take the time to prepare and gather their thoughts – really think about their vision of the organization. Number one rule for strategic planning: *You must come prepared to take a seat at the table.*

We hope this high-level workbook provides a valuable tool for you and your team as you navigate the unpredictable waters of 2020 planning.

### **This workbook will assist you to:**

- Be ready to lead with your ideas and thoughts
- Be prepared to share *why*
- Get your thoughts in order
- Clarify all the ideas floating in your head
- Create a plan that focuses on your future: vision, goals, and results

In other words, be ready when you take a seat at the table to lead and make a strong impact. Let’s get started.

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### **Exercise 1: A Good Strategic Plan Will Answer:**

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?
- How do we know we are making progress?

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Pause and think about your business. What are you thinking about? Growth, products, customers, staff, competitors?


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### Exercise 2: Mission Statement – “Describes the organization’s purpose and reason for existence.”

What is the function/purpose/role of your organization?


Who is your customer?


What is your deliverable?


#### Mission statement best practices:

- Short – clear, concise and useful
- Inspiring
- Realistic and measurable

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- Catchy, easy to remember
- Differentiates you from your competition – informs, focuses and guides
- Explains what you do, how you do it, why you do it

### Practical Application:

- The average length of a mission statement is 15 words
- A powerful short mission statement, TED: Spread Ideas
- Thought-generating mission statement: Nike - To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete\* in the world. \*If you have a body, you are an athlete.

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### Exercise 3: Vision Statement - “A statement that describes the long-term picture of what the organization wants to become.”

Use the following questions to think about your organization’s vision statement.

Think of your organization 10 years from today and describe what you will:

1. Look like:


2. Offer Your Customers:


3. Compete with in the Market:


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Using the input above, let's create a vision statement...start writing using the answers to the questions above, don't over think it – just write it!


Now...go back and edit! Grab your **red** pen:

- Circle those key words, the words you absolutely must use
- Enjoy scratching out the fluffy stuff
- Now...let's take a second look

Rewrite your vision using the words you circled above. Keep it simple and do not worry about getting it perfect. You will be updating this vision as you develop and implement your plan.


**Vision Statement Best Practices:**

- Paint a picture of the future in words creating a vivid description of what you will look like in the future as you reach your goals
- Short – clear, concise
- Inspirational and memorable

**Practical Application:**

- The average length of a vision statement is 10 - 15 words
- Four-word vision statement:
  - Feeding America: A hunger-free America
- Ten-word vision statement:
  - Make-A-Wish: That people everywhere will share the power of a wish
- 30-word vision statement:
  - Amazon: To be Earth's most customer-centric company, where customers can find and discover anything they might want to buy online, and endeavors to offer its customers the lowest possible prices.

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### Exercise 4: Ensuring You Have A Voice in the Strategic Planning Process

Organizations should conduct a SWOT analysis at a minimum every three years. Your SWOT Analysis is a great resource for driving conversation in the planning process. SWOTs create the rails for the discussion and validation:

#### Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

Those issues likely to have an impact on the organization's performance; financial resources, products/services, staffing, management. Typically, organizations have greater control over internal strengths and weaknesses.

- Strengths
- Weakness

List a few strengths and weaknesses below:


#### External Environmental Factors

Issues outside the organization that are likely to have an impact on your performance; economic, political, technological, cultural, etc.

- Opportunities
- Threats

List a few opportunities and threats below:


#### Top Ten Tips

1. Get key stakeholders involved: managers, staff, customers, vendors, competitors
2. Lock-on to a Desired Future State
3. Use your data
4. Write your plan once...then update, revise and improve your plan year-after-year
5. Establish and protect your strategic thinking time
6. Use your plan as your decisioning tool
7. Take risks

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8. Work “on” not “in” the business
  9. Set uncomfortable goals – if a goal sounds doable, think bigger
  10. Share your plan with the universe!
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### Exercise 5: Incorporating Strategic Thinking into Your Daily Routine

#### Take time to think strategically

- Commit to daily or weekly think time
  1. Develop a process for think time
  2. Create a habit of taking time to think
- Set a specific time for thinking
  1. Set aside at least 30 minutes of alone time
  2. Calendar your “Think” time

#### Be Disciplined

- Protect your “Think” time, do not give it away!
- Avoid outside interruptions
- Find balance with your daily life

#### Share the Value

- Define a method for processing your thoughts
  - Encourage others to think strategically
    1. Add strategic thinking to your meeting cadence.
    2. Give others permission to take think time during the workday
    3. Establish ground rules for “Think” areas
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### Exercise 6: Your Credit Union’s Values

**Values: The core beliefs an individual or organization will adhere to regardless of where they are headed and who is watching. Values are the guiding principles that drive behavior and differentiate between right and wrong.**

Organizations with a mission, vision and active core values tend to sustain economic, environment and industry challenges better than their competitors.







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**What beliefs and principles drive my best behavior, set me apart from others and are key to my performance?**

- Consider values you “should” live by – those that are expected of you
- Values you “want” to live by – those you want to be known for

If you have trouble identifying values, refer to the list of words on the following pages (appendix 1).

Values I “should” live by:	Values I “want” to live by:

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Now that you have completed this workbook, we hope you feel more prepared for your upcoming planning session. We understand that credit union executives often wear many hats and rarely have time to sit back and *just think*. Through decades of facilitation and coaching, Kathy Darwin has found when credit union decision-makers set aside time to engage in deep, strategic thinking, their yearly planning is greatly improved.

So...do whatever it takes to find the time to devote to thinking and preparing for your strategic planning session. If you are feeling like you need a helping hand, don't shy away from asking a professional, like Kathy Darwin. Often an outside perspective can truly act as the missing puzzle piece. Even more, planning and coaching services are more affordable than you might expect. Darwin's unique approach allows for even the smallest credit unions to utilize her services.

**Contact Kathy at [kathy.darwin@me.com](mailto:kathy.darwin@me.com) or visit her site at [kathydarwin.com](http://kathydarwin.com). Looking for more credit union planning resources? You can find them on her [site!](#)**

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### Appendix 1: Value Brainstorming Words

Abundance  
Acceptance  
Accessibility  
Accomplishment  
Accuracy  
Achievement  
Acknowledgement  
Activeness  
Adaptability  
Admirable  
Adoration  
Adroitness  
Adventure  
Affection  
Affluence  
Aggressiveness  
Agility  
Alertness  
Altruism  
Ambition  
Amusement  
Anticipation  
Appreciation  
Approachability  
Articulacy  
Assertiveness  
Assurance  
Attentiveness  
Attractiveness  
Audacity  
Availability  
Awareness  
Awe  
Balance  
Beauty  
Being the best  
Belonging  
Benevolence  
Blessed  
Bliss  
Boldness

Brave  
Brilliance  
Buoyancy  
Calmness  
Camaraderie  
Candor  
Capability  
Care  
Carefulness  
Celebrity  
Certainty  
Challenge  
Charity  
Charm  
Chastity  
Cheerful  
Clarity  
Cleanliness  
Clear-mindedness  
Cleverness  
Closeness  
Comfort  
Commitment  
Compassion  
Completion  
Composure  
Concentration  
Confidence  
Conformity  
Congruency  
Connection  
Consciousness  
Consistency  
Contentment  
Continuity  
Contribution  
Control  
Conviction  
Conviviality  
Coolness  
Cooperation  
Cordiality  
Correctness

Courage  
Courtesy  
Craftiness  
Creativity  
Credibility  
Cunning  
Curiosity  
Daring  
Decisiveness  
Decorum  
Definition  
Deference  
Delight  
Dependability  
Depth  
Desire  
Determination  
Devotion  
Devoutness  
Dexterity  
Dignity  
Diligence  
Direction  
Directness  
Discipline  
Discovery  
Discretion  
Diversity  
Dominance  
Dreaming  
Drive  
Duty  
Dynamism  
Eagerness  
Economy  
Ecstasy  
Educated  
Effectiveness  
Efficiency  
Elation  
Elegance  
Empathy  
Encouragement

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Endurance  
Energy  
Enjoyment  
Entertainment  
Enthusiasm  
Excellence  
Excitement  
Exhilaration  
Expectancy  
Expediency  
Experience  
Expertise  
Exploration  
Expressiveness  
Extravagance  
Extroversion  
Exuberance  
Fairness  
Faith  
Fame  
Family  
Fascination  
Fashion  
Fearlessness  
Ferocity  
Fidelity  
Fierceness  
Financial  
Firmness  
Fitness  
Flexibility  
Flow  
Fluency  
Focus  
Fortitude  
Frankness  
Freedom  
Friendliness  
Frugality  
Fun  
Gallantry  
Generosity  
Gentility

Giving  
Grace  
Gratitude  
Great  
Gregariousness  
Growth  
Guidance  
Happiness  
Harmony  
Health  
Heart  
Helpfulness  
Heroism  
Holiness  
Honesty  
Honor  
Hopefulness  
Hospitality  
Humility  
Humor  
Hygiene  
Imagination  
Impact  
Impartiality  
Independence  
Industrious  
Influential  
Ingenuity  
innovative  
Inquisitiveness  
Insightfulness  
Inspiration  
Integrity  
Intelligence  
Intensity  
Intimacy  
Intrepidness  
Introversion  
Intuition  
Intuitiveness  
Inventiveness  
Investing  
Joy

Judiciousness  
Justice  
Keeness  
Kindness  
Knowledge  
Leadership  
Learning  
Liberation  
Liberty  
Liveliness  
Logic  
Longevity  
Looking good  
Love  
Loyalty  
Lucky  
Majesty  
Making a difference  
Mastery  
Maturity  
Meekness  
Mellowness  
Meticulousness  
Mindfulness  
Modesty  
Motivation  
Mysteriousness  
Nature  
Neatness  
Nerve  
Obedience  
Open-mindedness  
Openness  
Optimism  
Order  
Organization  
Originality  
Outlandishness  
Outrageousness  
Passion  
Peace  
Perceptiveness  
Perfection



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Perkiness	Rest	Structure
Perseverance	Restraint	Success
Persistence	Reverence	Superb
Persuasiveness	Richness	Support
Philanthropy	Rigor	Supremacy
Piety	Ritual	Surprise
Playfulness	Sacredness	Sympathy
Pleasantness	Sacrifice	Synergy
Pleasure	Sagacity	Systematic
Poise	Saintliness	Tactful
Polish	Sanguinity	Teamwork
Popularity	Satisfaction	Temperance
Potency	Security	Thankfulness
Power	Self-control	Thoroughness
Practicality	Selflessness	Thoughtfulness
Pragmatism	Self-reliance	Thrift
Precision	Sensitivity	Tidiness
Preparedness	Sensuality	Timeliness
Presence	Serenity	Timely
Privacy	Service	Tireless
Proactivity	Sexuality	Traditionalism
Professionalism	Sharing	Tranquility
Prosperity	Shrewdness	Transcendence
Proud	Significance	Treasured
Prudence	Silence	Thoughtful
Punctuality	Silliness	True
Purity	Simplicity	Truthful
Realism	Sincerity	Trustworthiness
Reason	Skillfulness	Truth
Reasonableness	Solidarity	Understanding
Recognition	Solitude	Unflappability
Recreation	Soundness	Unforgettable
Refinement	Speed	Uniqueness
Reflection	Spirit	Unity
Relaxation	Spirited	Universal
Reliability	Spiritual	Uplifting
Religiousness	Spontaneity	Usefulness
Resilience	Spunk	Utility
Resolution	Stability	Valor
Resolve	Stealth	Variety
Resourcefulness	Stillness	Victory
Respected	Strength	Vigor
Respectful	Strong	Virtue

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Visionary  
Vitality  
Vivacity  
Warmth  
Watchfulness  
Wealth

Willfulness  
Willingness  
Winning  
Wisdom  
Wittiness  
Wonder

Worthwhile  
Worthy  
Youthfulness  
Zealous