

Strategic Issues Analysis

This process is used to assist a leadership group identify, clarify and prioritise the issues they see need to make up a strategic direction or plan.

It can be used in leadership groups, such as an eldership, church board, staff team or ministry team.

Its advantage is in its fairness and objectivity. Issues that are only important to individuals and not the group are eliminated. Issues that are important to all are prioritised.

Step 1 - List the Issues

Ask every person to list the key strategic issues that they believe impact the church / team and need to be addressed in the next 3 years. Allow 6-10 minutes for this. Ideally each person should have 4 or more issues they believe are important.

Step 2 - Establish an agreed group list.

Decide the number of people who need to agree on an issue for it to be included in the group list (~20 – 30% of the total number i.e. if there are 8-10 in the group use 3 to agree, if 5-7 in the group, 2 to agree).

Ask each person in turn to share only one issue. If the required number also have this written down as an issue, then the item is agreed and written up on a white board.

There may need to be some clarifying discussion of whether the issue different individuals had written down is the same issue or something a little different to the one read out. This is often an important discussion and assists the group clarify the issues they see as strategic.

Use a), b), c) etc in the agreed group list so not to communicate a priority order.

Go around the group, one issue from each person at a time, until all issues have been mentioned and either included or discarded.

The purpose of this exercise is to 'weed' out any issues which are simply the 'pet' issues of individuals and not shared by the group. We call these outlier issues.

If there is an issue that people agree should be included but they did not have it written down, it is put to the side then voted separately on at the end and may be included at that point.

This should produce a list of issues marked a) to say j)

Step 3 - Prioritise the list on an Importance / Urgency Grid

Ask everyone to copy down the grid exactly as drawn onto their page.

Importance ^ ^ ^ ^ ^	High			
	Medium			
	Low			
		Low	Medium Urgency	High

Point out the high urgency, high importance square and explain the grid.

Ask each person to place the letters a) .. j) in whichever square on the grid that matches the priority they would like to assign.

E.g. If they believe issue d) is of middle importance and does not need to be completed immediately they may place it in the centre square.

Squares may contain more than one item.

Step 4 - Establish a collective priority grid

Use the empty master grid drawn on the whiteboard.

Calculate the number required to prioritise each issue. (This is ½ the total group number rounded up e.g. for 13 in the group use 7). Take each issue (a) to (?j?) individually and work through the grid pointing at each square in turn. Ask for a show of hands when you point to the square in which the person has placed the issue. Ask people to keep their hands up, when the required number have that issue at the level indicated or higher enter the issue on the master grid.

Work through the grid diagonally pointing to the squares in the following order:

<<< Importance <<<	4	2	1
	7	5	3
	9	8	6
	>>>> Urgency >>>>		

This gives a slight priority to importance over urgency which is appropriate in strategic planning work.

Decide which issues are the most important. It is likely that you will only be able to work on issues in squares 1,2 and 3. Not all issues can translate into strategic objectives.

Step 5 - Re-write the highest priority issues as Objectives

Do a little word-smithing on the 3-5 prioritised issues to redraft them as strategic directions for the future. You may have to add to or trim the list by agreement to get 3-5 or so key strategic issues.

It may be necessary (although not ideal) to take the work of the group home for some editing and then send the completed objectives back for endorsement.

Strategic Issues List

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

f)

g)

h)

i)

j)

Strategic Issues Prioritisation Grid

<<< Importance >>>	High			
	Medium			
	Low			
		Low >>>	Medium Urgency >>>	High