

SOAR: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results

Overview

SOAR is a strategic planning instrument that allows an organization to focus on current strengths and to project its vision for the future. Grounded in Appreciative Inquiry¹, SOAR complements SWOT approaches: focusing on the organization or issue, enhancing what is currently done well, and imagining how to move forward. This approach should engage individuals at all levels of the organization or system who are invested in the issue or program (Stavros & Hinrichs, 2009).

SOAR Framing Questions

S = Strengths: What is working well? What are we proud of? What are our assets, capabilities, and greatest accomplishments?

O = Opportunities: What are the external circumstances or challenges and how can we reframe them in a way that creates potential for action? How can we reframe challenges to be seen as opportunities? What new skills do we need to move forward?

A = Aspirations: What is our preferred future? What can we be as a system? What strategic initiatives would support our aspirations?

R = Results: How do we know we are succeeding? What indicators will allow us to measure progress toward achieving our goals? What resources are needed?

Implementing SOAR...

- Engages stakeholders to determine conditions that have led to the greatest successes of the past and focuses on generating untapped potential and possibilities.
- *Focuses on “what we want” instead of “what we don’t want.” This activity reframes threats and weaknesses to focus on “where we are going,” which allows individuals to look past fixing what is broken.*
- Determines the unique strengths of organizations or systems. What are its best qualities – resources, capabilities, environment and plusses?
- Determines the results we want to see and aspirations for the future. This is the vision for the future and should inspire and challenge.

¹ Appreciative inquiry is a positively-oriented approach to framing questions, analysis, decision-making, and strategy. One of the assumptions is that the way we ask questions will focus our attention in a particular direction. Instead asking questions like, “What are the problems?” or “What needs to be fixed?,” appreciative inquiry challenges us to frame questions from a positive perspective. Learn more at: <http://www.davidcooperrider.com/ai-process/>.

- Prioritizes opportunities with the most potential for success and impact.
- Determines goals to be addressed and identifies what measures you will use to track success toward that goal. (Strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis, 2017)

Implementing SOAR at the Organizational Level

- **Step 1.** Identify organizational stakeholders from all levels of the organization and what the planning sessions will entail.
- **Step 2.** Determine what questions will be used to gather different perspectives from key stakeholders (create an interview protocol to be used in the process).
- **Step 3.** Engage internal and external stakeholders to determine conditions that have led to the greatest success of the past. Focus on generating untapped potential and possibilities.
- **Step 4.** Focus on “what we want” instead of “what we don’t want.” This activity reframes threats and weaknesses to focus on “where we are going.”
- **Step 5.** Determine the unique strengths of the organization. What are its best qualities – resources, capabilities, environment and plusses?
- **Step 6.** Determine the results you want to see and your aspirations for the future. This is your vision for the future and should inspire and challenge.
- **Step 7.** Prioritize opportunities with the most potential for success and impact.
- **Step 8.** Determine goals for opportunities to be addressed and identify what measures you will use to track success toward that goal.
- **Step 9.** Create an action plan for implementing goals. (Strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis, 2017)

Works Cited

Stavros, J. M., & Hinrichs, G. (2009). *SOAR: Building Strengths-Based Strategy*. Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Co.

Strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis. (2017, July 2). Retrieved from ASQ Service Quality Division: <http://asqservicequality.org/glossary/strengths-opportunities-aspirations-results-soar-analysis/>

SOAR Action Planning Goal: _____

<p>STRENGTHS <i>What are your current strengths pertaining to this goal?</i></p> <p><i>How can these strengths be leveraged to enhance your goal?</i></p>	<p>OPPORTUNITIES <i>What resources are available for progressing toward your goal?</i></p> <p><i>Internal:</i></p> <p><i>External:</i></p>
<p>ASPIRATIONS <i>Where do you see your goal/outcome in 5 years? What helped to achieve it?</i></p>	<p>RESULTS <i>What strategies would support improved implementation of your goal?</i></p> <p><i>What would indicate that you are on the right track to achieving your goal?</i></p>

What strategies are you interested in pursuing over a **one-month, three-month, and six-month** timeframe?

What is your jurisdictional capacity to work on these strategies? (Consider staffing, funding, evaluation, training needs)

Who needs to be involved in this initiative (organizations/people)? What roles will they play?

What actions will your organization/jurisdiction take?

How will you know when you are successful? (Indicators of success)

Based on today's conversations, what additional information do you still need to collect? (From NASTAD or your jurisdiction)