**Traditional Strategic Planning vs Living Strategy**

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| Strategic planning | Strategic thinking, questions, dialogue, and stories |
| Attempts to predict the future and build everything around this prediction | “You can’t predict the future, but you can be ready for whatever it brings.” “The only kind of strategy that makes sense in the face of unpredictable change is a strategy to become adaptive...Planned responses do not work” |
| Annual, linear process | Ongoing, iterative process. |
| Inputs as one-way “data dumps” of current facts and collected data | Collective knowledge and intelligence gathering capabilities of the entire community are available “just in time” to be used for critical reflection and interactive inquiry |
| The environment is predictable enough to allow use of a linear, cause/effect process to accurately plan and control how we operate in it | In the nonlinear, dynamic system in which we exist, we can anticipate only what is most likely to happen through continuous feedback, inquiry, and learning and thus be prepared to respond collaboratively, quickly and intelligently to whatever emerges from the system |
| Produces static text documents that often consist of hierarchical components prescribing a plan for the future, moving from a big-picture, long-range plan down to near-term, tactical actions | Evolves dynamic, multimodal vignettes, images, and dialogue – a living story of aspirations and possibilities designed to excite the passion and imagination of the people living it and engages them in co-creating the emerging story and their shared future |
| After a few face-to-face group interactions, a small number of individuals develop the strategic plan | Living strategy continuously evolves out of ongoing, seamlessly interwoven individual reflection and work and group, face-to-face, and virtual interactions and collaborations |
| Strategic planning tends to move as quickly as possible to solutions and actions and leave little time for reflective thought and conversation | Living strategy emphasizes conversation as a core business process. The association is skilled at knowing when to “stay in the question,” thinking about the most meaningful issues, and when it’s time to act quickly and decisively |

Living Strategy: Guiding Your Association through the Rugged Landscape Ahead
By: Paul Borawski and Arian Ward Journal of Association Leadership, Winter 2004