

ELEVATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN INTO ACTION
WITHIN THE VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

By

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the requirements for the degree of

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In

LEADERSHIP

We accept this proposal as conforming
to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

This study asks how the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) can firmly embed its Strategic Plan into day-to-day operations. The opportunity will foster further development and support of the plan, enabling the organization to accomplish its goals. The study is significant because it ensures the VPD follows best practices in strategic planning, and the development of sustainable approaches will prevent the repetition of past mistakes. The conduct of this action research project includes both quantitative and qualitative methodology, accomplished through an electronic survey and a series of one-on-one interviews, and complemented by relevant literature. The research supports nine recommendations, including a review of the strategic plan, the return of strategic working groups, an internal marketing program, enhanced communications, integrated programs training and accountability measures. The implementation of these recommendations will enable the VPD to create a culture of change and make meaning of its strategic plan,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER 1. FOCUS AND FRAMING.....	1
Introduction.....	1
The Opportunity.....	1
Significance of the Opportunity.....	4
Systems Analysis of the Opportunity.....	5
Organizational Context.....	7
CHAPTER 2. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	14
Strategic Planning.....	15
Organizational Change.....	21
Organizational Culture.....	24
Management Controls.....	30
Conclusion.....	36
CHAPTER 3. CONDUCT OF RESEARCH.....	37
Research Approach.....	37
Project Participants.....	40
Research Methods.....	41
Research Tools.....	41
Study Conduct.....	43
Data Analysis.....	47
Ethical Issues.....	50
CHAPTER 4. ACTION RESEARCH RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	55
Survey Results.....	55
Demographics.....	56
Knowledge of the Strategic Plan.....	60
Relevance of the Strategic Plan.....	63
Alignment of the Strategic Plan.....	63
Communication of the Strategic Plan.....	64

Meaning of the Strategic Plan.....	65
Current State of the Strategic Plan.....	68
Interview Results	72
Communication.....	73
Focus.....	74
Commitment	76
Accountability.....	77
Change	79
Leadership.....	79
Conclusions.....	81
Summary	82
Detailed Conclusions	83
Scope and Limitations of the Research.....	94
CHAPTER 5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS.....	98
Overview of Recommendations.....	98
Detailed Project Recommendations.....	99
Recommendation 1 – Review the Strategic Plan.....	100
Recommendation 2 – Reinstigate Strategic Plan Working Groups.....	101
Recommendation 3 – Develop a Marketing Strategy	102
Recommendation 4 – Create a Communication Plan	103
Recommendation 5 – Deliver Executive Briefings	104
Recommendation 6 – Expand the Profile of the Strategic Plan.....	104
Recommendation 7 – Conduct Employee Focus Groups	105
Recommendation 8 – Deliver a Training Package	106
Recommendation 9 – Develop Follow-up Strategies	107
Organizational Implications.....	107
Implementation of the Recommendations	108
Implications for Inaction.....	110
Leadership Implications.....	111
Future Research	113
CHAPTER 6. LESSONS LEARNED	115
Organizational Learning	115
Personal Learning	117
A Final Comment.....	119
REFERENCES	121
APPENDIX A. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	126
APPENDIX B. SURVEY INVITATION.....	130
APPENDIX C. SURVEY PREAMBLE.....	131

APPENDIX D. LETTER OF INVITATION.....132
APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE.....134
APPENDIX F. COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY135
APPENDIX G. RESEARCH CONSENT FORM136

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Sworn and civilian respondents and their position within the VPD 56

Table 2. Years of service, of sworn and civilian survey participants 58

Table 3. Awareness of VPD values for sworn and civilian personnel, by assignment..... 62

Table 4. Communication of the Strategic Plan, by work area 66

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Nature of work for sworn and civilian respondents.....60

Figure 2. Meaning of the Strategic Plan.....68

CHAPTER 1. FOCUS AND FRAMING

Introduction

The Vancouver Police Department (VPD) embarked on a strategic planning process in late 2003, culminating in the development of the Vancouver Police Department Strategic Plan (2004-2008) (Vancouver Police Department, 2004b). This document has served to guide the operations of the VPD, and many of the objectives contained therein have been reached (Vancouver Police Department, 2005d). In spite of this success, the plan is lacking direct links to operational priorities; is absent many performance measurements; and, is not wholly entrenched into the business processes of the organization.

The Planning and Research Section of the VPD is now responsible for the ongoing development and evolution of the Strategic Plan. My goal, as the Officer in Charge of this Section, is to ensure the continued success and evolution of the Strategic Plan. To accomplish this goal, I need to know how the new strategic plan can become firmly entrenched into the business practices of an organization that has seen previous strategic plans developed, only to subsequently languish.

The Opportunity

The VPD has completed two separate strategic planning exercises since the early 1990s, resulting in two different strategic plans. Both plans were very different from one another, and both languished before any meaningful development within the organization. While much of the day-to-day policing continued, unaffected by the absence of a strategic plan, long-range organizational planning lacked focus and direction, and management control and accountability.

In early 2004, the VPD was in the process of finalizing its current Strategic Plan. This process began within an organization that lacked an official guiding document for over a decade. A thorough initiative to restore strategic planning included input from all levels of the organization, community input through a deliberative dialogue process, and support from both the VPD Executive and the Vancouver Police Board (VPB). At the completion of this process, a new guiding document was distributed throughout the organization, to the VPB and to City Council, and was also made publicly available through electronic sources (Vancouver Police Department, 2004b). The design of this new strategic plan serves as the blueprint for all future prioritization of service delivery for the Department.

Flowing from the development of the Strategic Plan was a comprehensive staffing review document, outlining projected staffing needs for the coming five years. That review resulted in the identified need for 469 additional sworn personnel and 170 additional civilian personnel, over and above the existing authorized strength (Vancouver Police Department, 2004a). The sheer numbers requested in this report generated substantial controversy with City staff, and resulted in an agreement to obtain an independent review of the staffing report and, in particular, how it linked to the Strategic Plan.

The University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV) completed this review, and produced a comprehensive report that outlines numerous areas of critical need. Further, it details areas where business cases were not made for additional personnel, and referenced other best practices organizations that had developed comprehensive operational plans to direct all of their business practices (Griffiths et al., 2005).

City Council ultimately approved a portion of the staffing increase requested by both City Staff and VPD management for 2005. Council also tentatively approved a further staff

increase for 2006; however, they also identified several deliverables for the coming year, as subjects to honouring that increase. These deliverables include: operational plans for each functional work unit; an overtime review and efficiencies assessment to obtain financial offset; a search for opportunities to share services; and, a search for opportunities to civilianize police positions to reduce costs (City of Vancouver, 2005).

Throughout 2005, the VPD developed a strategic operating plan, which spells out the Department's operational priorities for 2006 (Vancouver Police Department, 2006d). In addition, the Department identified efficiencies through the civilianization of nineteen existing sworn positions and developed improved management controls to provide increased oversight on overtime use, both of which resulted in budget savings for 2006 (Vancouver Police Department, 2006a, 2006c). The delivery of this work and the accompanying reports met the deliverables outlined by City Council, and this resulted in the addition of another 31 sworn police officers and 46 civilian personnel to the authorized strength of the Department (City of Vancouver, 2006).

In spite of the recent gains in both sworn and civilian staffing over the past two years, a larger question remains; how can the VPD firmly embed the Strategic Plan into its business practices, when they have experienced the development of previous plans that have subsequently languished? It is through the ongoing development, research, and support of the plan that the organization can move forward in a concerted effort to provide the best overall service and accomplish its goals. Further, to what extent is the Strategic Plan impacting current VPD operations? How can the VPD successfully integrate the five key strategic steps into the day-to-day operations of the organization? What are the organizational conditions

and processes required to ensure that strategic plans succeed in their implementation?

Moreover, what measurements will serve as indicators of success?

Significance of the Opportunity

The VPD is committed to following best practices in strategic planning for police agencies, and covets the accepted principles regarding the dynamic nature of strategic plans. Yukl (2002) outlines how a successful organizational vision evolves over time, with this evolution being fostered by the success that is experienced, combined with the increased awareness of limitations to the vision. Similarly, “objectives that seemed unrealistic may suddenly become attainable” (p. 166). This continual evolution of the Strategic Plan will assist the VPD in moving forward from year to year, keeping the plan current and relevant.

Anthony and Young (2003) detail how strategic planning is the first phase in the management control process, and this process evolves through both the budgeting, and the operations and measurement phases. The reporting and evaluation phase of management control further supports the concept of an evolutionary process and, as organizational priorities change, this further influences potential revisions of the Strategic Plan. As the VPD embarks on delivering police services through 2007, notable cuts to areas of its budget to help offset additional personnel may hamper its ability to deliver on strategic objectives.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) also stress how the world is evolving too quickly around us, and the idea of a static strategic plan is unrealistic. “Progress today is more likely to be the result of a focus on incremental improvements in tools and processes than of tectonic shifts of minds” (p. 209). These incremental improvements build on one another, to reshape organizations and their strategic plans. These improvements are a reality of policing, as

changes throughout society affect the priorities of public safety. The Strategic Plan needs to change with this broader societal change.

With the ongoing change associated to a strategic plan, and the requirement for the VPD to develop and link operational plans to the Strategic Plan, the importance of maintaining and updating it is paramount. History has shown how past strategic plans have languished, and I have observed these experiences influence current staff and managers towards a laissez-faire attitude about the current plan. By driving the new plan with clear leadership strategies and operational plans that link it to daily activities, a cultural shift will occur. Further, new initiatives generated through sound business-case preparation, combined with management controls linked to the objectives of the plan, will result in measurable success in the following years.

The development of coordinated sustainable approaches to strategic and operational planning will prevent the VPD from repeating past mistakes. In fact, the VPD will benefit well into the future, as all operational needs will measure up against a valid, supportable, and sustainable strategic plan. This will subsequently provide a solid foundation for future support of additional resource requests.

Systems Analysis of the Opportunity

Senge (1990a) details how business and other human endeavors, which will include police departments, are all systems. They are all “bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other” (p. 7). The VPD demonstrates this interrelationship with the broader societal influences on a day-to-day basis.

From an external systems view, the actions a police officer takes on a service call will have both immediate and long-term effects on a number of other organizations and

individuals, including social service agencies, health care providers, the Court system and the individuals involved in the original call for service. There is an equally complex set of variables and stakeholders, from an internal systems view, who become involved with any sort of change initiative. In relation to this particular project, the systems impacted are varied.

One of the key stakeholders in police operations is the City of Vancouver, and ultimately, City Council. The budgetary controls placed on the VPD by City Council directly impact VPD operations, and influences both the internal and external stakeholders of VPD operations. When the investment of resources is re-prioritized, current service programs may increase while others may decrease. Changes in either direction will have an impact on the community, the Courts, the various social services the police interact with and the taxpayers.

Increased resources to Patrol will result in greater efficiencies to the community services, whereas a reallocation to investigative functions will increase the burden on Patrol, and decrease community satisfaction at the front end. Overall increases in the number of officers will result in an increased workload for the Courts. This, in turn, will result in greater caseloads for prosecutors and longer delays in getting events to trial. Consequently, the Ministry of the Attorney General will have to review staff levels and facility capabilities within the Court system to meet the increased demand, thereby creating a potential burden on the taxpayer.

Much of the day-to-day problem solving performed by police officers is constrained to the parties involved. Another large portion of it draws in external social service resources to assist. The Ministry of Children and Families will experience similar impacts to those of the Court system, along with other social service agencies that the VPD interacts with on a daily basis. This involvement includes referrals, service calls and other interventions, which

will increase or decrease, depending on where the VPD chooses to prioritize its role and dedicate resources.

Within the VPD, three unions have a stake in the welfare of the employees. The civilian personnel are members of the Teamsters, and the sworn personnel holding the ranks of Constable and Sergeant are members of the Vancouver Police Union (VPU). There are also 34 sworn Officers holding the rank of Inspector, who are members of the Vancouver Police Officers' Association (VPOA).

The recent completion of a civilianization study resulted in the replacement of 19 sworn personnel with new qualified civilian employees (Vancouver Police Department, 2006a). The VPU and the VPOA both have a critical stake in protecting the positions available to their membership. Recognition of the important influence the unions and associations play within the VPD, and the continued involvement of these groups through any organizational research and change process, is paramount.

Where the organization experiences a gain, there is a corresponding loss elsewhere, and changes to this balance are likely to have consequences somewhere in the organization. This too can affect the ability to meet strategic objectives, particularly if the objectives in the strategic plan are not entrenched into the day-to-day processes of the organization.

Organizational Context

The VPD became a police force on May 10, 1886, when John Stewart was sworn in as the first, and at the time, only Constable to police Vancouver. After the fire of 1886, the VPD quadrupled in size; however, there were a limited number of laws available for them to enforce, including the complete absence of drug laws (Swan, 1986). By 1905, the VPD had expanded to 31 sworn personnel and by its 25th anniversary had risen again to 53 men.

Throughout the early 1900s, the VPD history shows countless acts of violence, as the boom years of the city produced rapid expansion and urbanization.

With the advent of the automobile, property crimes increased, along with the corresponding need for increased enforcement of new traffic laws. Over the next few decades, the expansion of morality and drug investigations moved to the forefront of the organization, and unprecedented unemployment led to many protests and demonstrations. Protests continue to be one of the biggest obstacles facing operational policing, and this aspect of society in British Columbia is one that persists today, continually drawing on available police resources (Swan, 1986).

Further organizational expansion occurred through the 1940's and 1950's, with the Department reaching 570 members (Swan, 1986). The Department undertook targeted enforcement initiatives to address specific and ever-changing crime problems; however, these were crime reduction and enforcement projects, as opposed to strategic goals and objectives.

Into the 1970s, the VPD divided its operations to cover four distinct geographic districts, making a dramatic switch in its patrol deployment strategies and ensuring District Inspectors were responsible for the deployment of personnel to address specific crime concerns. This represented an initial attempt to improve the quality of police service to the community, but did not have an overarching strategic plan. The initiative ultimately did not succeed, as the personnel resources were not available to carry out the mandate (Swan, 1986). Later in the decade, the VPD moved to a team-policing model, with the desire to provide distinct service to meet the needs of the different communities within Vancouver.

The team-policing model also coincided with substantial personnel increases, bringing the strength of the Department up to 955 members.

In 1986, the Department turned 100 years old and, while it experienced many successes, it had numerous setbacks. The history of the organization has shown many initiatives and business plans that have clearly defined goals to reduce crime and improve the levels of service; however, formal strategic planning was non-existent from an organizational perspective.

I first encountered a strategic planning process in 1990, and in 1991 witnessed our first strategic plan, after ten years of service with the Department. The Executive of the Department initiated this plan, and they sought input from every work unit within the organization. The process included measurements of effectiveness within each work unit. However, while input spanned all ranks, the overall support for the Strategic Plan at this time was limited, as many managers relegated the plan to the bottom of the priority list.

The VPD implemented its next strategic plan in 1996, and the process involved very little input from the various stakeholders in the Department. At that time, the mission of the VPD was to provide “professional and effective Community-Based Policing through partnerships, focusing on prevention, enforcement, investigative and problem solving strategies” (Vancouver Police Department, 1996). Further, it identified six distinct values, namely:

People - we are committed to the well being of each other; commitment - we each have a strong commitment to a common mission; decision making - decision-making is lowered to the appropriate level of responsibility; open communication - we promote and support clear effective two-way communication; creativity - we recognize opportunities and try new ideas; and, differences - opinions are encouraged and valued as a source of creativity and change. (Vancouver Police Department, 1996, n.p.)

I held the rank of Constable at that time, and was working as a dog handler. No information about the Strategic Plan reached our work unit. The Executive drove this Strategic Plan, and there was little fanfare as it floated across the organization. This lack of communication was commonplace, and resulted in the plan never gaining any credibility throughout the organization.

In 2000 and 2001, a new Executive was leading the VPD and the Strategic Plan of their predecessors had lost its profile. There was a substantial amount of upheaval at the Executive level, including a number of changes at the Chief Constable rank. Given the nature of the leadership at that time, along with other critical operational issues going on in the organization, the Executive made a conscious decision to not move forward with a new strategic plan. The Executive acknowledged that the timing was not right to move forward with a new strategic plan, simply for the sake of having a plan itself.

The 2004 Strategic Plan took a different approach to previous plans. It started as an initiative built on a partnership between the VPD and the VPB. Section 26 of the BC Police Act outlines how the municipal police board and the Chief Constable determine the priorities, goals and objectives of the police department and that the Chief Constable must report to the Police Board each year, outlining the implementation of programs and strategies designed to achieve the priorities, goals and objectives ("Police act", 1996).

Statute provides for a legislated responsibility to determine the goals and objectives of the Department. In 2004, the VPD produced a well-conceived strategic plan, due in part to the impetus to move forward in a joint and proactive fashion. The process began with facilitated sessions involving police officers and civilian personnel to help clarify the Department's mission, vision, values, strategic objectives and priorities. This was followed

by a meeting of senior managers, to obtain their input into the planning process, and then by another planning session for a cross-section of members representing different organizational sections and all ranks of the organization. Finally, the VPD and the VPB hosted a community deliberative dialogue session, to discuss the top community safety issues in Vancouver. This process was unprecedented in past strategic planning sessions. “The feedback from the community was an integral part of our planning process” (Vancouver Police Department, 2004b, p. 9). It was well received by the vast cross section of cultural and neighborhood communities who were represented.

The process outlined above resulted in the creation of the Department’s current strategic plan. This plan contains a clearly defined mission, values and vision for the organization.

Our Mission: In fulfillment of its public trust, the Vancouver Police Department maintains public order, upholds the rule of law, and prevents crime.

Our Values: In carrying out our mission, members will uphold IPAR.

- Integrity: We believe in doing the right thing in all circumstances.
- Professionalism: We will pursue the highest standards of professionalism in policing.
- Accountability: We will maintain the highest ethical and legal standards.
- Respect: We will be compassionate and respectful in all of our actions.

Our Vision: Canada’s leader in policing – providing safety for all. (Vancouver Police Department, 2004b, p. 6)

The implementation process for the new strategic plan fell to a committee of people, from a cross-section of the organization. This decentralized approach worked well at the outset, as it was substantially easier for the organization to free up valuable staff resources from different areas of the Department. Once implemented, however, the VPD needed to

centralize the ongoing support of the plan under one Section. This centralization provides a coordinated approach to the communication of the plan, the ongoing measurement processes and timely reporting to the Executive, Board and Council.

The Planning and Research Section is responsible for the research and analysis to develop policies and procedures that support the short-term and long-term organizational planning of the Department (Vancouver Police Department, 2005c). This Section is a natural fit to fill the role of the keepers of the Strategic Plan, and the independent review of the VPD staffing request further recognized this. In that review, shortages of personnel within the Planning and Research Section were identified as a critical area of concern, and a shortage that needed to be addressed as a priority in order for further development to occur in other areas of the Department (Griffiths et al., 2005).

The VPD requested that these additional personnel be added to the Planning and Research Section, as a part of its budget request process to City Council (City of Vancouver, 2004). Council approved substantial staff increases for the VPD, including three civilian positions and one sworn position for P&R in 2005 and a fourth civilian position in 2006 (City of Vancouver, 2005). The long-term success of the Strategic Plan, including the ongoing revisions to it and ancillary measurement responsibilities, will fall to these personnel within the Planning and Research Section. These tasks will require an ongoing and coordinated involvement of all stakeholders, including the membership, the Board and community representatives.

While strategic planning has occurred within the VPD in the past, the ability to keep the plan in motion has failed. The VPD is well motivated to keep this plan current, and at the forefront of the operation. The need to support future staff increases, which requires meeting

outlined deliverables, provides the motivation for this task. The greater long-term approach, where organizational direction is set, along with the ongoing programs initiated by the Department, are all supported by the framework of the Strategic Plan. This is the ultimate purpose of the Strategic Plan.

For the current Strategic Plan to succeed, including the attainment of its objectives, the staff of the VPD must continue with their ongoing attention to the plan. Observable failures in the past clearly underscore the importance of this. I firmly believe the Strategic Plan is a living document and the Executive members today share this belief. Kouzes and Posner (2002) outline how a vision needs to be revisited, and change with the times. The world is continually changing around us, and the mission, vision and priorities of police departments need to change accordingly. Because the Strategic Plan is subject to continual change, it requires a coordinated approach, continual administration and measurement, and clear direction for the future. This includes an implementation process for operational plans for each strategic step and each work unit within the organization.

CHAPTER 2. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is a substantial amount of literature available on the subjects of leadership and strategic planning; however, very little is specific to policing. While not vocation specific, the general principles associated to these topics cover the broad spectrum of leadership opportunities, and are directly relevant to circumstances within the VPD. This review of the literature will ground my research project, by providing a framework based on the existing body of knowledge on leadership and strategic planning. By combining this knowledge with the results of my research, I will formulate conclusions that link operational recommendations to documented best practices from the private and public sectors.

This literature review will focus on four key areas, namely: strategic planning, leading organizational change, organizational culture, and management controls. In a desire to determine how the VPD can firmly embed the Strategic Plan into its business practices, a deeper exploration of the concepts and purposes of strategic planning is essential. This includes the examination of visioning, values and mission statements, and the importance of establishing communication processes within the organization. Further, with a legacy of abandoned strategic plans, it is incumbent on the VPD to explore change management strategies, and identify the processes to influence change in its business practices and create a new way of doing things.

Living through the legacy of abandoned strategic plans has resulted in an evolution of the culture of the VPD, to one where many police officers question the need for a strategic plan. Through the exploration of literature in relation to culture, and in particular the unique qualities of police culture, a greater understanding of change management will prevail. This

will serve to guide the VPD through strategic change and explore the reasons for resistance to change.

Finally, an examination of the facets of management control, including benchmarking, measurement and accountability, will reveal the importance and the value of the Strategic Plan, and help to enhance the meaning of it across the organization.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is the integral focal point of this research project. While the VPD has embarked on the process in the past, history has shown a repetition of the Department's inability to realize the benefits of ongoing strategic planning. This problem is not unique to the VPD. Strategic planning regularly fails in the implementation process. Agreed upon courses of action, arrived at through often-frequent discussion, seldom meet with success at implementation. While the implementation is attempted, and designed to have some effect on an organization, more often than not, the energy devoted to the planning is not carried forward into the implementation, and the plans languish (Bean, 1993). Where the history of the VPD reveals this inability to entrench its previous strategic plans into the day-to-day operations, the literature provides a theoretical framework upon which to plan future direction and realize a greater degree of success.

The development of organizational values, a vision, and a mission, along with ongoing communication of the same across all levels, is paramount to success (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Bryson, 2004; Bryson & Alston, 2005; Fullan, 2001). The VPD developed its organizational values through a process of inclusion with the employees. The structure of these values links to the general core values in policing. For an organization to be effective, its values should be compatible to the values of its members. This link between personal

values and organizational values has an intrinsic link to dedication to the organization and productivity in the work (Drucker, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Values serve as the foundation upon which an organization builds its vision. Bean (1993) outlines three interconnected pieces of information that form an organization's vision. The first of these is the business definition, which defines the organization's actual business purpose. This definition answers the question about what business the organization actually performs. The second aspect is the long-range vision, which outlines where the organization is going. The third aspect is the mission statement, which outlines who the organization is, in light of the previous two aspects. The mission is the link that bridges the present to the future. Simplified, these pieces ask; where are we now, where are we going, and how are we going to get there? Later in this chapter, under management controls, I will address the fourth, and perhaps most important question; how will we know when we have arrived?

The ability for leaders to impart the organizational vision is beneficial to both the leaders themselves, and to the organization as a whole. The importance of visioning for leaders cannot be understated. It is an invaluable personal trait, representing strength within an organization, and is a fundamental source of power within that organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Quigley, 1993; Yukl, 2002).

While effective visioning ultimately enhances the power and credibility of the leader, most noteworthy are the organizational gains that personnel draw from it.

The corporate vision is the most fundamental statement of a corporation's values, aspirations, and goals. It is an appeal to its members' hearts and minds. It must indicate a clear understanding of where the corporation is today and offer a road map for the future. (Quigley, 1993, p. 5)

The vision is akin to a guiding light, and when communicated effectively, serves to motivate employees across all levels of the organization.

It is important to note, however, that the vision statement must be more than simply words. Anyone can write a vision statement, for any organization. The genuine vision strikes a chord with the members of the organization, and the buy-in developed for that vision will permit the organization to take great strides forward. “When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-to-familiar ‘vision statement’), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to” (Senge, 1990a, p. 9).

The vision also stretches beyond the confines of individuals in an organization. Fullan (2001) outlines that visions “can act as attractors, but only when they are shared at all levels of the organization, and only when they emerge through experience, thereby generating commitment” (p. 115). The advancement of a vision that attracts others will generate interest from the ground up, resulting in greater buy-in to the end state.

Welsh (2005) concurs with the importance of vision, and further emphasizes that it is incumbent on the leader to bring the vision to life. The goals must be defined and succinct and the targets must be clear and attainable. Further, the leader must constantly communicate them throughout all levels of the organization and, where possible, reinforce with rewards.

Communication is a critical success factor for any organization looking to move forward with visioning and long-range planning (Bean, 1993; Collins, 2001a; Fullan, 2001; Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; LeClair, 2001; Quigley, 1993; Senge, 1990a; Welsh, 2005). Communication of the vision must occur on a consistent basis, and organizational steps forward, change initiatives and day-to-day operations must subscribe to that vision. “Leaders must walk their talk. Failures may occur but their actions must consistently concur with the vision on an overall basis” (Quigley, 1993, p. 141).

Much of the literature addresses strategic planning in for-profit organizations. However, there are some unique characteristics within nonprofit organizations, allowing them to prosper through strategic planning. LeClair (2001) outlines that the purposes for strategic planning in nonprofit organizations provide a number of significant benefits. These include the identification of critical issues, setting priorities and allocating resources, evaluating satisfaction of the organizational membership and assessing operational effectiveness.

Within the setting of nonprofit organizations, Quigley (1993) outlines three significant differences regarding their visioning and values. First, most of them are less hierarchical than for-profit organizations. Second, their structure lends itself to a greater need for consensus, often protracting the visioning and strategic planning processes. Third, the purpose of the nonprofit organization requires a strategic plan to manage the continuing and dynamic tension between their service excellence and financial stewardship.

The structure of the VPD is different from other, more traditional, nonprofit associations, in part due to the existence of a hierarchical rank structure. In addition, it differs from a traditional nonprofit organization, in light of its direct link to a municipal government. That said, flattening of the VPD in the 1990s reduced the number of ranks, and there has been a shift towards greater consensus in many of the decision-making processes. Senge (1990b) addresses the concept of tension, which is directly applicable to the VPD. The vision and strategic plan generate tension within the organization, as people see where they are currently, and where they want to be. “Without vision, there is no creative tension. Creative tension cannot be generated from current reality alone” (p. 9). This tension creates growth, opportunity and progress for an organization, and enables it to move forward into action.

Bean (1993) outlines how businesses need focused planning and disciplined action. “The kind of strategic planning toyed with over the past quarter-century, as an autumnal rite-of-passage or occasional resort event, has not and will not work” (p. 5). Further, “strategic effectiveness is achieved by setting the right long-term priorities and implementing them” (Bean, 1993, p. 5). An organization does not succeed by having a strategic plan; it succeeds by implementing programs and activities structured around that plan in an organized and prioritized fashion.

Bean (1993) refers to two opposites on the organizational dichotomy. At one end of the spectrum is operational reactive individualism. This refers to the day-to-day operations bogging down the long-range success of the organization. An organization reacts to external stimuli, and individuals or groups of individuals frequently do this without taking advantage of organizational synergies that are available in a team-oriented approach. Whereas, at the opposite end of the spectrum is strategic proactive teamwork. Strategic thinking oversees the day-to-day operations, and moves an organization towards a higher level. Being proactive refers to organizational self-control, and being both efficient and effective. In addition, teamwork allows organizations to draw on the synergy within, and all work towards the common goals and objectives.

Essentially, it is the strategic thinking that overlays the operational plans, with the long-term organizational success as the priority. It is akin to working towards a big picture, as opposed to being lost in the day-to-day operation of the organization. Senge et al. (1999) have written on strategic thinking, which is based on the discovery of the big strategic questions. These go beyond mere problem solving, and require imagination, creativity and images of possibility. “By moving their attention to a deliberate focus on essential questions,

they can develop an inquiry-oriented approach to evolving organizations” (p. 511). In spite of the big questions concept, the operational steps are often small and tactically sound, to allow for incremental improvements that compound over time.

These small steps serve as points of leverage. Senge (1990a) has detailed the importance of leverage, in “seeing where actions and changes in structures can lead to significant, enduring improvement” (p. 114). He further outlines how leverage is regularly a small-scale, and well-focused and well-thought-out step, as opposed to a large overwhelming course of action.

The importance of leverage is echoed by Bean (1993), in what he has labeled the strategically leveraged plan. It is “unusual in its tenacity, creativity, aggressiveness, initiative and overall synergy, yet is focused, attainable, and even realistic from a higher strategic vantage point” (p. 9). The leveraged results exceed the results from traditional company plans due to the holistic approach taken at the outset, and the commitment attained through strategic proactive teamwork.

There is an intrinsic link between an organization’s strategic plan, and its operational plans. LeClair (2001) details the importance of operational planning as a part of the strategic planning process. “Operational planning takes an association from the ‘what it seeks to accomplish and why’ to the ‘how and when’” (p. 33). The operational planning assumes a functional perspective and translates the organizational strategies into actions. It includes the development of operational tactics, which include key activities, timeframes and milestones; responsibility and oversight; staffing; and, costing (LeClair, 2001).

With operational plans that answer the questions of how and when, the final critical element is measurement. Through ongoing measurement, an organization can determine if it

is in fact moving forward. Measurement will provide an internal feedback loop to reassess strategies, and to learn from successes and failures, and allow further progress. I will expand on measurement later in this chapter, as management controls serve a critical need at the end of any change process. Before I get to that point, I will examine the aspect of organizational change that accompanies strategic planning.

Organizational Change

The VPD has experienced stalled strategic planning processes over the past twenty years. While there are numerous reasons to account for this historical trend, the core of this problem can appear to be an inability for the VPD to effect change in relation to its strategic planning commitments. Anderson (2006) notes that the structure of police agencies, with their hierarchical top-down model of leadership, is often counterintuitive to leading change. However, one can effectively implement change in a police environment through leadership and visioning. “Change must be envisioned, anticipated, managed and adapted to by key leaders, and this leadership must be exercised on a global scale” (Anderson, 2006, p. 31).

Organizational change is ongoing, regardless of the vocation or organization involved. Advances in technology, changes to demographics in the work force and internal and external forces related to the specific functioning of the work force continually place demands on leaders to facilitate change (Anderson & Ackerman-Anderson, 2001; Anderson, 2006; Conner, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Quinn, 2004). However, it is often the smaller influences in an organization, and not changes to major processes, that require regular attention. Most organizations’ strategies remain relatively stable for extended periods; however, as new challenges and problems emerge, change to strategy is inevitable in spite of the fact that core

strategies may not vary. The critical issue then becomes one of blending and prioritizing (Bryson, 2004).

Kotter (1995) articulates eight key reasons why change efforts fail, based on his observations of over 100 companies that embarked on a change or improvement initiative. These eight reasons are: a failure to establish urgency for the change; a failure to have a large enough leadership coalition; the absence of a vision; a failure to adequately communicate the vision; a failure to remove obstacles to the vision; not structuring and celebrating short-term wins; declaring success too early; and, not anchoring the change in the corporate culture. Four of these eight critical steps link directly to the vision of the leaders in an organization. Within the police environment, the leadership commitment cannot be understated.

Examining this information in light of the substantial leadership change in the VPD over the past decade, it is clear to see how instability in the leadership has not enabled the strategic plans to flourish. As leaders change within an organization, so does the vision, and without that committed and driving force behind it, the strategic vision fades. Kaplan and Norton (2001) echo this concept of leadership in change, and note how dedicated middle managers can sustain quality improvements, and effectively implement change initiatives; however, it is ongoing and active leadership from Executive members that leads to an organization that is fully aligned to its strategy.

Historically, the VPD has made an effort to implement effective strategic plans. As with most change geared at strategically focused organizations, the issue is not so much the movement in that direction, but the inability to sustain the effort (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Kaplan & Norton, 2001). While it is simplistic to point to an effective leader to oversee this change, most large organizational structures cannot expect to succeed with the efforts of one

person. With leadership found at all levels of the VPD, the responsibility for leading change does not rest with any one individual. Anderson (2006) details that leadership trends in policing span all levels of a management team:

Each manager must lead and each leader must manage in a world where both leadership and management dimensions must be developed to respond to constant change and pressures, both internal and external to an organization. Increasing pressures of a technical, interpersonal, and organizational nature are already upon us; are not likely to diminish. (p. 30)

The importance of leadership through these change processes cannot be overstated. Collins (2001b) details the need for organizational leaders to have a fierce resolve for the success of their companies. This is not for personal gain, but for the advancement of their organization. Along with fierce personal resolve is the need to empower people to drive the change to attain the vision. “It is important that leaders light the way toward strategically managed change and innovation that responds proactively to new opportunities and future-trend threats. When they are acting in the consultative role, they not only ardently practice experimentation and problem solving but also develop the tendency in others to be more explorative and prudently adventuresome” (Anderson, 2006, p. 155).

There is a clear link between managing change and strategic planning. Bryson (2004) notes that “the strategic planning process is...inherently prone to fail because it is deliberately disruptive. Only strong sponsors, unflagging champions, skilful planners and facilitators, a supportive coalition and a clear view of the potential benefits can make it succeed” (p. 91). The view of the benefit is an essential component to effectively driving organizational change. Senge (1990b) details how the vision associated to change creates a desired state of how the organization could look. When employees can accurately assess their

current reality and compare that to the desired vision, the tension created will provide impetus for change.

This approach is synonymous with the work of O'Toole (1995), who presents a case for values-based leadership and notes that the most difficult challenge of leadership is to bring about change without imposing one's will. The imposition of the will of a leader consistently results in resistance. "The source of resistance to 'bad,' frivolous, and dangerous change is the same as the resistance to 'good,' necessary and positive change" (O'Toole, 1995, p. 254). The model of values-based leadership entails the creation of a common moral purpose, under which all factions within an organization can establish a common ground. Within this framework, the common and higher purpose supersedes personal gains and motives, and thereby mitigates resistance.

Through the course of my career, I have witnessed numerous instances where leaders imposed initiatives, and these initiatives failed due to resistance from the membership. In some instances, the change had merit; however, they never had an opportunity to succeed due to the overwhelming level of resistance. While O'Toole (1995) comments that values-based leadership is an ideal, and arguably does not largely exist, his approach is valid. When contrasted with the essential elements for strategic planning, there are parallels within the concepts of the development of organizational vision and values. Therefore, a leader facilitates organizational change through the establishment and acceptance of shared organizational values and a vision of where the organization is going.

Organizational Culture

The culture of an organization dramatically influences the ability for leaders to effect change. While O'Toole (1995) has espoused the strength of values-based leadership within

organizations as a key to enabling change, his approach may be somewhat simplistic when dealing with the forces associated to a strong organizational culture. Cameron and Quinn (2006) note that the most frequently cited reasons for the failure of strategic planning are linked directly to an organization's culture. Further, in some instances the cultural resistance to the change has left organizations in a greater state of dysfunction than they were before the change was even attempted.

There is a strong inter-relationship between successful organizational improvement and changes to the organizational culture. "When the values, orientations, definitions, and goals stay constant – even when procedures and strategies are altered – organizations return quickly to the status quo" (Cameron & Quinn, 2006, p. 11). This concept provides insight into much of the past lapses experienced by the VPD, in relation to their strategic plans. It also serves as a warning to the current leadership team, to ensure that the organization's culture aligns with its vision and values.

The cultures of police departments are steep in the history of the organization, much like one would find in other corporations and nonprofit entities. Organizational cultures evolve over time, and are entrenched within organizations following years of experienced success and built up defenses to perceived obstacles. As new members enter an organization, those assumptions are passed down through the years (Schein, 1996).

Strong organizational cultures traditionally bind police departments, and the VPD is no exception to this phenomenon. In spite of its strength, police culture is similar to other contemporary human cultures, in many ways. It is made up of "independent actors, arising and existing in a broader social environment of social values and personal meanings" (Crank & Caldero, 2000, p. 146). The key difference with the police culture, as opposed to a

corporate organization's culture, is that it spans many agencies and jurisdictions, and is not necessarily confined within any one department.

Based on personal observations, Crank (as cited in Giacomazzi, 1999) notes that police behavior is predictable, regardless of where the police organization is located. Further, the consistency of police culture, across jurisdictions, is due to the constant interaction that police officers have with "the street environment, the administrative environment, the courts and the media" (Crank, as cited in Giacomazzi, 1999, p. 924). Local cultures of the police have developed consistently, across jurisdictions, based on the pre-existing values of its members and the external influences applied through the media, courts, administration, and the criminals they meet. In general, the type of people recruited, and the problems and groups that the police encounter, results in a consistent culture within the vocation (Crank & Caldero, 2000).

While exploring business process changes within the VPD, one cannot underestimate the role that the organizational culture plays. French and Stewart (2001) note that change efforts within the hierarchical structure of a police department can be greatly hampered by the traditional design and hierarchical leadership within these organizations. Kaplan and Norton (2001) detail a historical perspective on cultural change within the command and control environment, where strategy is developed at the top and filtered down through a centralized structure. While these systems worked in the nineteenth century, they are ineffective in the rapid and ever-changing work environment today. Buy-in and commitment are essential to success and it is critical to constantly communicate a shared vision, and proactively engage personnel in the commitment to the vision, to affect a change in the culture (Clapham, 2006).

In spite of today's changing environment, police agencies necessarily continue to maintain the hierarchical rank structure associated to paramilitary organizations. Certainly, the hierarchical structure of the VPD will not be changing in the near future. Fullan (2001) notes that the structure of an organization does make a difference to organizational success; however, it is not the key point to achieving successful change. "Transforming the culture – changing the way we do things around here – is the main point" (Fullan, 2001, p. 43).

Cresie (2005) notes that an organization's "culture, or 'personality', will usually be an accurate representation of the demonstrated values of the leadership within that organization" (p. 75). Further, "when the reality of the organization falls short of expectations, it remains the responsibility of the leadership to change that organizational culture to meet the desired goals and expectations" (Cresie, 2005, p. 75). This responsibility links directly to the long-term strategic planning of the organization, and further recognizes the time it takes to have an effective impact on the culture of an organization.

Mintzberg (1994) details how organizations that possess a strong culture are reluctant to accept the processes associated to organizational planning, as it is viewed as too calculated and impersonal. I suggest that the hierarchical rank structure further compounds this perception within a police department, where employees perceive their involvement to be a token gesture, with the overlying belief that the planning is truly a top-down initiative. Further, this becomes even more critical if the organizational planning strays away from the accepted norms of the existing culture. Bryson (2004) articulates the importance of cultural awareness, as executives and managers require a full understanding of an organization's culture to ensure a well-conceived culture change is included with their strategy formulation.

Bryson (2004) notes that changes to the underlying assumptions within an organization, brought about by changes in strategy, can be some of the most complex and difficult changes to bring about. Culture is an integral part of strategy formulation, as it “provides much of the glue that holds inputs, processes, and outputs together” (Bryson, 2004, p. 185). The culture will frequently direct which initiatives receive priority, and often beyond any direction provided by management. This concept is echoed by Cresie (2005), who notes “not only must the chief and leaders change the processes, employees must also change expectations and value systems” (p. 75).

A high level of commitment is required to change the culture in any organization and it requires a long-term commitment to the process from its leaders. They must provide an alternate vision of the organization, to overshadow the informal mission statements that employees act upon within the organization’s culture. “The Chief and leaders within the department should expect a timeline of five to seven years to effectively incorporate any significant change of culture” (Cresie, 2005, p. 75).

The first step to changing the culture is to have a clear vision of where the department should be within the next five years. “This vision for the future must be specific because it will be the chief’s or manager’s responsibility, as well as that of the leadership staff, to clearly articulate that vision to the other members of the department” (Cresie, 2005, p. 76). They need to communicate the vision of a changing culture across the organization. “It is important to communicate the vision to all members of the department. After all, it is human nature to ask ‘What’s in this for me?’” (Cresie, 2005, p. 76). Further, “by outlining the expectations of the vision, leaders will clarify the mission of the organization” (Cresie, 2005, p. 77).

Hill (2005) writes about changing the culture of a police organization, and while her focus relates specifically to community policing, the themes related to the police culture and communication are consistent. She notes that most officers will accept an invitation to participate in a new culture, although there may be varying degrees of enthusiasm. It is through “opening the chief’s door to communication with all levels of departmental personnel and encouraging the flow of information and ideas will allow the department and its officers and staff to continually grow and refine their mission” (Hill, 2005, p. 146)

Cresie (2005) refers to empowerment, and the involvement of all employees, generating cultural shifts in police departments. “Empowering employees to help attain the vision allows them to buy into the process as they work toward implementing their ideas” (p. 76). Employee involvement, through strategic and long-term planning, will increase buy in, and foster a shift in culture over time. Kaplan and Norton (2001) further emphasize employee involvement in the ongoing processes, as they examined teamwork processes within organizations.

If they were to achieve their teamwork objectives, they had to set the tone for constructive, supportive dialogue, not criticism and micro-management. For risk-taking and innovation to be encouraged, executives must create a climate that permits shortfalls and problems to be open for discussion and problem solving. (p. 324)

The ability to change the culture of an organization further enables change. Fullan (2001) outlines that “leading in a culture of change means creating a culture (not just a structure) of change ... producing the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices – all of the time...” (p. 44). When the organizational culture associated to policing overlays change initiatives, a strong barrier may exist to reject that change. Crank and Caldero (2000) refer to the *boomerang effect* and the *warping effect*.

The boomerang effect is defined in instances where the efforts to impart change actually increase the resistance to that change, whereas the warping effect defines when proposed changes are assimilated into the culture and result in unintended shifts in the effects of the change.

Given the strong undercurrent associated to the police culture, leaders effecting organizational change in police departments must continually assess the impact that change is having, and respond to the issues as they arise. Leaders cannot underestimate the importance of an organization's culture, as the failure to recognize cultural pressures will regularly lead to the failure of the change initiatives. Kotter (1995) discusses the eight errors that cause change initiatives to fail, and the eighth error is "not anchoring changes in the corporation's culture" (p. 64). The failure to address burgeoning culture barriers within the police department will definitively negate the projected benefits of change initiatives.

Management Controls

While a leader's vision and organizational values will influence and drive change, true change is successful when it takes hold in the organization. Black and Gregersen (2003) note that in spite of the strong drive of a committed champion, and rewards for desired behaviour, employees can still become lost in change. To address this problem, communication, measurement and accountability are critical components.

The development of a strategic plan, including employee input into the organizational values, the vision and the mission statement is admirable. However, it loses meaning if there is no follow through. Bossidy and Charan (2002) refer to the process of execution as, "a systematic process of rigorously discussing hows and whats, questioning, tenaciously following through, and ensuring accountability" (p. 22). In reviewing the strategic planning

of the VPD, the planning processes have delivered the discussion and questioning. Now it is a matter of addressing the following through part, and organizational accountability.

As organizations, police departments are accountable on two different levels. First, the public has the right to expect police accountability due to their power, including the power to deprive liberty and the expenditure of a valuable tax-based resource. Second, the public will find utility in police accountability, as it forms an important measure of operational performance and the reduction in operational errors for policing (Moore & Braga, 2003). Legislation and common law authority define this first level of accountability. It is the quality of the service to the public, which defines the second level of accountability.

To offer a parallel view of management controls in the private sector, Kaplan and Norton (2001) outline that organizations need clear boundary systems, including legal constraints and codes of conduct that clearly articulate forbidden behaviour. This includes strong internal control systems required to safeguard cash and other assets. While the design of these management control systems promotes compliance to the rules and accountability, they cannot be the sole measurement of success. “Performance measure systems in many organizations relate to such internal control tasks. These are important, but focusing only on internal control confuses adherence to rules and regulations with accomplishing the mission and outcomes” (Kaplan & Norton, 2001, p. 349).

The vision of the VPD is strong, and grounded in the consistent core personal values of its members. Combined, they serve to guide the actions of the employees and, like most nonprofit groups, are based on the premise of their area of responsibility; doing good things for others.

The not-for-profits are generally stronger than the for-profits in terms of the strength of their vision. But, the not-for-profits are relatively weaker in terms

of most elements of the strategic plan, particularly those having to do with implementation and accountability. (Quigley, 1993, p. 199)

It is this implementation phase, and the aspects of accountability, where the VPD and many other police departments have struggled with their strategic plans. This problem is not unique to policing, and the ability to implement a strategic plan, and essentially operationalize it, is what allows organizations to move forward successfully.

While the Strategic Plan provides organizational direction and focus, the establishment of processes to measure progress and to hold people accountable for attaining the goals is vital. “It is easy to say that an organization has high standards. But, high standards without accountability are not really high standards at all; they are merely high hopes” (Cresie, 2005, p. 78). Further, managers must communicate what behaviour is acceptable, and more specifically what actions are unacceptable, in pursuit of the mission (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). In the VPD, accountability is one of the core organizational values, and the continued practice of accountability for the strategic goals and objectives will result in the successful execution of the plan. It is less about how well the strategy works, but rather that the responsible parties carry out and implement the strategy. Bryson (2004) refers to strategic management systems, which are “ongoing organizational mechanisms or arrangements for strategically managing the implementation of agreed-upon strategies, assessing the performance of those strategies, and formulating new or revised strategies” (p. 270). Effective measurement is essential.

“An organization’s measurement system strongly affects the behavior of people both inside and outside the organization” (Kaplan & Norton, 1996, p. 21). The fact that an organization chooses to measure something implies a level of importance to that function or

process. People will respond to perceived areas of importance with greater diligence than to activities perceived less important.

The objective of any measurement system should be to motivate all managers and employees to implement successfully the business unit's strategy. Those companies that can translate their strategy into their measurement system are far better able to execute their strategy because they can communicate their objectives and their target. (Kaplan & Norton, 1996, p. 147)

Performance measurement, outlining how effective an organization is at meeting its objectives, is critical in the world of nonprofit organizations. This measurement is driven by the public, donors who provide funding, the government and the regulatory bodies that serve as a watchdog over these organizations (Pappas, 1996). Part of measurement is also the process of benchmarking. "Benchmarking compares the cost and effectiveness of one organization's operations to those of other organizations" (Pappas, 1996, p. 164).

Pappas (1996) also differentiates between benchmarking and best practices, whereby benchmarking is the comparison of an organization's performance against the performance of like organizations, and best practices represents the most effective of these organizations. This approach suggests that attaining best practices is frequently too huge a crevice to traverse. It requires extensive organizational commitment and resource allocation to meet the strenuous work involved to accomplish the task.

This contrasts the thinking of Welsh (2005) and Kaplan and Norton (1996), who outline that there is ongoing flow from one to another. Benchmarking serves as an important step in measurement and, done correctly, it produces a comparative level based on like organizations, and sets a performance standard or target to attain. In addition, it lends itself to supporting the concept of best practices and serves as a concrete foundation for service improvements. Welsh (2005) details how important best practices are, not in terms of

copying the performance of others, but in taking those tasks and accompanying measurements and improving on them to attain organizational goals.

Regardless of the measurement process used, it is again critical to communicate the ongoing measurement results. It goes well beyond simply the vision. Communication of both the strategic objectives and the measurement results needs to occur throughout a company, and on a regular basis. These communications serve as a reminder to all just what the critical objectives are, and how the organization is doing at meeting those objectives. Further, it serves to communicate and gain commitment towards the strategic objectives across all levels of the organization (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

The continual evolution of change, and the reassessment of the strategies, is a cyclical approach that ensures the Strategic Plan remains current and relevant. To accomplish this cyclical analysis of strategies, successful organizations have developed teams of people to continually reassess progress and adjust the strategies as required. Kaplan and Norton (2001) outline how successful organizations have had the overall strategy set by the Executive and then permitted people within the organization to identify and implement the business activities that have the highest impact for accomplishing the goals and objectives.

While assessing a police department's business activities for their impact on society is essential, it is more difficult to quantify effectiveness and efficiency than it is in the private sector. The process of evaluating policing in terms of economic variables is relatively new. While the private sector is regularly measured by outputs and cash flow, it is substantially more complex to apply financial and economic measures to the outputs and outcomes of a police department's activities (Moore & Braga, 2003; Stockdale et al., 1999). In spite of this difficulty, the external requirements to account for our effectiveness, and justify the high cost

of policing are of paramount importance to police managers. “In this time of dramatic and sweeping change, it is important to help funding decision makers to articulate the difference between minimally adequate, adequate, good and excellent policing ... services” (Anderson, 2006, p. 33). The goals and objectives detailed in the Strategic Plan define the concepts of excellent policing. The organizational commitment and accountability to accomplishing those goals is what defines a successful police department.

Organizations often take a number of different approaches to ensure performance is occurring at the Executive level. Kaplan and Norton (2001) detail how the effective implementation of a balanced scorecard approach has resulted in a new culture emerging that is based on a team effort, designed to support the organizational strategy. This team approach, where the team holds itself mutually accountable for achieving its performance goals, is a strong method to effect organizational change. Further, it is through accountability for the individual and for the team that organizational leadership capacity is built (Smith, 1996).

Accountability is a self-fulfilling prophecy. It breeds on itself, and starts with the leadership of an organization. Organizational leaders hold themselves accountable for their responsibilities, and then devolve that down to the team level. Within a team model, there is a collective commitment to accountability, and to team performance in relation to its goals. It serves to set the example for the organization, to foster trust in one another and to begin the cultural shift (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Smith, 1996).

On final note, while accountability will assist in the execution of strategies, and hold those responsible to the cause and the objective, the second equally important component is the recognition of success. Ensuring accountability will remind people they are responsible

for action. The celebration of success reaffirms the importance of the objective, and recognizes those that are committed to the objective. “By celebrating people’s accomplishments visibly and in group settings, leaders create and sustain team spirit; by basing celebrations on the accomplishment of key values and milestones, they sustain people’s focus” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 369).

Conclusion

The vast array of literature related to strategic planning provides an excellent framework on which the VPD can establish police best practices. While strategic plans are commonplace in police departments, there is little literature specific to strategic plans in policing. Regardless, the concepts espoused in the literature from private sector and nonprofit organizations are relevant to police organizations.

The body of literature on strategic planning serves as a framework on which an assessment can be made of the Strategic Plan in the VPD. Drawing on this information, and conducting the research for this project, I will identify how to embed the Strategic Plan into the day-to-day operations of the Department. This process will result in conclusions and operational recommendations that will assist the VPD well into the future.

CHAPTER 3. CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

The conduct of research will elicit the data required to answer key questions about the state of the Strategic Plan within the VPD. The research will clarify how the VPD can firmly embed the Strategic Plan into its business practices, when previous plans have been developed and then subsequently languished. Further, the research will identify the extent that the Strategic Plan is having an impact on current VPD operations and how the VPD can successfully integrate its five key strategic steps into the day-to-day operations of the organization. Finally, it will help identify organizational conditions and processes necessary to ensure that strategic plans succeed in their implementation, and the measurements necessary to serve as indicators of success.

I adopted a research approach that draws on the theories of action research, and incorporates multiple data collection tools to answer the research questions. I then analyzed the data collected and synthesized the information into common themes. This process provided clarity to the information and defined organizational successes and deficiencies from the strategic planning process. It also served as a foundation for the development of recommendations for the VPD.

Research Approach

This research project draws on the concepts of action research, and involves a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Stringer (1999) defines action research as an involved process, where traditional research subjects should participate in the research and the processes in such a way that they ultimately benefit from the research itself. It goes well beyond the simple data collection and analysis completed by an uninvolved researcher.

Further, action research “embraces principles of participation, reflection, empowerment, and emancipation of people and groups interested in improving their social situation or condition” (Berg, 2004, p. 195). The participants involved in this project are all employees of the VPD, and represent a cross-section of stakeholders who participated in the overall research and resulting solutions. Their involvement defines participation and fosters both individual and collective reflection on the organization as a whole. The participants were sworn and civilian, supervisory and frontline personnel, who were empowered to provide input. The anonymity and confidentiality associated to the research process ensured that no negative consequences could fall their way from elsewhere in the organization.

Glesne (1999) emphasizes that the core role of action researchers is to solve some sort of problem and to take action in some way, and without political or controlling overtones. In this model, the researchers work as agents of change, with their involvement in the inquiry and their participation in dialogue leading directly to recommendations and solutions. The scope of this research project is fully within the VPD, with the results of the research leading directly to process improvements and organizational change to address the problems outlined in the research question.

Berg (2004) effectively outlines how the procedural process of action research involves four stages: identifying the question; gathering information to respond to the question; analyzing and interpreting the information; and, distributing the results. This approach defines the course of this research project, and serves as an intervention to resolve a specific set of problems within the VPD. Cross-functional work teams defined the strategic goals and objectives when the Strategic Plan was first created. This research project, which includes membership surveys and one-on-one interviews, marks a return to the core

stakeholder involvement. This time, however, the research approach leads to the development of supporting business processes to ensure a deeper understanding of the Strategic Plan through subsequent action research cycles.

This research project incorporates quantitative methodology to answer broad questions related to the state of the organization, and to assess the current level of support for the Strategic Plan and strategic planning process. It defines the scope of the problem, and endeavors to focus the research into a manageable target group for additional research methodology.

Additionally, the use of quantifiable data becomes an essential component to meet organizational requirements. Ironically, one of the biggest criticisms in the UCFV review of the 2004 VPD staffing request was the Department's inability to provide quantifiable performance measures (Griffiths et al., 2005). When the sole source of funding for police agencies comes from revenue generated from public taxation, the financial controls for the City of Vancouver recognize substantiated data analysis grounded in quantitative research over data collection from qualitative methodology.

In spite of the need for quantifiable data, I also incorporated the collection of qualitative data. Within the realm of qualitative research, Glesne (1999) has outlined the importance of employing a variety of means to collect data within this aspect of research alone. The process of utilizing multiple methods assists with the validation of the data, thereby enhancing the reliability of the process. To accomplish this within my research approach, I incorporated the collection of free-form answers into the survey process, providing broad qualitative information on the Strategic Plan. I also conducted a series of one-on-one interviews with members of the management team, to obtain data from a

different method. This method served as a final means of fleshing out detailed information on the underlying themes arising from the previous method.

Project Participants

The VPD is the focus of this research project, and all participants involved have some affiliation with this organization. The Strategic Plan is an organizational document that affects the work of every employee and, as such, I approached as large a cross-section as possible to participate in this research. However, the VPD has over 1,500 employees, and it is highly impractical to ensure every employee of the organization is able to provide input. It was critical that I clearly defined a sample that ensures representation from the different areas of the organization, based on participant job function, level of responsibility and position within the structure.

Both methods employed throughout this research project have a slightly different target audience, while remaining within the scope of VPD personnel. The survey targeted a broad organizational audience, directed at frontline and supervisory personnel. The interview targeted a smaller set of participants at the management level of the organization. The only criterion for participation was that each participant had to be an active employee of the VPD.

There was no differentiation made between the gender or the cultural beliefs and backgrounds of the participants. While the personnel employed by the VPD include men and women of varying ages, and they cover a broad spectrum of cultures reflecting the diversity of the community, I did not identify particular demographic groups for this study, nor were these data collected during the research.

Research Methods

This research project employs multiple research methods to collect data for analysis. Stringer (1999) refers to the employment of different models of conventional research methods, to address site-specific problems with unique variables at play within the target organization. As such, this project utilizes a blend of both quantitative and qualitative methodology.

Research Tools

I utilized two research tools to collect data. Each tool is distinct from the other, and provides a different approach to gathering data on the same topic. The tools selected were a survey and a series of one-on-one interviews.

The survey: A research survey tool, or questionnaire, provides the opportunity to sample a large representation of the VPD staff to gauge their assessment of the current state of strategic planning within the Department. Palys (2003) suggests that an effective survey has the versatility and capacity to represent a direct response from all those participating. Further, “a survey is a system for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour” (Fink, 2003, p. 1).

Palys (2003) details how the goal of non-probabilistic sampling is to generate a strategically chosen sample, as opposed to probabilistic sampling, where one defines a representative sample within a larger group. In the case of this research, I am interested in issues that go beyond a singular state of affairs, and am looking into the deeper theory and understanding behind the situation. I conducted the survey using a purposive procedure, identifying participants who are “intentionally sought because they meet some criterion for

inclusion ins the study” (Palys, 2003, p. 142). The survey sample is purposive, in that it targets both frontline and supervisory ranks, and both sworn and civilian personnel.

For the purposes of this research project, I conducted an electronic survey. The survey was developed within an electronic environment, on the Department’s survey software program, and distributed to participants via e-mail (“Select survey asp (version 8.1) [computer software]”, 2005).

Interviews: Glesne (1999) refers to a one-on-one interview as a topical interview which serves to “search for opinions, perceptions and attitudes toward some topic” (p. 69). The use of semi-structured interviews, where the initial questions asked are pre-determined, while allowing the participants some latitude as the interview progresses, enables the interviewer to probe issues more fully (Berg, 2004).

Morgan (1997) notes that one of the key factors supporting the use of participant interviews is the fact that control of the discussion is in the hands of the interviewer. In addition, there is a closer communication from this one-on-one setting than found in the larger focus group setting. The interviewer can draw on non-verbal queues and a foundation of rapport that is less prevalent in a group setting (Glesne, 1999; Morgan, 1997).

I conducted a series of personal interviews in this research project, with participants representing a sample of individuals at the management level of the VPD. Through this particular method, the pre-determined questions focused on the integration of the Strategic Plan into the business processes of the VPD. Although the core questions were structured, the peer relationship I have with each participant allowed a free-flow of inquiry beyond the core questions. Given the size of the sample interview population and the existing relationships I

had with each participant, this method produced productive dialogue and ample data for analysis.

I designed the interview to strike a balance with the survey questionnaire. Palys (2003) outlines how the face-to-face nature of these interactions provides for greater clarity of thought, a more intimate relationship and a humanistic approach to sterile data collection. The ability to build rapport from the relationships is paramount (Berg, 2004; Glesne, 1999; Palys, 2003). Each of the managers involved is a peer within the VPD and, as such, rapport will exist from the outset of the interview. This relationship enabled me to dig deeper into the subject matter, earlier in the interview, and resulted in data that are more complete.

Study Conduct

I applied the research tools sequentially, with some overlap of activities between the end of the survey and the start of the interviews. The electronic survey formed the basis of the research, providing a broad overview of the state of the Strategic Plan within the organization. I then conducted the one-on-one interviews with a sample of management team.

The survey: The survey (see Appendix A) consisted of 19 closed- and open-ended questions, which I designed to elicit a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. The survey questions themselves were of paramount importance, and I designed them to meet the specific objectives of the survey, and to be clear, concise and purposeful. To ensure this occurred, and to reaffirm the soundness of the questions, Ms. Tamie Fennig, an experienced survey writer who presently works in the Planning and Research Section reviewed them. In addition, I piloted the survey with a small sample from the respondent population, to ensure

that the respondents understood the questions themselves and to reaffirm that the questions enabled insightful responses to address the purpose.

I developed the survey within a survey software program ("Select survey asp (version 8.1) [computer software]", 2005) and distributed invitations to participate via the departmental e-mail system. The administration of the survey was wholly within the internal computer network of the VPD, which provided for accurate dissemination, ease of use for responses and a comprehensive method to monitor involvement. The capability of the software enabled me to track the number of survey participants relative to the sample size. While I had prepared a strategy to reach out to work units and provide face-to-face information sessions across the organization, this step proved to be unnecessary.

On June 7, 2006, I distributed the survey to 1,720 employees of the VPD, representing the Sergeant and Constable ranks of the organization, as well as supervisory and frontline civilian personnel. Participants in the electronic survey received an e-mail from me (see Appendix B) introducing the survey and inviting them to participate. Attached to that e-mail was an electronic link that, when selected, took the participant directly to the survey. The first screen contained a Survey Preamble (see Appendix C) which served to provide informed consent to the participant. If they selected "yes" to the consent, they moved to the first question. If they selected "no" to the consent, they moved to the end of the survey and did not have access to the questions.

This distribution included 133 sworn police Sergeants, 1,161 sworn police Constables, 41 civilian supervisors and 385 civilian frontline workers. Within five hours of distributing the survey, 159 participants had responded. Within two days, 289 participants had responded and within nine days that figure rose to 376 participants.

I entered into this research method wholly expecting to see a limited response. My presumption was based on a perceived level of interest in relation to the topic, as well as the logistical aspect of a work force that covers shifts twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (Fowler, 2002). Given that the response rate far exceeded my expectations, I did not need to deliver face-to-face information sessions to encourage participation in the survey. However, I did identify that the response from sworn police officers was proportionally lower to the entire sample size, compared to that of civilian employees. To address this, I forwarded a reminder e-mail to the entire list of sworn police participants who received the original survey, requesting that they complete the survey if they had not already done so. I distributed this request on June 16, 2006 and it resulted in 546 responses for a final total, after two weeks.

Interviews: I conducted six face-to-face interviews as a part of the research methodology. The participants represented both sworn and civilian managers, and the sample represents one interview for every six Section managers. This ratio translated into interviews with five sworn police Inspectors and one civilian manager. The only criterion added to the selection process was that the manager had to have held a management position for the past two years, to coincide with the existence of the current Strategic Plan.

At the time of this research, there were 33 sworn police managers and 7 civilian managers working for the VPD. There are only 22 sworn managers identified as eligible for an interview, once I filtered the group to allow only those who had been in a management position in the past two years. I divided this group of managers by their functional area of work, and then within each sub-group, I drew one name at random. These five Inspectors

received a Letter of Invitation to participate in the interview (see Appendix D), and everyone I approached agreed to participate.

I conducted a similar process for the civilian managers; however, because of the small number involved, there was no attempt to segregate them by work group. I drew a single name at random to receive an invitation to participate, and this manager agreed to participate in the first instance.

Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. The interview itself consisted of a series of open-ended questions (see Appendix E) designed to provide specific details to answer the overarching research question. The interview questions elicited information about the participant's knowledge and commitment to the organization's strategic objectives, the business processes in place in their Section, and input for process change within the organization to support the Strategic Plan. The interview process was semi-structured, to provide a few core questions, and then offer the opportunity to probe into other areas of related interest. I asked the same set of core questions of every participant, to ensure consistency across the series of interviews.

To authenticate the interview questions, I piloted the core interview questions with an uninvolved peer. This provided the opportunity to test both the schedule of the interview, and the subject matter at hand (Berg, 2004). From this pilot process, I was able to refine the questions further and help to ensure that I received the type of information I was seeking.

To capture the data, the interviews were recorded using digital audio equipment. I initially viewed this aspect as somewhat problematic within the police environment. My experience has shown that there is a cultural reluctance for police officers to have their thoughts recorded. While there was a risk that some participants may not have been willing

to participate because of the audio recording, I decided to persevere with this aspect as the result is a better reflection of the dialogue, and provides a substantially broader collection of more accurate data for analysis (Palys, 2003).

I used dialogue and a signed confidentiality agreement (see Appendix F) to allay the fears associated to the aspect of recording the conversation. In addition, I provided each participant with written notification, through a Research Consent Form (see Appendix G), detailing where and how I will be retaining the recorded conversation. Further, I had the information transcribed immediately following the interview, and returned the transcript to the interviewee for review and sign off. This process seemed to satisfy the interviewees that their confidentiality is important, while serving to obtain the most accurate data possible. I met no objection in relation to audio recording the dialogue.

Data Analysis

Palys (2003) notes that survey data will provide an ordinal measurement, as they are different from one another and impose a level of magnitude to the variable being measured. The analysis of the data obtained from the survey has resulted in the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. As a process of analysis, I have aggregated and summarized the survey data. The summary includes a frequency distribution to identify the number and percentages of people in each of the categories being analyzed (Babbie, Halley & Zaino, 2003; Palys, 2003).

Further, I used the data analysis software SPSS to run cross tabulations, to gain a more in-depth analysis of the distribution of one variable for each category of a second variable (Babbie et al., 2003). This process allowed me to compare and contrast the answers provided to specific questions, against the different variables of the sample group. In other

words, I could identify if there was a relationship between acceptance of the Strategic Plan and the level of service of a respondent.

While SPSS assisted in the analysis of the quantitative data from the survey, the data obtained from the interviews is strictly qualitative in nature, and cannot be analyzed in the same fashion. Berg (2004) states that “good qualitative research, like good quantitative research, is based on calculated strategies and methodological rigor [and] qualitative research cannot only add texture to an analysis but also demonstrate meanings and understandings about problems and phenomena that would otherwise be unidentified” (p. 114).

Berg (2004) reaffirms the concept of context, and details how the frequencies of specific textual elements “provide a means for identifying, organizing, indexing and retrieving data. Analysis of the data ... should involve consideration of the literal words in the text being analyzed, including the manner in which these words have been offered” (p. 269). Additionally, Glesne (1999) refers to data transformation as “the prelude to sensitive, comprehensive outcomes that describe, identify patterns, make connections, and contribute to greater understanding” (p. 151).

The critical point is that the meanings associated with the content data from the interviews, along with the open-ended responses in the surveys, form the basis of the analysis. They then become the framework to substantiate conclusions and recommendations. The process of content analysis provides a window on how the participants view their social environment. “It is a passport to listening to the words of the text and understanding better the perspective(s) of the producer of these words” (Berg, 2004, p. 269).

I analyzed the qualitative data from the interviews by drawing on the themes underlying the data. One key aspect of qualitative inquiry is the analysis of data using data

displays. The generation of mind maps, and similar visual tools, can provide clarity to the content themes, and allow the researcher to visualize and link the vast array of data (Glesne, 1999).

I conducted the analysis myself, utilizing two physical approaches, as opposed to relying on computer based applications for textual data analysis. While this aspect of analysis interests me, I did not have sufficient time over the course of the research period to adequately learn and apply these software solutions. Rather, I categorized the responses from each interview participant, used Microsoft Excel to link them to each question, and then identified an underlying theme for each individual response.

I coded each response to a question into a defined theme. I identified these themes through an analysis of the content, treating each piece of data independently of all other pieces of information. I attached an identifying label to these pieces of information, with the source data ranging from a few words within an answer to paragraphs of information (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Through this preliminary coding, I identified 27 different themes. Further, I was also able to identify patterns in the data, and make meaning in relation to the research questions and the literature. I then used the sorting capabilities of Excel and tabulated the identified themes to develop an index of the frequency that each theme appeared. While Glesne (1999) warns of drawing on computers to strictly count words, my analysis ensured that the meaning of the data was identified first, and the sorting of themes thereafter simply assisted with the second level of analysis.

I then generated a mind map diagram, to explore the linkage of each of these themes in greater depth, and in relation to the research question. I used the research question as the centre, and mapped out the themes around it on a sheet of paper. Where themes linked with

one another, I connected them to one another, thereby identifying broader themes. This process enabled me to condense the number of themes down into a smaller and more manageable set of core themes. These core themes served as the foundation for my interview findings, and served to authenticate these findings against the findings from the survey.

The analysis of qualitative data also includes an assessment of its authenticity and trustworthiness. This validation process includes a process of triangulation. Data triangulation provides for comparisons of different data collected, through different methods, against one another, to validate the collective whole (Berg, 2004). Glesne (1999) outlines further methods of triangulation for validation, in relation to the utilization of different data sources.

I applied the concepts of triangulation by incorporating two research tools into the data collection methods. I combined different types of questions within the survey to obtain different types of data. By building surveys and interviews that target different positions and ranks within the organization, the combination of differing sample groups served to validate the data from one group against that of another group. Finally, I combined different analysis techniques, and compared and contrasted the results, thus substantiating my findings.

Ethical Issues

Royal Roads University (RRU) mandates that every division within the University implements measures to ensure all involved in research scholarship are “aware of the principles and practices of scholarly integrity, accountability and responsibility” (Royal Roads University, 2000, p. 1). RRU follows eight guiding ethical principles, as set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement on ethical conduct that governs any research involving human participants. These principles are: respect for human dignity; respect for free and informed

consent; respect for vulnerable persons; respect for privacy and confidentiality; respect for justice and inclusiveness; balancing harms and benefits; minimizing harms; and, maximizing benefits ("Royal roads university research ethics policy", 2004).

In addition to scholarly integrity, the organizational values to which I subscribe include specific mention of integrity. The Vancouver Police Department Strategic Plan 2004-2008 defines the value of integrity as "doing the right thing in all circumstances" (Vancouver Police Department, 2004, p. 6). Given the nature of this major project, the organizational support for its outcomes and the direct impact on the VPD, integrity in the research is paramount, and further solidified as the project unfolds.

The Vancouver Police Regulations and Procedures Manual (RPM) further details specific policy relative to ethics. Section 53.08 of the RPM details the VPD Code of Ethics and Section 53.09 details the Conflict of Interest policy. These organizational policy and procedure documents further define my ethical obligations as a member of the VPD, and provide clear professional and personal direction (Vancouver Police Department, 2005c).

This research project involves the active participation of many police members and stakeholders within my work setting. I am in a potentially precarious position due to my rank, and the perception of authority and influence within this setting. The paramilitary structure of the organization will undoubtedly surface when I hold the rank of an officer, and most participants hold lower ranks. Due to this positional power, any research methodology that involves human interactions is subject to influence.

I utilized a Research Consent Form (see Appendix G) and a consent agreement within the Survey Preamble (see Appendix C) to offset this perception of bias due to a power imbalance. "Though informed consent neither precludes the abuse of research findings, nor

creates a symmetrical relationship between researcher and researched, it can contribute to the empowering research participants” (Glesne, 1999, p. 116). I have ensured that participants know that they are not obligated to participate, that non-participation carries no penalties and that participants are free to withdraw at any time. I also removed my rank and title from all correspondence with participants, to mitigate the perceived power imbalance. Documents of this nature have helped to build the level of trust between the participants, and myself and have proven effective when utilized with the existing relationships currently built on authenticity and a common purpose.

The key concept of action research is that the research participant is a key stakeholder in the process, and not simply a subject or distant participant. Stringer (1999) details how the role of the action researcher is to develop relationships that do not exploit the participants. These participants are stakeholders in the solution, and the researcher should serve more as a facilitator than as a director. “The researcher’s role is not to push particular agendas but to neutralize power differentials in the setting so that the interests of the powerful do not take precedence over those of other participants” (p. 214). The relationship here is the critical component.

To parallel the importance of relationships with concepts from the consulting industry, one needs only to look at the aspect of authenticity. Being authentic means to “put into words what you are experiencing with the client as you work” (Block, 2000, p. 37). This type of behaviour leads to increased trust, leverage and commitment. Further, authenticity is a practiced behaviour throughout this action research process. Authenticity in the relationships with participants will ensure engagement in the project at hand, and lead to buy-in during a subsequent implementation of recommendations.

The thought of implementing a long-term strategy also brings forth the concept of reciprocity (Glesne, 1999). Throughout this process, I have gathered information that will serve the ends of this research, and in some ways, the subject matter alone will give benefit back to the participant. The intent of the overarching question of this project is to improve operational and strategic planning for the VPD. The participants, who are all employees of the Department, stand to achieve greater gains in their work environment than if those involved were from outside the organization.

Confidentiality has also been a paramount consideration during the conduct of this research. The ethical obligation to protect the research participants' identities has assisted in entrenching the authentic relationship, and enable truer participation from the subjects. Given the culture of the police department, where "everyone's business is everyone's business", the participants will undoubtedly be inclined to pry into the opinions of others and the research conducted to that point.

The best way to inspire confidence in research participants is to show them how vigilant you are in safeguarding the information that others give you; it tells them that you will show the same vigilance with their information and that they can really trust you. (Palys, 2003, p. 91)

To accomplish a guarantee of confidentiality, I utilized two separate tools. The Commitment to Confidentiality form (see Appendix F) informed participants of my commitment to maintain their confidence throughout the research and reporting process. The Survey Preamble (see Appendix C) and the Research Consent Form (see Appendix G) outlined the potential risks and benefits to participants, and ensured they were aware that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time (Berg, 2004).

On a final note related to ethics, I found it interesting that ethical considerations continued to arise throughout the research process. This is consistent with the works of

Glesne (1999) and Palys (2003), who note that the circumstances and responses will potentially result in the research venturing into uncharted waters, and will require ongoing review as the case-by-case circumstances unfold. As my research unfolded, I had people wilfully breach their confidentiality with me regarding the survey, as they wanted to describe their experiences with me. Further, on a number of occasions, I exchanged e-mails where participants offered up that they had completed the survey, and in one instance, a participant was looking for direction on how to re-enter the survey to modify an incorrect answer she had previously provided. I continually had to honour both the RRU and VPD ethics policies, maintaining confidentiality where applicable, and draw on these guiding documents to inform my ongoing decision making.

CHAPTER 4. ACTION RESEARCH RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this action research project was to engage all VPD employees in meaningful dialogue and input related to the Strategic Plan. I found the support and response to my research overwhelming, as I reached out to sworn and civilian personnel from the management, supervisory and frontline ranks.

As I explored the data derived from the survey, it clearly answers the questions related to the level of commitment and knowledge of the Strategic Plan. The results of this research demonstrate the extent to which the plan is currently embedded in the organization. Further, the qualitative information from the open-ended survey questions, combined with the data obtained through the managerial interviews, clearly detail where deficiencies lie in support for the plan. This data also provides information to assist the VPD as it moves forward into the coming years, and to guide the development of business processes and solutions that result in a Strategic Plan with greater emphasis, and a stronger foothold within the organization.

In this chapter, I detail the findings from the different methods used to collect data in this research project. These findings lead to a series of conclusions in relation to the Strategic Plan of the VPD. Finally, I outline the scope and the limitations of the research.

Survey Results

I distributed the survey to every employee in the VPD who holds a supervisory or frontline position, including sworn and civilian personnel. In total, 1,720 employees received an invitation to participate in the survey, with 546 employees (31.7%) electing to participate.

I received completed surveys from 528 of the 546 respondents, representing a 30.7% response rate, and these 528 respondents comprised the research sample for this study.

Demographics

Table 1 depicts the breakdown of participants, identifying both sworn and civilian personnel, and whether they hold frontline or supervisory positions. The total number of participants comprised 396 sworn police officers and 132 civilian employees. This ratio is similar to the ratio of sworn to civilian personnel at these levels in the organization, and

Table 1. Sworn and civilian respondents and their position within the VPD

		Position		Total
		Frontline	Supervisory	
Sworn	Count	305	91	396
	% within Sworn	77.0%	23.0%	100.0%
	% within Position	74.2%	77.8%	75.0%
	% of Total	57.8%	17.2%	75.0%
Civilian	Count	106	26	132
	% within Civilian	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
	% within Position	25.8%	22.2%	25.0%
	% of Total	20.1%	4.9%	25.0%
Total	Count	411	117	528
	% within Sworn and Civilian	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%
	% within Position	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%

produces a representative sample of the available population within the VPD. As previous research suggests, the ability to use the internal VPD e-mail distribution lists resulted in a comprehensive sample of the organization (Fowler, 2002).

When examining the distribution between sworn and civilian personnel, Table 1 depicts the breakdown of response rates by both the status of the employee, and by the position the employee held in the VPD. There were 1,294 sworn police officers invited to participate in the survey. Only those employees who held the ranks of Constable and Sergeant received the survey, and 396 people (30.6%) responded from this group. I invited 404 civilian employees, also comprised of frontline and supervisory personnel, to participate in the survey. Only 132 civilian employees (32.7%) elected to participate. It is interesting to note that the response rates for participation from both sworn and civilian personnel were similar, within their own groups.

In terms of the position participants held within their respective groups, 23% of the sworn respondents held supervisory positions. This is a higher percentage than reflected in the organization, where 11.7% of sworn personnel are supervisors. Table 2 shows the level of seniority of the survey participants, segregated into five-year increments. The survey recorded the length of the employees' service, to determine if the length of time an employee had worked for the VPD had any bearing on the results.

A majority of respondents had 10 or less years' experience with the VPD. This is consistent for both sworn police personnel, at 51%, and civilian support personnel, at 65.9%. This is representative of the VPD work force, in which 54.1% of the sworn personnel have 10 or less years' service (Vancouver Police Department, 2005a). These figures also match the general demographic trends of the VPD.

Table 2. Years of service, of sworn and civilian survey participants

		Years of service					Total
		0-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-15 yrs	16-20 yrs	21+ yrs	
Sworn	Count	120	82	37	81	76	396
	% within Sworn	30.3%	20.7%	9.3%	20.5%	19.2%	100.0%
	% within Years of service	62.5%	84.5%	67.3%	85.3%	85.4%	75.0%
	% of Total	22.7%	15.5%	7.0%	15.3%	14.4%	75.0%
Civilian	Count	72	15	18	14	13	132
	% within Civilian	54.5%	11.4%	13.6%	10.6%	9.8%	100.0%
	% within Years of service	37.5%	15.5%	32.7%	14.7%	14.6%	25.0%
	% of Total	13.6%	2.8%	3.4%	2.7%	2.5%	25.0%
Total	Count	192	97	55	95	89	528
	% within Sworn and civilian	36.4%	18.4%	10.4%	18.0%	16.9%	100.0%
	% within Years of service	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	36.4%	18.4%	10.4%	18.0%	16.9%	100.0%

Civilian respondents were comprised of 19.7% supervisors. Like the sworn personnel, civilian supervisors all have dedicated workstations, enabling a greater access to their e-mail and the survey application. While many of the civilian support personnel are committed employees, they are generally less attentive to their e-mail and less likely to monitor their e-mail on a daily basis. In addition, some of the civilian personnel also work variable hours, and the nature of their work precludes them from regularly monitoring their e-mail and the VPD computer network.

The issue of non-response is always a concern in the administration of surveys. However, as the administration of this survey progressed, I continually became less worried

about this concern. This was the first survey administered using Select Survey ASP computer software. It was new to both the researcher and the participants, and everyone participating was seeing something they had never experienced before within the VPD. The software provided me with the tools to monitor response rates, and I was able to do this within the realm of both sworn and civilian personnel. Fowler (2002) notes that the use of internet-based surveys are relatively new, but are still prone to variables associated to interest in the topic and motivation of the participants. Two weeks following the distribution of the survey, I noted that the response from sworn personnel was disproportionately low as compared to civilian personnel. By sending out a reminder e-mail to sworn police officers only, I was able to prompt them to consider the survey again, thereby increasing the response rate for this group.

The final variable determined through the preliminary data from the survey was the general nature of the work of participants. Everyone responding to the survey identified the general nature of his or her daily work. This data does not identify the Unit or Division in which the participant works, and thereby fails to define specific tasks they perform. Rather, participants provided a general description of the type of duties they fulfilled. Figure 1 depicts the nature of the work of the participants. This figure also differentiates between sworn or civilian personnel.

Clearly, the majority of sworn personnel responding to this survey (57%) work in operational police duties. This is representative of the actual deployment of police personnel within the organization, where 57.9% perform uniformed operational assignments. Similarly, the vast majority of civilian personnel responding to this survey (78%) work in

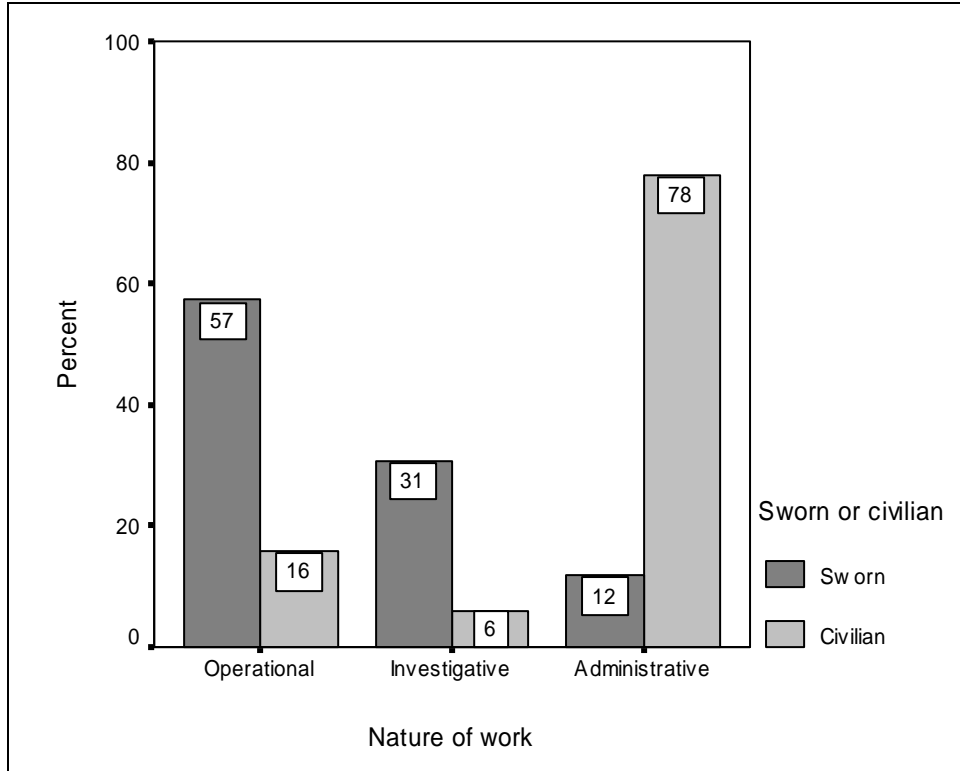


Figure 1. Nature of work for sworn and civilian respondents

administrative assignments. This too is representative of the functional work assignments of the survey sample.

Following the collection of basic demographic information, the results from the remainder of the survey attest to the existing knowledge of the Strategic Plan. Further, these results identify a number of areas where the Executive of the VPD have done well in the implementation of the plan. They also detail areas of deficiency, and provide information that suggests how to improve the plan, and its integration into the VPD.

Knowledge of the Strategic Plan

The survey contained three questions directly related to employee knowledge of the Strategic Plan. Most employees (82.2%) have an understanding of the VPD mission statement. Interestingly, this statement is consistent across all three functional work areas,

where operational employees (80.8%), investigative employees (78.1%) and administrative employees (88.5%) all demonstrate commensurate knowledge of the VPD mission statement. The only areas where there appears to be a lack of knowledge in relation to the mission statement is in the operational and investigative areas, where each area showed that close to 10% of their personnel are unaware of the VPD mission statement.

In relation to organizational values, the VPD has four core values: Integrity, Professionalism, Accountability and Respect (Vancouver Police Department, 2004b). While the vast majority of employees (90.3%) state they are aware of these values, 9.7% recorded that they had minimal or no awareness of them. Table 3 shows that the employees who are most unaware of the VPD values consist of personnel who work in the operational and investigative areas. 10.1% of operational personnel note that they are unaware of the core values, while 14.1% of investigative personnel are unaware of them. This is in contrast to the personnel assigned to administrative duties, where only 5.1% of the employees lacked some level of awareness of the organizational values.

The final question related to employee knowledge measured the respondent's awareness of their own responsibilities, in relation to the goals and objectives of the plan. Within all three areas of work, the majority of personnel (68.6%) indicated that their own work responsibilities were at least somewhat in alignment with the goals and objective set out in the Strategic Plan. Again, the only areas of the Department where there was disagreement about the alignment of individual responsibilities were in the operational areas (8.7%) and the investigative (10.3%).

Table 3. Awareness of VPD values for sworn and civilian personnel, by assignment

		Aware of IPAR Values					Total	
		Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neutral	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree		
Operational	Sworn	Count	144	39	14	4	3	204
		% within Values	92.3%	97.5%	93.3%	100.0%	100.0%	93.6%
		% of Total	66.1%	17.9%	6.4%	1.8%	1.4%	93.6%
	Civilian	Count	12	1	1			14
		% within Values	7.7%	2.5%	6.7%			6.4%
		% of Total	5.5%	.5%	.5%			6.4%
	Total	Count	156	40	15	4	3	218
		% within Values	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	71.6%	18.3%	6.9%	1.8%	1.4%	100.0%
Investigative	Sworn	Count	70	23	5	8	1	107
		% within Values	95.9%	92.0%	83.3%	100.0%	50.0%	93.9%
		% of Total	61.4%	20.2%	4.4%	7.0%	.9%	93.9%
	Civilian	Count	3	2	1		1	7
		% within Values	4.1%	8.0%	16.7%		50.0%	6.1%
		% of Total	2.6%	1.8%	.9%		.9%	6.1%
	Total	Count	73	25	6	8	2	114
		% within Values	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	64.0%	21.9%	5.3%	7.0%	1.8%	100.0%
Administrative	Sworn	Count	32	6	3		1	42
		% within Values	30.8%	31.6%	75.0%		33.3%	32.3%
		% of Total	24.6%	4.6%	2.3%		.8%	32.3%
	Civilian	Count	72	13	1		2	88
		% within Values	69.2%	68.4%	25.0%		66.7%	67.7%
		% of Total	55.4%	10.0%	.8%		1.5%	67.7%
	Total	Count	104	19	4		3	130
		% within Values	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	80.0%	14.6%	3.1%		2.3%	100.0%

Relevance of the Strategic Plan

The survey contained two questions intended to gauge the relevance of the Strategic Plan to the work of the employees, and to the organization as a whole. In exploring whether employees felt that the plan had relevance to their duties, 62% of personnel expressed some level of general agreement or neutrality on the subject. Only 20.3% of operational sworn staff and 15.8% of investigative sworn staff agreed that the Strategic Plan had relevance to their duties. The survey did not reveal where the shortfall originated, but suffice it to say, the employees are unable to draw a link between their day-to-day duties and the Strategic Plan itself.

Similarly, barely one half of VPD employees (54.4%) believe that the VPD has effectively prioritized the objectives within the plan. This is most apparent with sworn police personnel, where 13.9% of those in operational assignments believe that the Department does not prioritize objectives effectively. Further, 20.7% of the personnel in investigative assignments share this belief.

Alignment of the Strategic Plan

The survey explored three key areas of alignment. First, did the values of the organization align with the values of the individual employee? Second, did the priorities of the employee's work unit align with the goals and objective of the VPD? Finally, did the broader work of the employees' work division, representing multiple like work units, align with the goals and objectives of the Department?

Less than 1% of all personnel responding to the survey felt that the organizational values were out of alignment with their own personal values. This is noteworthy, as Kouzes and Posner (2002) stress the importance of the link between personal values and

organizational values. Further, Yukl (2002) notes that the development of shared organizational values, based on strong personal values, generate a greater acceptance of the broader organizational ones. Given the level of employee involvement at the outset of the Strategic Planning process, it is not surprising that there is a strong linkage here.

In all instances, and considering different variables related to employee status and the nature of their work, the majority of the employees believe that the work done by their Unit, and the work done by their Division as a whole, is in alignment with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. Notably, 73.3% of all personnel believe that the work performed by their Unit is in alignment, with the greatest support coming from those working in administrative assignments (80.3%). From the broader divisional context, 74.8% of employees believe that the work done by their Divisions is in alignment with the goals and objective of the Strategic Plan.

In spite of this, a portion of the operational and investigative work force does not feel the work of their Division aligns with the Strategic Plan. A total of 10.2% of the operational employees and 11% of the investigative employees perceive a distinct gap between the work of their Division and the broader organizational goals and objectives. These two groups recorded similar numbers in relation to the work done by their individual Units. In contrast, it is interesting to note that administrative personnel overwhelmingly believe (98.4%) that their Unit and divisional work is in alignment with the Strategic Plan.

Communication of the Strategic Plan

The survey asked one direct question related to the effective communication of the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. It is alarming to note that only 12.9% of sworn personnel in the VPD agree that this communication is occurring. Broken down by rank, the

numbers were consistent between the Sergeants (13.1%) and the Constables (12.2%). Further, only 17.8% of civilian personnel agree that effective communication is taking place. With civilian personnel, there is a notable disparity between the views of the supervisors (20.7%) and frontline staff (8%); with respect to the amount of effective communication that is occurring.

All operational, investigative and administrative areas appear to be lacking effective communication of the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. Table 4 shows the level of agreement that effective communication of the Strategic Plan is occurring. This data is further broken down, into the three core work areas. In the operational areas of the VPD, 46.7% of personnel are neutral or do not believe that effective communication is taking place. Administrative personnel share this perception, with 42.9% of these employees believing the same. This is the area with the greatest representation of civilian employees, thereby demonstrating a consistent perception between sworn and civilian personnel. Most notable, however, is that 62.7% of employees performing investigative duties do not believe that there is some level of effective communication of the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.

Meaning of the Strategic Plan

Assessing the meaning of the Strategic Plan in relation to employee's day-to-day work requires a judgment call on the part of the employee. In many ways, it is a compilation of many of the previously measured variables, which provide an overview of the acceptance of the Strategic Plan. Surprisingly, only 16.2% of sworn police personnel agree that the plan has meaning in relation to their day-to-day duties. This figure is noticeably higher for civilian personnel, where 26.9% believe the plan has meaning.

Table 4. Communication of the Strategic Plan, by work area

		Nature of work			Total	
		Operational	Investigative	Administrative		
Effective Communication of Goals and Objectives	Agree	Count	31	11	21	63
		% within Communication	49.2%	17.5%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Nature of work	14.6%	10.0%	16.7%	14.1%
		% of Total	6.9%	2.5%	4.7%	14.1%
	Agree Somewhat	Count	82	30	51	163
		% within Communication	50.3%	18.4%	31.3%	100.0%
		% within Nature of work	38.7%	27.3%	40.5%	36.4%
		% of Total	18.3%	6.7%	11.4%	36.4%
	Neutral	Count	38	31	29	98
		% within Communication	38.8%	31.6%	29.6%	100.0%
		% within Nature of work	17.9%	28.2%	23.0%	21.9%
		% of Total	8.5%	6.9%	6.5%	21.9%
	Disagree Somewhat	Count	35	22	20	77
		% within Communication	45.5%	28.6%	26.0%	100.0%
		% within Nature of work	16.5%	20.0%	15.9%	17.2%
		% of Total	7.8%	4.9%	4.5%	17.2%
Disagree	Count	26	16	5	47	
	% within Communication	55.3%	34.0%	10.6%	100.0%	
	% within Nature of work	12.3%	14.5%	4.0%	10.5%	
	% of Total	5.8%	3.6%	1.1%	10.5%	
Total	Count	212	110	126	448	
	% within Communication	47.3%	24.6%	28.1%	100.0%	
	% within Nature of work	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	47.3%	24.6%	28.1%	100.0%	

The majority of both groups of employees remain neutral, or have some level of agreement that the plan has meaning; however, 7.1% of the sworn police officers believe the plan has no meaning in relation to their daily work. This is dramatically different from the civilian personnel, where no one (0%) indicates that the plan has no meaning.

The survey expanded on the concept of meaning, and employees identified specifically what the Strategic Plan means to them. The employees selected from a number of options, and were able to select multiple options if more than one applied to their circumstance. In addition, employees could add additional options if further information was applicable. This method of survey yielded some interesting results.

Over 60% of all staff indicated that the Strategic Plan means focused priorities. This figure further supports the earlier issue of alignment, in that a similar percentage of personnel believe that their work priorities align with the Strategic Plan. Additionally, over one half of those surveyed believe that the Strategic Plan also means organizational direction. The results of these two responses proved to be consistent, regardless of the participant's rank within the organization.

Figure 2 provides a more detailed look at the different meanings that employees apply to the Strategic Plan. There are consistent responses from frontline personnel and supervisors in every variable, except for the Strategic Plan meaning additional work. In this one variable, those employees who hold supervisory positions were twice as likely to equate the Strategic Plan with additional work. One other noteworthy point was the small number of employees who commented that they knew nothing of the plan. The low percentage is statistically insignificant; however, I did find it interesting that there are employees in the

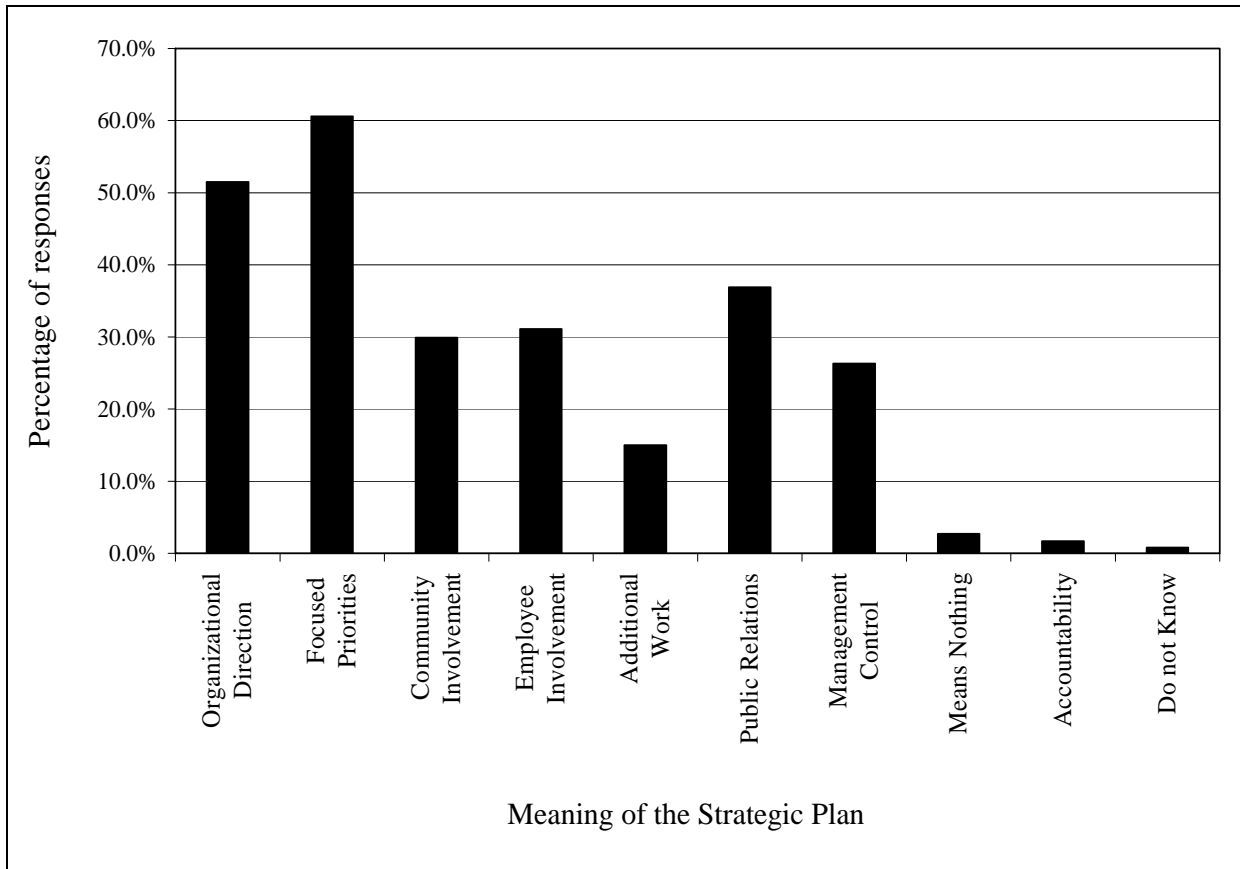


Figure 2. Meaning of the Strategic Plan

organization who truly associate no particular meaning to the Strategic Plan. It may further be a testament to a lack of communication within the organization.

Current State of the Strategic Plan

The survey explored two final areas relating to the state of the Strategic Plan. First, employees related whether they felt the organization has done enough to keep the plan alive and embedded in the organization. Then, they indicated the impact of the Strategic Plan on their day-to-day duties. Both of these questions required a yes or no response, and then participants could elaborate and provide further comment, based on their yes or no answer.

These subsequent responses provided further qualitative data, which enabled a deeper exploration of strategic planning in the VPD.

When exploring the work to keep the Strategic Plan alive in the organization, less than half of the employees indicated this is occurring. More than half (53%) of the sworn police officers and 49% of the civilian employees indicated there is not enough focus on the Strategic Plan, in order to keep it alive and embedded in the organization.

Employees who indicated the plan is alive in the VPD attributed this state to a number of key themes. First is communication, where information sharing through posters and notices, information sessions with the Executive, the open communication of goals with divisional managers and other promotions within the different work sites has resulted in success. Second is the sense of accomplishment, including the acquisition of additional personnel and the development of effective strategies to fight crime (e.g. the COMPSTAT program). Third is the expansion of community involvement in our processes, including community and neighbourhood forums and the desire to solicit input from our customers. One anonymous survey participant summarized this best with the statement that “departmental goals are being realized, such as better technology, increase in sworn numbers and support staff, ethnically diverse [*sic*], better community/police partnerships, promotion of VPD services to the public, etc”.

When exploring the work to keep the Strategic Plan alive in the organization, less than half of the employees believe this is occurring; 53% of the sworn police officers and 49% of the civilian employees do not believe there is enough focus on the Strategic Plan, in order to keep it alive and embedded in the organization.

For those employees that do believe the plan is alive in the VPD, they attribute this state to a number of key themes. First is communication, where information sharing through posters and notices, information sessions with the Executive, the open communication of goals with divisional managers and other promotions within the different work sites has resulted in success. Second is the sense of accomplishment, including the acquisition of additional personnel and the development of effective strategies to fight crime, such as the COMPSTAT program. Third is the expansion of community involvement in our processes, including community and neighbourhood forums and the desire to solicit input from our customers. One anonymous survey participant summarized this best with the statement that “departmental goals are being realized, such as better technology, increase in sworn numbers and support staff, ethnically diverse [*sic*], better community/police partnerships, promotion of VPD services to the public, etc.”

While some employees believe the plan is alive, others are undecided. One anonymous participant stated that

Enough has been done to keep it alive, or at least visible, due to the availability of this information on the intranet and slogans that have been painted onto the walls. I am uncertain as to the degree to which these principles have been embedded and internalized by the staff and whether these principles are reflected in the productivity and the quality and integrity of their work. While my answer to the previous question is ‘yes’, I hesitate to provide an unqualified yes.

Further themes developed in relation to the belief that the plan is not alive within the organization. This includes the fact that much of our gains are out of the control of the Department, in that financial support for initiatives within the scope of the Strategic Plan are at the behest of City Council and the annual civic budget process. The survey identified further shortfalls in the area of communication, namely: an imbalance of importance placed

on the plan by different managers; the continual struggles with excessive work demands placed on understaffed patrol squads; and, the perception that the Strategic Plan is not overly important to the Executive.

While there is split consensus whether the Strategic Plan is alive and embedded in the Department, a majority of both sworn police officers and civilian personnel believe that the Strategic Plan does have an impact on their day-to-day duties. Fifty-five point one percent (55.1%) of sworn staff and 63.8% of civilian staff feel the plan has such an impact. Further exploration of the reasons why show that a strong organizational emphasis on the core values has directly assisted with the acceptance of the Strategic Plan into their work. In addition, a recent move towards the COMPSTAT program has generated an expanded organizational awareness for operational policing problems, and has focused many on the operational links to the goals and objectives associated to community safety. The high profile nature of this program, along with its recent development, has brought this to the forefront of people's thoughts.

In spite of the positive impact, there continues to be a large percentage of the work force (43%) that does not believe the Strategic Plan has an impact on their day-to-day duties. While a number of people noted they were too busy to pay heed to the Strategic Plan, and could therefore not identify any impact it had on their work, two distinct themes surfaced from the detailed responses to this question. One of the themes is the legacy the organization has with previous strategic plans. One anonymous survey recipient noted that

We go out and do our jobs to the best of our abilities and a lot of what we do impacts the core values and mission statement naturally, as we do those jobs. Do I give any thought to what the management set down as the flavour of the month or the season's set of new buzzwords that make up a new and improved mission statement? No. I have heard this all before and you can always make

a big splash about how we are all behind the new saying and direction in which we are headed...then we never hear about it again.

Clearly, the legacy of past failures with strategic planning continues to haunt the acceptance of the current Strategic Plan, two years after implementation. The other noteworthy themes relate to the volume of work the officer face in the field, and an inability to link the plan to any organizational success. Again, communication is the link, and most notably, the failure of the department to celebrate its successes and frame them in such a way that the Strategic Plan receives recognition for the role it played in the organization's accomplishments.

The themes identified from the last two questions, and the open-ended responses where survey participants put forth their final comments, clearly demonstrated some commonality. These themes surface later in this chapter, and coincide with the themes that arose from the one-on-one interviews in the second phase of this research project.

Interview Results

I interviewed six managers as a part of the research methodology, representing managerial capacity from the operational, investigative and administrative work areas mirrored in the survey. This group included both sworn and civilian managers. I posed the same series of questions (see Appendix E) to each manager. These core questions formed a consistent structure to foster dialogue related to the Strategic Plan, and each interview expanded into different directions from there, depending on the manager's experiences and assignments.

The initial analysis of the data flowing from the interviews resulted in the identification of 27 separate themes. A more detailed analysis of the content followed, and I subsequently consolidated the data down into six core topics. These broad themes encompass

the complex set of information resulting from the interviews. I have identified these key themes as communication, focus, commitment, accountability, change and leadership.

Communication

Communication served as the one common variable that arose consistently throughout each interview. In every interview, and in response to the majority of the questions, every manager identified the fact that communication of the Strategic Plan varied. In every instance, the managers could provide examples of where they were aware of the strategic initiatives that were ongoing within their own Divisions, but they also commented that they were unaware of what was going on elsewhere in the organization. One manager noted that the officers working at the street level do not see the Strategic Plan, and the managers do not truly sell the plan to the members. It is not surprising that they feel it is not embedded into the organization.

Another manager commented that the Strategic Plan started strong, with lots of communication, but that it has waned over time. This manager continued that

Definitely, there's been less reference to the Strategic Plan. It almost seems to me in some ways like it was an experiment that some people have already committed to, well, failure. When really, it hasn't been given enough of a chance. We're still quite fairly early in the whole process.

The comments on communication were not limited to simply communicating the plan. When dialogue evolved to the topic of VPD members not being aware of the plan, a number of managers did not believe the Department truly linked the Strategic Plan to what it did as an organization. One manager noted that they should "communicate that a lot of decisions that the organization is making, we're making with the Strategic Plan in mind, and relate it back to the Strategic Plan." Further expanding on linkage, there was a constant tone across the group of managers that they did not believe our members were aware of why we

made many of the organizational decisions we did. While no one wants to get to the point of providing explanations for every decision made, where the Strategic Plan serves as the framework for new initiatives, the organization must articulate that linkage. A manager commented that “it’s a little time consuming, but it’s a case of communicating to our members how we are using [the Strategic Plan] as a tool for decision-making.”

Two thirds of the managers interviewed also note that they are unaware of key initiatives that link to strategic goals and objectives going on outside of their own Divisions. While there is consensus the Operations Division is communicating the COMPSTAT program well, they have not observed a communications strategy to link that program to the VPD Strategic Plan. Further, the managers from both the operational and administrative areas of the VPD could not comment on the progress made on strategic goals and objectives by the managers in the investigative areas.

Focus

As the dialogue shifted to discussing the purpose of the Strategic Plan, every manager believed that the plan did provide focus to the organization. This focus served to benefit the overall Department and each of their individual work sections, and themselves personally.

One manager noted that

It gives me a bit of a template to look at when I am trying to decide my priorities in my Section ... It gives me the opportunity to look at the Strategic Plan, see how the plan fits with what we need to do here to make things better, and ... it’s almost like a bit of a backdrop for me to use for making arguments for changes that I want to see implemented to make my Section better.

Sworn managers commented that the Strategic Plan helps them filter out work that falls outside of their mandate, or work that they cannot fit into their existing workload. One manager noted that, “having a mission statement, values, having the guiding principals,

having specific programs and plans it allows me to communicate to my staff here as to what I want and use the Strategic Plan as my reasoning behind it.” It assists the managers with identifying and sticking with priorities within their own work units, and provides them with a document to fall back on if they face a challenge to their strategies.

As the discussion on priorities evolved, half of managers commented that the Strategic Plan has many goals and objectives, and the Department has not prioritized them within the plan. All agree that the community safety initiatives are the police business line, and the de facto priority items. However, many other strategies identified in the Strategic Plan do not relate directly to community safety. Given the vast number of strategies associated with these objectives, and the limited capacity to coordinate everything at one time, the managers were at a loss to define which ones are priorities. One manager asked, “Where are the priorities within the Strategic Plan? Do we all focus in on them all concurrently; or is one more in focus than the other? It’s confusing. I seem to be drawn to the pinball effect.” Further, the lack of internal prioritization of this many objectives begged the question, “Where do you go with the resources you have, bearing in mind you have your own mandate?”

Another manager commented that there was no consensus within operations as to what our top three priorities are. While the organization outlines priorities at the divisional level, there is a question whether anyone knows what the top three priorities are for the organization. One manager commented that, “a successful Strategic Plan would have the actual workers on the ground understanding what the organization stands for and what the focus is”.

There was also consensus on the ever-changing nature of police work, and the need for a Strategic Plan to provide organizational direction. Externally driven change is a fact in policing, and the Strategic Plan provides the organizational focus for the longer term. The managers recognize that priorities will change and evolve, but the longer-term roadmap provided by the plan reaffirmed the organizational focus.

Commitment

During the dialogue in the interviews, the issue of commitment surfaced in a number of areas. There was consensus that the Executive was extremely committed to the plan at the outset. One manager notes that this is the most focused an Executive has been on strategic planning for as long as the manager has worked in policing. Every manager refers to buy-in, and there is consensus that it varies across every rank in the organization, and at different times, the level of commitment varies too.

One manager noted that

We got a little side tracked awhile back, where the Strategic Plan was starting to be ignored, and we were starting to fall into what my fear was: this is just going to be another iteration of it where we haven't had the commitment. But, there was a concerted effort to bring it back on track, and that's a good thing. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe it wasn't being ignored, but I just got the sense that we were starting to fall away from it.

The legacy of strategic planning surfaced in four of the interviews, and every manager interviewed fears that this Strategic Plan could go the way of previous plans if it does not receive sufficient attention. Every manager supports the concept of a Strategic Plan, and felt that it adds value to the organization. While a sense of trepidation was present, all of the managers are hopeful that attention to the plan continues. One manager noted that in his

Section

There was actually a committed effort to refocus on the Strategic Plan because it had been kind of put on the shelf for a little while; and then it was kind of a ... [The Deputy] pulled everyone together and kind of dusted it off again and said, "We have got to take a look at this."

Another concern, related to commitment, is the continual attention to the plan itself.

While one manager believes that the plan is important, "it is not the be-all and end-all for the organization." That perception was not shared, as another manager countered this position and noted that he finds himself regularly pointing the plan out to fellow managers and the Executive. He is left with the impression that there is no conscious thought of the Strategic Plan during their decision-making.

There was agreement, however, that the plan is waning and there was general concern that the Strategic Plan does not lose momentum within the organization. Every manager wants to see the Strategic Plan succeed, and supports its existence to provide organizational direction and accountability.

Accountability

All of the managers interviewed referred to the Strategic Plan as a tool to help assure accountability. That accountability exists at many levels, including within our own organization, with the public and with the City. Within the VPD, managers cited examples from recent benchmarking exercises, which assure best practices and ongoing measurement within the organization. In spite of this measurement, one manager did note that the current Strategic Plan is absent of much quantifiable measurement. While some specific targets have been set to reduce measurable property crime, other areas of the Strategic Plan do not have a measurement tool designed to attest to when we have obtained our objectives.

The organizational values provide an accountability tool for the public. There is agreement that the values of the organization have been communicated to the membership,

and those values reaffirm our commitment to the community. They detail a framework of actions that, if followed, will ensure that our customers receive professional and respectful service.

Managers also noted that in some circumstances the VPD does not follow certain areas of the Strategic Plan, and thereby question the level of accountability. First, some of the supportive work force initiatives are not followed consistently across the organization, and there is little consequence for not participating in these strategies. One manager noted that, “performance development ... is the most glaring one. Accountability; the ability of some people in the organization just to veto or to ignore things and not be challenged on it.”

Another manager noted that, “creating a supportive workplace; on the whole there’s been some of that, but on the flip side of that, we’re not holding people accountable which means that we’re not supporting them all the way through.” Essentially, the inability to hold employees accountable is having a negative effect on those employees who are performing, as those who do not follow the rules face no consequences for their actions.

The other key area of accountability that consistently surfaced is the absence of independent control over our funding and resources. Many view the success of the Strategic Plan to be somewhat at the mercy of City staff, who control the revenue for the Department. It is increasingly difficult for managers to exercise creativity, in all sectors of the organization, while operating in a strict budget control environment where there is little flexibility or adaptability. This surfaced throughout the interviews, and in particular, relating to the deployment and training of staff, embarking on new operational projects and getting additional staff to address workload demands. It was interesting that this information

remained consistent across all managers, be they sworn or civilian, and regardless of the nature of their work.

Change

The managers interviewed all indicated that there was a cultural change that was evolving, in relation to strategic planning. The legacy of past plans has hurt the organization in its bid to move forward with this plan, and that belief is prevalent at every level of the organization except the newest Constables and frontline civilian personnel.

Every manager has used the Strategic Plan at some time to guide process changes within their own Sections, and some have been in a position to do this multiple times, as they have changed assignments during the past two years. Every manager offered up suggestions for further process change. This change could occur at the Section level, including streamlining and gaining efficiencies in the manner in which work flowed within their individual units, or to the broader organizational context. Examples of the types of broader changes suggested include: the inclusion of the Strategic Plan into the promotional and development processes and changes in the operational structure to assist with the flow of communication. Other suggestions include changing the reporting structure in relation to the plan, to ensure better communication. In addition, changes to the plan itself, to streamline the goals and objectives, to account for completed goals and to move forward with a new communication plan.

Leadership

The term leadership serves as a catchall to summarize a series of issues that arose with multiple managers during their interviews. Every manager indicated that the Executive is paying less attention to the Strategic Plan than it did one year ago. One manager noted that

So much effort and energy was put on trying to get those extra 50 police officers that we felt we had been promised, that some of the rest of the plan seems to have just ... I don't know if it's fallen out of favour, or people are just exhausted with it, or they just want to give it a rest, or I don't know. But, you don't hear much about it anymore.

The discontinuance of the working groups chaired by each Deputy Chief Constable, for their respective area of responsibility in the plan, further fuels this perception. Managers that previously sat these meetings are no longer involved with them, and there does not appear to be a level of accountability for their own respective areas of responsibility.

The addition of 100 new officers in the past two years is one area where every manager indicated we have experienced success. The Strategic Plan has directly resulted in improved processes and new business initiatives that have the VPD further ahead than it was in 2004. In spite of this success, in many instances there is an absence of a link to the Strategic Plan. For example, one manager referred to a number of operational projects that were underway or recently completed where there had been no linkage to the Strategic Plan. The manager assumes that employees can draw the link, but it is never overtly stated. This mirrors the observation by another manager, who was unsure of the activities going on in different Divisions, and what they were doing to support the plan.

The managers are looking for challenges, and ways in which they can take greater ownership of portions of the plan. In that process, however, there is a desire for increased communication and progress reports on our success with the different strategies. I presented preliminary data from the survey to the managers, and they provided comments on the overwhelming sense that the plan was not embedded in the organization. Every manager believes that, in spite of the progress, the VPD has not done enough work to celebrate our organizational successes. One manager notes that members "do not see changes in their work

environment as a result of the Strategic Plan. And, if there are changes that could be attributed to the Strategic Plan, they certainly don't attribute those changes to the ... plan."

Similarly, the inability to link external organizational success to the Strategic Plan appears to have resulted in a lessening of its importance. Another manager noted that, "we not only don't market our strategic successes internally, it is not directed to City Hall or the community in such a fashion so that it keeps the Strategic Plan at the forefront". This manager noted further that, "the VPD commends individual members for acts of valour and exceptional service, but there is no recognition or celebration of an individual's or unit's accomplishments towards strategic goals and objectives".

This leadership theme, in concert with the other core themes arising from the interview process, culminates in a consistent message coming forth regarding the state of the VPD Strategic Plan. While we have experienced much success, and the Executive has done a commendable job of leading the VPD, there is still considerable room for improvement to embed the plan fully into the culture of the Department. When I compare and contrast this interview data with the data derived from the membership survey, there are some clear links between the messages coming from all of the levels of the organization. This information serves to form the foundation for a series of conclusions that will answer the research questions.

Conclusions

Based on my conclusions, the findings of this study serve to answer the research questions. This section will summarize these conclusions, and set the stage for a series of recommendations for the VPD to consider, with the intent to enhance the overall commitment and organizational attention to its Strategic Plan.

As a general comment, the research findings speak well of the organization, and the work being done at all levels of the Department. There is a consistent message that resource limitations affect every area of the organization. While there are certainly areas for improvement in relation to the Strategic Plan, the consensus is that the VPD Executive and management are doing a good job, under sometimes-difficult circumstances.

I have separated this section into two parts. The first part provides a brief summary of each conclusion, and the second part develops each conclusion in relation the research questions and the project findings, and links them to the relevant literature.

Summary

I have drawn nine conclusions from the research findings:

1. The Strategic Plan is important to personnel in the organization, regardless of whether they are sworn or civilian personnel, and whether they are line staff, supervisors or managers.
2. Interest in the Strategic Plan is waning at the management and Executive levels.
3. Communication of the Strategic Plan has declined.
4. Employees are generally unaware of the impact that the Strategic Plan has on organizational decision-making.
5. There is an absence of linkage between organizational accomplishments and strategic goals and objectives
6. Prioritization of the many goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan is missing, resulting in diminished effort and returns.

7. There has not been a cultural shift in the VPD to embrace the Strategic Plan into the organization.
8. There is disconnect between the different functional work areas, and staff in one area are unaware of the work done elsewhere in the organization that ties to strategic goals and objectives.
9. Managers are expressing a consistent desire to increase the level of accountability in the organization.

Detailed Conclusions

The overarching research question asks how the VPD can firmly embed its Strategic Plan into its business practices, when previous plans have been developed and then subsequently languished. While the answers to the “how” question will surface in the recommendations, the research findings clearly reaffirm that the organization can accomplish this task.

These nine conclusions further clarify the answer to the main research question, and individually respond to the sub questions that flow from it.

1. The Strategic Plan is important to staff in the organization, regardless of whether they are sworn or civilian personnel, and whether they are line staff, supervisors or managers.

The first indication of the importance of the plan, and the commitment from the employees to the betterment of the organization, was their willingness to participate voluntarily in this research. This speaks well to the concepts of action research, and clearly, the level of participation in the survey is an indicator that the topic is of interest to the organization (Fowler, 2002; Stringer, 1999).

Their willingness to participate spanned multiple levels of the organization. The response rate to the survey was well beyond my initial expectations. I also experienced numerous participants e-mailing me to let me know they had completed the survey, and thanking me for involving them in the process. Further, every manager I approached for an interview on this subject was willing to step forward and dedicate time. In the resulting data, it was consistent across all managers that the Strategic Plan is an important document for them and for the organization.

In examining the question of the extent to which the Strategic Plan affects VPD operations, it is clear from the response rates that it is having an impact. That these police officers and civilian employees were so willing to participate is a testament to them and their organization. It also demonstrates a willingness to embrace an opportunity to participate in a prospective shift in the culture. As Hill (2005) notes, this openness to a new way of doing things, and something outside their normal area of expertise, is a sign that they are open to change.

The comments received through the open-ended survey questions clearly articulate a desire for the organization to succeed. The managers found the interviews to be meaningful and interesting, and this process translated into meaningful participation for all involved. Further, this approach is consistent with contemporary writing on strategic planning processes (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Bean, 1993; Bryson, 2004; LeClair, 2001; Mintzberg, 1994). The concept of empowering employees through involvement is one of the key steps for bringing about a shift in the culture (Cresie, 2005).

2. Interest in the Strategic Plan of the VPD is waning at the management and Executive level.

At all levels of the Department, a consistent theme emerged from the research that interest in the Strategic Plan has waned. In 2004, at the outset of the current plan, there was a strong and highly visible commitment to the Plan from the Executive. The research from this study accounts for this commitment, and further reveals that employees believe it has eroded over time. While there is little doubt that the leadership team is engaged and hard working, these observations speak to the impact that the Strategic Plan is having on the operations of the VPD. As a result, it also serves to limit the successful integration of the five key strategic steps into the organization.

Survey respondents comprised of frontline and supervisory employees have shared observations, directly stating that support for the plan has diminished, from both their managers and the Executive. In concurrence, all of the managers interviewed also believe that support for the plan has diminished. For the managers, this view applies at the Executive level, but they also see it regularly within their peer group.

These observations are consistent with the literature, noting that a lot of the difficulties that organizations experience with their strategic plans actually occur in the implementation phase (Bossidy & Charan, 2002). Much as the VPD has seen past strategic plans languish, Bean (1993) notes how organizations regularly struggle through the implementation phase of their plans, and fail to carry through on the objectives. In all cases, whether it is the private sector or the nonprofit or governmental sector, the lack of high-level champions will result in a dramatic reduction in the acceptance of the plan.

Bryson (2004) stresses the importance of strong sponsors and dedicated champions to drive the cause of the Strategic Plan. Quigley (1993) echoes this when he states that “leaders must walk their talk” (p. 141). While managers and Executive have generally supported the plan from the outset, the consistent observations recounted in the surveys and interviews detail that this enthusiasm has abated. This speaks to the sub question on the organizational conditions necessary to embed the strategic plan into the business practices of the VPD.

When the VPD first implemented its strategic plan, a Deputy Chief Constable was responsible for each of the five key strategic steps. Each of these Executive members established work teams to drive the different goals and objectives within the steps, and take responsibility for them. Half of the managers interviewed participated in these sessions, and each has noted that the sessions have stopped over the last year. No one could account for the reason the committee work stopped, however, given the work demands all were facing, less committee work had some appeal.

Work on the strategic steps continued, with the Executive and managers diligently carrying out strategies for which they were responsible, but the perceptions for the committees stopping were that they were no longer required. The cessation of this work has created a gap in the integration of the key strategic steps into the day-to-day operations. Further, the conduct of these meetings emphasized organizational conditions, through a process of accountability and communication, which are required to solidify the implementation.

Kotter (1995) details eight key reasons for the failure of change initiatives. One of these is not having a large enough coalition to support the change, which supports the earlier part of this conclusion related to dedicated champions. The second is the declaration of

success too early in the campaign. The elimination of these working groups presumably resulted from the belief that they were no longer required. There was a perception of progress on many different levels, and this early declaration of success has essentially halted progress.

3. Communication of the strategic plan has declined.

Insufficient communication was arguably the strongest message that came from the research. This message spanned all levels of the organization, and the impact affected both sworn and civilian personnel. The lack of communication is certainly problematic, in light of the literature, which consistently cites that communication is a critical component to the success of strategic plans (Bean, 1993; Collins, 2001a; Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Quigley, 1993; Senge, 1990a; Welsh, 2005)

As the VPD implemented this Strategic Plan, the employees readily questioned the plan due to their experiences with past processes. This implementation served as an opportunity for the organization to move forward in a new direction. The research shows that the VPD has definitively made progress; however, both the survey and the interview findings note an insufficient amount of communication. This is a risk area for the VPD, and similar to situations in other organizations, where their failure to adequately communicate the vision is cited as a key reason for the inability to implement organizational change (John. P. Kotter, 1995).

The decline of communication directly affects the extent to which the Strategic Plan influences VPD operations. Further, the reductions and the recognized absences of communication define it as an organizational condition required to succeed. Clearly, the majority of the participants in this research have noticed the reduction in formalized communication processes.

Communication must also go beyond hanging posters on the wall and sharing the vision. While the vision, values and mission are core pieces of the strategic plan, the question remains; how will we know when we get there? Measurement is a critical component in strategic planning (Bean, 1993; Bryson, 2004; Kaplan & Norton, 2001; LeClair, 2001). Beyond the measurement, the communication of performance is also critical. The communication of performance measurement generates a level of importance to the accomplishment of the goals. By sharing that level of success, it serves to reward the accomplishment and motivate others to act, and help the organization attain its goals (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Pappas, 1996).

4. Employees are generally unaware of the impact that the strategic plan has on organizational decision-making.

The survey revealed that the majority of the employees are uncertain of the role that the strategic plan plays within the organization. While many sworn and civilian personnel believe that their work, and the work of their Units and Divisions, aligns with the strategic goals and objectives, a large percentage did not. This was consistent with observations made by the managers, who did not believe the employees knew the broader impact of the Strategic Plan.

LeClair (2001) details how strategic plans serve to guide an organization in its decision-making, and how this should link to the satisfaction of the membership and for assessing their effectiveness. While this parallels communication, and the importance of making staff aware of the role of the Strategic Plan, it also speaks to the level of organizational awareness of the personnel. Further, it serves to identify conditions and

processes to integrate the key strategic steps into the day-to-day operations of the Department.

New employees receive a limited introduction to the Strategic Plan, and it plays a very small role for the majority of supervisors. All of the sworn police managers I interviewed believe that the supervisory training, the promotional process and the performance development process should incorporate the content of Strategic Plan. It is through a deeper understanding of the Plan, and the role it plays in the organization, that member awareness will increase, and the plan will become integrated into police operations. Senge (1990b) refers to creative tension in his discussion on leadership and building a learning organization. Through an effective vision, and the incorporation of the Strategic Plan into these internal business processes, the creation of tension will drive and motivate change.

5. There is an absence of linkage between organizational accomplishments and strategic goals and objectives

While many employees are not aware of the impact that the Strategic Plan has on decision-making, they are also uncertain of how the plan links to organizational accomplishments. This too is a symptom of inadequate communication, and the inability of the staff to intuitively link accomplishments to the Strategic plan. This linkage is an important condition for the success of the plan, particularly in light of the success the organization is experiencing..

Kotter (1995) detailed the failure to celebrate success as one of the eight reasons for change initiatives failing. Organizationally, the VPD does a very good job of celebrating success. The Department publicly recognizes members for exceptional service, and for deeds

of bravery and valour. These ceremonies receive substantial attention from the media, and promote success within the Department. However, there are no celebrations linking organizational success to the Strategic Plan.

In identifying processes to link the plan to success, the Department can draw on its benchmarking reports to connect the goals and objectives with successful results.

Benchmarking is something new to the VPD, and it will serve as an opportunity to measure key performance indicators, and their success in relation to the plan. Bryson (2004) notes how ongoing performance assessments need to be distributed across the organization to manage the implementation of strategies and track progress. Equally as important are the celebrations of the success from these strategies, which serve to anchor change into the culture of the organization (John. P. Kotter, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

6. Prioritization of the many goals and objectives of the strategic plan has not occurred, resulting in diminished effort and returns.

The research showed a consistent belief that the VPD had not prioritized its goals and objectives effectively. While the survey data supported this, deeper meaning came from the managers during the interviews. There was a consistent message that the Strategic Plan contained many different and varied goals, all of which had merit. The managers all believed that their workload prevented them from concentrating on the broad spectrum of goals because there were simply too many of them. They are seeking direction on what should be the priority, given the limitations on their time and resources. Clearly, the sheer volume of goals and objectives, and an absence of prioritization, is having an impact on the integration of the Strategic Plan into VPD operations.

The Strategic Plan contains five key strategic steps; however, these steps contain 19 separate goals and collectively, the goals contain 69 separate objectives. The VPD held a managers' workshop on the Strategic Plan in August 2005. A portion of that session focussed on the prioritization of goals and objectives, and the session concluded with a list of the top ten goals at that time. Half of the managers interviewed note that nothing further came of that session, and they are presently unaware of which goals and objectives are a priority to the organization. This gap in direction directly affects the ability of managers and supervisors to integrate the strategic steps into day-to-day operations of the Department.

This is problematic, as it diminishes the efforts of everyone in the organization, when their effort is spread too thinly, across many different tasks. Bean (1993) articulates the constant need for a prioritization of goals and objectives for a strategic plan to succeed. This is a critical point during the implementation stage. Simply having a plan on the shelf is not enough. It requires a complex implementation process to succeed.

Kaplan and Norton (2001) note how middle managers can implement change but it is the ongoing leadership from the Executive that aligns the changes with the organizational strategy. The managers were unanimous in their support of the Strategic Plan, and reaffirmed their commitment through the course of the interviews. Further, they noted that no previous Executive has been as committed to a Strategic Plan as that seen today. While that commitment is vital, and there is acceptance that community safety initiatives and crime control are at the forefront, the difficult decisions to prioritize strategies to meet the goals have to be made (Allison & Kaye, 2005).

7. *There has not been a cultural shift in the VPD to embrace the strategic plan into the organization.*

The survey results indicate that there is an awareness of the Strategic Plan at all levels of the Department, and participation in this research demonstrates a desire by employees to be involved. In this regard, it is having an impact on the Department. However, there has not been a cultural shift in the Department to embrace the plan fully.

In spite of this, there is a strong knowledge of the organizational values. I have discussed how the values of the VPD are generally consistent with those of the individuals in the occupation. This results in a synergy, which leads to the acceptance of broader organizational values. The adoption of the organizational values, and the consistent knowledge of them across the Department, speaks well of their acceptance. The linkage between the employees' personal values and organizational values adds credibility to those of the organization, and results in greater dedication to duty (Drucker, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). While there is acceptance of the values, the organizational culture has not yet embraced the broader Strategic Plan.

Culture is cited as the biggest barrier to strategic planning (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Policing has a uniquely defined culture that is not simply restricted to any one police department. It spans the vocation as a whole, and is noteworthy for its resistance to change. In particular, this is directly applicable to strategic planning (Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Crank & Caldero, 2000). In the case of the VPD, the fact that previous plans have disappeared once they receive minimal attention simply compounds the resistance.

The complexity of the change, however, does not preclude the Department from continuing to undertake it. Bryson (2004) notes that changes of this nature, which involve

organizational strategy, are the most complex and require the greatest attention. Clapham (2006) experienced success within the police environment in Richmond, by proactively engaging the staff in the vision. While the Executive has consistently been espousing the values, there has been less effort at the lower levels, to engage the supervisors and line staff in the vision, and to hold them accountable for attaining it. A return to this level of “in your face” communication and involvement defines the organizational conditions and processes to enable success.

8. There is disconnect between the different functional work areas, and staff in one area are unaware of the work done elsewhere in the organization that ties to strategic goals and objectives.

Allison and Kaye (2005) refer to the need to have a key individual responsible for different aspects of the plan, and have them report back. As mentioned in conclusion two, this model was a part of the VPD processes early in the life of the Strategic Plan. All of the Deputy Chief Constables chaired working committees, which were responsible for all of the goals and objectives within their strategic step. These served as cross-functional teams, drawing on personnel from across the organization, and not just the direct reports of each Deputy Chief Constable.

Throughout the interviews, those managers who had been involved in the working groups commented that they were no longer occurring. These working committees produced results, as they developed operational plans and strategies, in a collaborative setting, to accomplish the different goals. They served as a link between the operational plans and the Strategic Plan, and were a valuable communication tool (LeClair, 2001). These working groups established processes that enabled the implementation of the strategic goals and

objectives. The managers define the absence of these working groups as a gap in the information sharing process, in large part because of the cross-divisional representation of the committees. It results in a lack of awareness of progress being made in the different Divisions, and prevents the celebration of accomplishments (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

9. Managers are expressing a consistent desire to increase the level of accountability in the organization.

Accountability is one of the four organizational values of the VPD. Every manager interviewed cited a need for greater accountability across the organization. In relation to the Strategic Plan, accountability should run from the top of the organization downward. Ensuring accountability at every level is essential (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Kaplan & Norton, 2001). An accountability process not only establishes organizational conditions for success, it also identifies measurements with which to measure that success.

A lack of accountability for the strategic plan is nothing new to police organizations. Quigley (1993) notes that it is common that many nonprofit organizations lack accountability, and standards of performance need to set for the organization. Without a level of accountability, goals and objectives are merely dreams. It is the accountability that ensures they are accomplished (Cresie, 2005). However, this must be approached prudently, because if too much focus is placed on internal controls, the pure adherence to rules will interfere with accomplishing objectives (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). This would be counterproductive, and ultimately create further strain on the strategic plan.

Scope and Limitations of the Research

This research study provides a broad spectrum of input into the Strategic Plan of the VPD from the management, supervisory and frontline levels of the organization. While I

made every effort to encompass as much input as possible, I controlled the scope of the research to ensure the research question was the focus of attention, and the process itself did have limitations.

The scope of the research was limited to the Strategic Plan, and the role that the management team and the Executive could take to ensure it becomes a part of the culture. It is not intended to reflect on the quality of the work performed by the organization as a whole, and does not account for other aspects of municipal policing where the VPD has experienced much success.

I used two research tools to collect the data, and I designed the questions in such a way as to ensure that participants remained focussed on the topic. I did not set up the data gathering tools to define responses based on gender, culture or other potential bias. This research was seeking answers to the broader organizational issues associated specifically to the Strategic Plan, and not defining those demographics as contributing factors.

The survey questions were unique to the VPD, and might not yield similar responses in other police agencies. The design of the survey included some mandatory questions, which required participants to answer each question. These questions were limited to the demographic questions that addressed whether the participant was a sworn or civilian member, the position they held in the VPD, the general type of work they did, and the level of service they held. The scaled questions that followed did not require a mandatory answer, and as a result, some participants chose not to answer some of these questions. In spite of this, and out of the 528 participants, the number of responses continued to exceed 400 for every one of these questions.

The VPD e-mail system was the medium used to distribute the survey, and this process did not account for people who were away from work during the conduct of the survey, people who were working off site for the three-week duration of the study, and those that otherwise had limited access to a network computer. It would be virtually impossible to replicate the survey distribution exactly.

The response rate for supervisors was disproportionately higher than the demographic for this group within the organization. Intuitively, I anticipated an enhanced response from this group. While all employees within the VPD have access to computers, generally speaking, all supervisors have dedicated workstations available to them, every day they work. Conversely, a large number of frontline sworn police personnel share computers, and spend little time each day at a computer on a desk. Given the nature of their duties, there is less likelihood that they would be as attentive to an e-mail based survey that required them to be on a computer. To address this issue in the future, a series of reminders directed at frontline sworn police officers would assist in increasing the response rate for this group. Alternatively, there may be value in using a hard-copy survey instrument in conjunction with the electronic survey, to provide enhanced opportunity for sworn police officers to respond.

I conducted the interviews in a one-on-one setting, in the offices of the VPD, and was able to draw on my existing relationships with the participants to help foster meaningful dialogue. If I posed these same questions to different managers, or another facilitator posed them to the same managers, the responses may vary solely due to pre-existing relationships between the parties.

During the course of the interviews, managers consistently alluded to the fact that everyone was overworked, and staff and financial resources were a constant strain. Further,

this state of affairs affects our ability to achieve our objectives. This truly is a critical concern within the organization, in part because so much of it is out of the control of the managers and leaders of the organization. The financial controls are coordinated through a corporate budget process, and the VPD is frequently at the mercy of the City budget office for additional funding for operational initiatives, staffing, equipment and training. While this information has value, in terms of its consistency across the organization, it falls well outside the scope of this study. I did not explore this aspect of the findings any further. It does provide, however, additional background information for other police resource studies currently being researched by VPD and City of Vancouver staff.

The initial proposal for this research project included the use of focus groups to generate additional data for the research. As this research project unfolded, and participation in the survey far exceeded expectations, the need for an additional data collection method became unnecessary. The volume of survey responses, combined with the free-form answers to open-ended questions, negated the need for further exploration of the same questions.

Further, given the unique work demands associated to operational police work, including the shift work and complex duties that may preclude attendance for many, I elected to not hold focus groups at this stage of the action research project. However, I also believe there is great value in drawing on the experiences of the employees, and their input is very beneficial to pending business process changes. As such, I will incorporate the focus group process into my implementation strategies, and I have factored them into my recommendations.

CHAPTER 5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The goal of this action research project was to review how integrated the Strategic Plan is in the day-to-day operations of the VPD, and to develop strategies to maximize its effectiveness. Through the research methodology, and drawing on extensive input from all levels of the organization, I have identified a series of conclusions about how well the plan is embedded into the Department.

The Vancouver Police Department Strategic Plan 2004-2008 has been the most successful and best-integrated plan I have experienced in my 26 years of service with the Department. The Executive of the VPD have done an admirable job to bring strategic planning to new heights within the organization. While the VPD has experienced success on many levels, and thrived on the development of efficiencies and solid operational policing strategies, the research shows that there are areas of improvement for the processes and the plan. The conclusions identify gaps relating to leadership, visioning, communication, celebration, linkage and accountability, and the recommendations offer solutions to address these gaps.

Overview of Recommendations

Flowing from the conclusions and supported by the research findings, following are a series of recommendations for the VPD to consider to further engage staff in the Strategic Plan. I recommend that the VPD:

1. Review the Strategic Plan for content, and consolidate the goals and objectives in a managed and prioritized manner.

2. Reinstigate the working groups for each of the strategic steps, reassigning responsibility and accountability for each strategic objective.
3. Develop a marketing strategy to publicize the Strategic Plan within the buildings of the VPD.
4. Create and implement a communication plan, to ensure consistent messaging regarding the Strategic Plan.
5. Deliver Executive level briefings, through the senior management team meeting process, to share the successes and initiatives that cross Divisional boundaries.
6. Expand the profile of the Strategic Plan in performance development and promotional processes.
7. Conduct focus groups with front line personnel, on a semi-annual basis, to inform and to solicit input on strategic objectives.
8. Develop a training package specific to the Strategic Plan, for delivery to every new employee joining the Department, and to every candidate in the supervisory module-training program.
9. Develop a follow-up strategy to reassess the results of the business change.

This list serves as a summary. The next section of the chapter expands on each recommendation, and provides additional supporting information.

Detailed Project Recommendations

The nine recommendations put forth are quite broad in nature. The work that will flow from these recommendations requires oversight and management, in spite of the fact that different areas of the Department may be responsible for completing the work itself. I recommend that this scope of work be coordinated through the Planning and Research

Section of the VPD. This Section is responsible for the Strategic Plan and individual responsibility for the project oversight and implementation should fall to the Inspector in charge of this Section.

Following is a more detailed examination of each recommendation, including suggested courses of action and proposals for the administration of processes.

Recommendation 1 – Review the Strategic Plan

I recommend that the Planning and Research Section review the Strategic Plan, assess what the VPD has accomplished to date, and identify strategies to consolidate or potentially eliminate. The research revealed that there are a large number of goals and objectives, to the point that it has become overwhelming. Over the past two years, some of these objectives have reached completion. There are also beliefs that some may no longer be relevant.

A comprehensive review conducted by the Planning and Research Section will enable the organization to focus its priorities on a more refined and current set of goals for the VPD. This review will conclude those goals that are completed, and reassess every other outstanding objective. Where there is room for consolidation; that should occur. In addition, recent discussion where issues like domestic terrorism have come to the forefront may result in the inclusion of some new priorities.

Upon completion of this review, a complete prioritization should occur of every objective. As was the case with the initial strategic planning process, the process of prioritization should involved a stakeholder group, bringing in managers and subject matter experts to help with informed decision-making. Further, this prioritization should link to different financial years. Clearly, the organization cannot accomplish everything at once. Given the resource constraints in the department, a prioritization process that results in

staggered due dates for completion will allow the managers, supervisors and line staff to concentrate on those matters that are the highest priority today, and move on to other items over time.

Recommendation 2 – Reinstitute Strategic Plan Working Groups

In the manager interviews, a consistent theme arose with those managers who had been involved with the Strategic Plan Working Groups. Not one of the managers knew why these sessions ended, yet those involved believed they were a benefit. There was little fanfare for their demise, and apathy seemed to prevail due to the other competing work demands occupying their time. I recommend that the VPD reestablish these work groups in concert with the updated Strategic Plan.

The research revealed clear messages about the lack of communication and celebration. In particular, this was most noteworthy when related to inter-divisional boundaries, where the investigators were unaware of how operational members were accomplishing strategic goals, and vice versa. While the VPD has recently instituted the COMPSTAT model for operational accountability and crime reduction, this program represents one piece of the Strategic Plan. The full Strategic Plan includes initiatives related to human resources, information technology, financial management and others. The COMPSTAT program does not deal with these areas of the organization.

Originally, each Deputy Chief Constable was responsible for one of the key strategic steps. Since the release of the plan, the civilian Chief Administrative Officer left the organization and one Deputy Chief Constable assumed his portfolio. In the last month, a further change occurred at the Executive level, with the appointment of a new Deputy Chief Constable to backfill a retirement. It is currently an opportune time to revisit these working

groups, and coordinate their return with Recommendation 1. This will provide continuity with an updated strategic plan, ensure the inspired engagement of the Strategic Plan with key people, and build an acceptance of responsibility for organizational objectives. These key people will lead strategies designed to accomplish goals, and reinstate the expanded communication between the Divisions.

Recommendation 3 – Develop a Marketing Strategy

One of the critical successes arising out of the marketing part of the Strategic Plan is the expanded profile of the Public Affairs and Marketing Section. Managers consistently referred to the expanded role of this Section as a positive result stemming from the Strategic Plan. I recommend that the Public Affairs and Marketing Section develop an internal marketing strategy to celebrate our success in relation to the Strategic Plan.

The marketing plan should contain a number of different approaches to fulfill its entire objective. First, the top priority is to concentrate on our personnel internally. The results of the research demonstrate an inability for them to link organizational successes to the Strategic Plan. In addition, there has been limited ability to celebrate successes in relation to the plan, as there has been no marketing of the successes. The second approach should concentrate on the corporate City of Vancouver. The managers, supervisors and line staff all note the inability to acquire sufficient resources in the research and a targeted marketing strategy will enable the VPD message to reach City Council on a regular basis. The final approach should explore external marketing options. These opportunities can leverage off our annual report, and allow the VPD to maximize its messages to the community it serves.

Recently the VPD has printed posters with the organizational values and the mission statement on them. They are appearing in the hallways around the buildings. The Information

Technology Section recently changed the name of the Intranet home page from “donut” to “IPAR” (Integrity, Professionalism, Accountability and Respect). This is a start to marketing the Strategic Plan, but further development can occur in these areas. Creativity generated from member input through focus groups, and input from marketing specialists, will result in a greater presence of the Strategic Plan throughout the Department.

Recommendation 4 – Create a Communication Plan

Following on the aspects of marketing, I recommend that the Planning and Research Section and the Public Affairs and Marketing Section collaboratively design a communications plan to enable consistent communication to the membership about the Strategic Plan. The expertise available in these two Sections of the Department will enable the design of succinct and pertinent information related to the Strategic Plan. Further, it will ensure consistent messaging is included in all communications, and that the VPD leverage technology to disseminate these communications in a timely and efficient manner.

Communication was the one consistent shortfall identified in all methods of data collection for this research. It did not matter what level of the organization the employees worked, or whether they held sworn or civilian positions, the large majority did not feel enough communication about the Strategic Plan was occurring. As noted, the literature further supports the continual communication of strategic objectives to reaffirm the organization’s commitment to the plan. This recommendation will have the broadest impact on the Department, and is a course of action that the VPD can implement quickly, to achieve immediate progress.

Recommendation 5 – Deliver Executive Briefings

I recommend that the Executive deliver Strategic Plan briefings to the management team at the weekly senior management meetings. This strategy will allow the Executive to reaffirm their commitment to the plan on a regular basis, and will serve as a vital communication link to inform the managers about important initiatives going on around the Department. Further, it will give the Executive an opportunity to acknowledge the work done by the different managers in relation to the plan.

Every manager commented through the course of the research that they were unfamiliar with the activities from other areas of the Department. In addition, they perceive that interest in the Strategic Plan has waned over time. By regularly updating the management team with a ten-minute presentation, the additional communication will inform the managers at one session, and broaden their knowledge of organizational initiatives. Currently, the Police Board receives a Strategic Plan update every second month. Each update is on one of the key strategic steps, and by following this same cycle, the management team will receive the same update report provided to the Board. Under this model, each topic will be presented once every ten months, so each topic will have meaning over a period of time, and it is likely that success will occur over that time that is worthy of mention.

Recommendation 6 – Expand the Profile of the Strategic Plan

I recommend that the Human Resources Section more fully incorporate the Strategic Plan into the different processes they administer. This includes the addition of measurable performance criteria related to the Strategic Plan being applied to the performance development program and promotional competitions.

The Department has invested a substantial amount of effort developing complex systems to monitor and assist employees with their development. The process that flows from this program links to promotion, career opportunities and employee growth. By inserting the Strategic Plan into this process, it elevates the importance of it among staff. As managers and supervisors complete development packages for their employees, they will likely feel more obligated to think about how both they and their employees are working towards the organizational goals in the Strategic Plan, and. This process will not only improve linkages, it will enable employees to focus on attainable goals for themselves and for the organization, and to set in place an action plan to accomplish them.

Through the research and the literature, I have established the importance of champions, and the champions of organizational visions are high up in the organization. As such, by including the Strategic Plan as a part of the promotional competition, a greater link to the plan will evolve as employees rise through the organization. Increased involvement in the Strategic Plan generally accompanies a promotion. While the Deputy Chief Constables are each driving a major strategic step, the managers and supervisors gain responsibility for implementing strategies to attain these goals. By incorporating the Strategic Plan into the promotional process, it not only readies the employee for the future, but also serves to assist in the selection process when accomplishments in relation to the plan are measured.

Recommendation 7 – Conduct Employee Focus Groups

I recommend that the Planning and Research Section coordinate ongoing focus group sessions for frontline and supervisory staff, to continue to link the Strategic Plan to operational police work. A regular cycle of bimonthly focus groups will enable the VPD to continue obtaining feedback on its goals and objectives. Further, it will permit the

membership to play an active role in the formulation of strategies and the ongoing assessment of their relevance.

When I analyze the answers provided by members through the open-ended survey questions, the impression I have is that many people did not buy in from the outset. In any strategic planning process, it is virtually impossible to obtain input from every employee. The regular scheduling of focus group sessions that are specific to the Strategic Plan provides an opportunity for staff to provide feedback.

The survey responses also contained many positive comments about the brown bag lunch meetings that the Deputy Chief Constables held with staff. Further, the employees lauded the town hall meetings with the Chief Constable and the Deputy Chief Constables. Given the demand for these forums, and corroborated by the desire to be involved in this research project, it is clear that employees want to participate and do care. Scheduled focus groups, discussing topics relevant to the organization, will enhance their involvement and the organization will benefit from the increased knowledge gained from its most valuable resource.

Recommendation 8 – Deliver a Training Package

I recommend that the Planning and Research Section work collaboratively with the Recruiting and Training Section to develop a training package on the Strategic Plan, for delivery to new employees and those participating in supervisory development.

Currently, new recruits to the Department receive a copy of the Strategic Plan and hear about the values of the organization. While there is some level of awareness that the Strategic Plan exists, there is not a focused education piece delivered to these new employees. Table 2 reflects that most (37%) of the participants in the survey have five or less

years of service. Given this demographic breakdown, which is comparable to the demographic breakdown of the entire organization, it is fair to say that this response is representative of the actual employee population. As the Department takes steps to market the Strategic Plan, it is also important to deliver training on the plan. Marketing will increase the profile, but training will provide meaning. If the employees attach meaning to the plan, then they are more likely to take notice of it, and to identify how it affects them.

Recommendation 9 – Develop Follow-up Strategies

I recommend that the Planning and Research Section develop follow-up strategies to assess these recommendations post implementation. Where the Planning and Research Section is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations, they too are responsible for the on-going measurement of the results of these strategies.

Through the research, the managers all professed a need for greater accountability with respect to the Strategic Plan. The literature supports this, and notes that accountability should run across the organization, beginning at the top. With the Planning and Research Section responsible for the Strategic Plan, accountability should also fall to that Section to follow through on the recommendations. Through the development of assessment processes, including a renewal of the survey in 2007, the Planning and Research Section will be able to assess the results of these recommendations and pursue alternate strategies to further assist in embedding the Strategic Plan into the VPD.

Organizational Implications

The implementation of the recommendations anticipates having long-lasting and positive implications for the VPD. It is also important to consider other consequences that may be associated with these recommendations. This section will examine the organizational

implications, and include an analysis of the systems impact on the VPD, the risks associated to not implementing the recommendations, and the leadership implications associated to acting on the recommendations.

Implementation of the Recommendations

The Planning and Research Section should manage the implementation process of these recommendations. Within the VPD, this Section is the work unit responsible for oversight of the Strategic Plan. It will be the responsibility of the Inspector in charge of the Section to develop a project plan and timeline to carry out these recommendations.

The recommendations include responsibilities tasked to other areas of the organization. To accomplish this, a team approach is required to share the tasks associated to the implementation process. Bryson (2004) notes that “the team is the basic champion for furthering strategic planning” (p. 307). Further, the team concept addresses the sharing of information and the political support within the organization. These two critical areas will assist with the implementation of change.

From a systems perspective, and as with any change initiative in the organization, the implementation of additional processes will result in extra work for employees of the VPD. Whether it is an Executive member championing a Strategic Step Working Group meeting, a manager leading a change initiative or line staff participating in focus groups, it will have an affect on the organization. It will create an extra burden on staff who have already been identified as being over worked, and where the resource constraints have been noted repeatedly throughout this research process and in other organizational research and documents (Griffiths et al., 2005; Vancouver Police Department, 2004a, 2005b, 2006b, 2006c).

Senge (1990a) writes extensively on how systems interact in organizations, and he has created different models to demonstrate the interrelationship between factors in an organizational system. In two of his system archetype models, he refers to the need to focus on long-term goals, and both of these models are applicable in these recommendations. First, in the “fixes that fail” model, short-term fixes, which address a problem, do not last. Often, unintended consequences follow, and attempts to address these consequences include doing more of the same strategy, thereby further compounding the problem. This model is applicable in relation to the resource issue, where contributing limited resources to address strategic objectives pulls them away from other tasks. The organization realizes an observable gain in relation to the strategic objectives, and the organization feels the negative and unanticipated consequence of the accomplishment months later.

The second model is that of “eroding goals”, where short-term solutions are performed at the expense of the long-term goal (Senge, 1990a). Arguably, this may be the case with the current Strategic Plan. It may also surface as a problem in relation to the recommendations contained herein. In this model, the short-term solution involves letting the long-term goal slip. This too is a realistic concern for the VPD, where considerable resources, which are already spread too thin, are moved around to address emergent needs at the expense of the long-term goals.

In both of these examples, focusing on the long-term goal is the answer. By delivering a commitment to the broader organizational goals, and not letting short-term fixes direct activities, the longer-term objectives will be realized (Senge, 1990a). By maintaining the vision, the organization retains its direction and continues to move forward. In this case,

the focus is on the Strategic Plan itself, and by maintaining the commitment to that plan, its vision will flourish over time.

Finally, as with any change initiative, it is important to test processes, obtain feedback, reassess hypotheses and adjust accordingly to continue towards the desired state (Anderson & Ackerman-Anderson, 2001; Bridges, 2003). This feedback loop is essential to continue moving forward. Anderson and Ackerman-Anderson (2001) note this concept in their learning and course correction model for transformational change. In this model, the vision remains at the end, and through the process of attaining the end state, an organization takes courses of action to correct when progress shifts from the “change plan”. Continual monitoring of the correction will identify when it goes off course again, and further corrective actions takes place to refine the course further. This process continues, and the magnitude of the corrections gradually narrows, as the desired target gets closer.

As one reviews the recommendations, the goal is a Strategic Plan embedded within the VPD, so that it has meaning in the day-to-day operations of the organization. Through these recommendations, processes will be required to monitor the progress towards that goal. The results of that monitoring process will provide the impetus to adjust the courses of action and ensure the organization stays on track with its goal. Interestingly, one can apply these principles to the recommendations suggested within this study, as well as to every goal and objective stated in the Strategic Plan itself.

Implications for Inaction

While it is important to assess the implications for taking action and initiating change fully, it is equally important to assess the implications for not taking action. The history of strategic planning within the VPD, as discussed in Chapter 1, has demonstrated the

implications for inaction. Many of the same issues that surfaced through this research project can be attributed to this legacy of strategic planning, where plans languish. By continuing to do nothing, the Strategic Plan will become a distant memory and the goals and objectives themselves will shift independent of one another, and with no overarching vision or mission.

A loss of broad organizational direction will prevent the VPD from any level of accountability for its service. In an organization that has resource limitations, a loss of direction will result in the inefficient and ineffective deployment of those resources. The Strategic Plan serves as a framework for organizational priorities, and those priorities should direct the deployment of those limited resources. Without that framework, there will consistently be questions asking if we have effectively deployed the resources we have, prior to receiving additional funding for personnel.

Leadership Implications

Effective strategic planning requires active leadership. Kotter (2001) notes that “since change is the function of leadership, being able to generate highly energized behaviour is important for coping with the inevitable barriers to change” (p. 91). The leaders of the VPD must continue to sell the change, and actively promote the Strategic Plan.

This requirement for active leadership is also not simply the responsibility of the Executive. While the literature review notes the importance of effective leadership from the top, the business approach to the implementation of the recommendation requires leadership that spans the organization. Kouzes and Posner (2002) refer to modeling the way, and “if [leaders] want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behaviour they expect of others” (p. 14). Others also allude to the same concept, or the

saying, “walk the talk” (Bridges, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Quigley, 1993).

It is imperative that the leadership group within the VPD share a commitment to the Strategic Plan, and model that commitment through their daily behaviour and interactions. For it to guide the organization, it must guide the leaders. It starts with every Inspector, civilian manager, Deputy Chief Constable and the Chief Constable, and permeates outward from there. This responsibility for the leaders takes time, but it reaps rewards. Leadership within the VPD is a team effort, and “exemplary leaders enable others to act. They foster collaboration and build trust” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 18).

Motivation is also important, and is accomplished through feedback, coaching and role modeling (John P. Kotter, 2001). It is further inspired through celebration. As noted in the conclusions and the recommendation, the importance of celebration, recognition and appreciation cannot be understated. Attention paid to this aspect alone will “encourage the hearts of the constituents to carry on” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 19). The development of these relationships, and the attention to the people, will foster commitment to the goals and the vision.

Through my experience working with the VPD over the past 26 years, I am confident in the capabilities of the men and women that work there. Leadership is prevalent at all levels of the organization. The relationships in existence within the organization, combined with the commitment to the good of the community, will continue to inspire the people to do great things. In relation to this research project, and the implications of the recommendations, the leaders require commitment: a commitment to the people, to the process, to the goals and to

the vision. Through this leadership commitment, the Strategic Plan of the VPD will become embedded in the culture, and the day-to-day operations of the Department.

Future Research

As with any research project, this investigation into the state of the Strategic Plan within the VPD is not exhaustive. While I examined many areas of the plan to identify how to embed it into the day-to-day operations, I not only anticipate, but also expect, further research.

Within the recommendations, I have suggested follow-up work to re-examine the effect that the implementation of the recommendations have on the organization. This measurement should occur one year following the implementation of changes, and will provide an accurate measure of the strategies used to improve communication, education and marketing of the plan.

A more directed approach to this type of research would also add value to the VPD. In particular, there is specific research worth conducting by targeting a sample population that is limited to specific areas of the Department. Alternatively, the sample could be similar to this survey, but the survey design could enable the identification of specific areas of the Department. When dealing with recommendations such as a training strategy, the ability for the data to narrow the focus of the training, and identify specific areas where the training is value-added, would be beneficial.

Finally, the focus of this research project is specifically the Vancouver Police Department. As noted in the literature review, cultural issues in policing span many police departments and, in many ways, are specific to the vocation and not simply the agency. Additional research in other police agencies would add to the body of knowledge in relation

to strategic planning in law enforcement. While I presume the issues identified from this research would be similar in other police departments, it would be folly to make that assumption without the rigor of similar research methods to support this theory.

CHAPTER 6. LESSONS LEARNED

I liken this research project to a learning journey, with the final destination being the completion of the major project research thesis. Throughout this journey, I continued to learn about my own organization, the people within it and the important role that leadership plays, both personally and in my organization.

My personal goal was to embark on a research project that provided me with interest, had meaning for the VPD, was applicable to my position, and could result in positive change for my organization. At the conclusion of the project, I can comfortably say that I have met my personal goals.

Organizational Learning

I embarked on this research topic, in part, by accident. In my position as the Inspector in charge of the Planning and Research Section, the responsibility for the Strategic Plan was placed in my office in mid-2005. As I started to prepare some background material in relation to an annual update report, my research questions came to the forefront. There is a saying in life that “timing is everything”, and although I do not wholly agree with that statement, in this instance there was some merit.

When I reflect back on my experiences in the conduct of the research, the support from the Department amazed me. The Executive supported my project, and enabled me to accomplish the research. My peers were supportive of me, and demonstrated their commitment and loyalty to the Department. The membership was similarly supportive of me, voluntarily giving of their time to participate, and showing their commitment to the Department. Most notable, however, was the trust they showed in the research process. The

frank and honest information that they provided has resulted in meaningful data for analysis. These heartfelt contributions greatly assisted me with the analysis process, as I was able to take the data at face value, note the consistencies with greater ease, and identify the themes more readily. Further, the volume of data obtained increased the reliability of the information, thereby adding validity to the results.

I was impressed with the excitement generated through the research process. Given the nature of the topic, and the introduction of a new computer-based application to administer a survey, I pessimistically believed I would get little response. The opposite was true, where the response rate was well beyond my expectations. Further, participants were sending me e-mails after completing the survey; to compliment me on the survey, on the survey software, and on the fact that it really only did take five minutes to complete as the preamble stated. This created an ethical dilemma that I had not accounted for prior to beginning the research, in that I was not expecting respondents to send written communication to me that they had voluntarily completed an anonymous survey.

The final observation I made through the survey process was one of genuine caring. I received a telephone call from a civilian employee who felt badly about the fact that she was unhappy with one of her answers she provided, and she wanted to know if she could go back into the survey and change it. I had configured the survey in such a way that any respondent could return to the survey within seven days of completion, and amend an answer. This employee was very happy, because one of her answers was incorrect, and she wanted to make sure that she offered up her true beliefs to add validity to the process. In other words, she cared about the process, and she cared about the Department.

The one-on-one interviews with my peers provided me with a similar sense of dedication to the Department. All of these people were senior members of the organization, who have seen substantial change throughout their policing careers. Their willingness to participate, and the open and honest dialogue that ensued, was a testament to their commitment to the betterment of the VPD. This spirited conversation also came up post-interview, as I have seen these people since that time. It presented another ethical consideration, in that two participants willingly alluded to our interviews within a group setting, reflecting further and breaching the confidentiality aspect of the original interview. I quietly responded and changed the topic, to steer it away from the interview process and to maintain the integrity of the confidentiality agreement.

Personal Learning

On a personal level, this learning journey was a rewarding challenge. The research project started with flourish, and moved through the ethical approval stage with ease. Following that, the process slowed as other external factors limited my availability to continue at the same pace.

As I moved through the process, I gained a greater appreciation for the research process, and in particular, the time required to do the groundwork in preparation for the research. I approached the preparation very methodically, completing each step sequentially and not maximizing efficiency by performing multiple steps simultaneously. For example, I piloted survey questions with people one at a time and made the review evolutionary from one person to the next, as opposed to fanning out multiple pilots at the same time and collecting it simultaneously. This was approach not incorrect, but certainly less efficient.

In the conduct of research, I elected to leave some of the questions optional for the participants to complete. While I intentionally left the open-ended questions optional, as they can be more demanding on participants, I also left a few of the multiple-choice questions optional. I elected to do this following some feedback I received in the pilot process and, if I were to repeat this survey with scaled Likert-type questions, I would set up the software to require an answer in order to move on. Given the dedication shown by the sample, and their willingness to participate, these types of questions are not time consuming, and the gains made from the expanded data set could prove beneficial in a smaller sample.

The survey administration was the first survey conducted in the VPD using this software application. I experimented through the survey design within the software environment, tweaking the question design and order to provide flow to the questions. I made sure to use the conditional capabilities of the software to ensure that participants did not see questions they did not have to answer, based on a previous answer earlier in the survey. This proved very beneficial, streamlining the survey for the participant, and I received numerous compliments on this feature.

I also tested the survey design, within the software environment, with six different people. I set the survey to allow multiple responses for this testing process, and had them answer the questions multiple times, and with different responses, to test the different conditional rules applied to the questions. I consciously spent additional time in this testing process, as I had not administered previous surveys with this software. Through this learning process, I gained a greater understanding of the application, and how it works, and I have established business processes within the Planning and Research Section for the administration of six pending surveys on other subjects within the VPD.

I also tested another new piece of technology through this research project: a digital recording device. These devices are relatively new to the VPD, and I was fortunate enough to be able to borrow one from another Section for the duration of the interviews. I had entered this research process with the belief that police officers would be less willing to speak if I recorded the conversation. In every instance, the recording device was not a distraction and the advantages gained from recording each interview, including the accuracy of the data obtained, far outweighed any perceived risk that the recording device may restrict dialogue. This tool proved so valuable that I have submitted a business case within the VPD to obtain one for my Section, to assist with our other ongoing research needs.

A Final Comment

The principle of life-long learning is a cornerstone of Royal Roads University. It is a concept that I embody, and is one that many of my peers share. This project was a journey, and I completed that journey with the assistance of others. In the framework of life-long learning, the sharing of knowledge is the key. Throughout this research project, I regularly had the opportunity to discuss the project and reflect on it with fellow workers. They expressed an interest in what I was doing, and proved to be a valuable source of influence and suggestions as I worked through the research methodology.

After the research was complete, I believe I struck a chord with many in the VPD. The open dialogue that followed, in relation to the Strategic Plan, my studies, the school and the program was encouraging. By asking questions, people stop and think, and then ask questions themselves. Through this communication, learning takes place. Through this communication, the VPD can hold true to its values, vision and mission, and embed the Strategic Plan in the operations of the Department.

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader” (Adams, n.d., para. 1).

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APPENDIX A. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Are you a sworn police officer or a civilian employee?
 - (a) Sworn Police Officer (or Special Constable)
 - (b) Civilian Employee

2. Which best describes your current level in the organization?
 - (a) Frontline Staff Member (i.e. Constable, Detective, Analyst, Clerk, Office Assistant, etc.)
 - (b) Supervisor (i.e. Sergeant, Team Leader, Advisor, etc.)

3. What is your current level of service with the VPD?
 - (a) 0 to 5 Years of Service
 - (b) 6 to 10 Years of Service
 - (c) 11 to 15 Years of Service
 - (d) 16 to 20 Years of Service
 - (e) 21 or More Years of Service

4. My work area can generally be described as:
 - (a) Operational
 - (b) Investigative
 - (c) Administrative/Support

5. Were you involved in the strategic planning process, in any way, for the development of the 2004 Strategic Plan?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No

6. I believe the strategic plan has relevance to my day-to-day duties.
 - (a) Disagree
 - (b) Disagree Somewhat
 - (c) Neutral
 - (d) Agree Somewhat
 - (e) Agree

7. I am knowledgeable about the VPD mission statement.
 - (a) Disagree
 - (b) Disagree Somewhat
 - (c) Neutral
 - (d) Agree Somewhat
 - (e) Agree

8. I am aware of the VPD core values (IPAR).

- (a) Disagree
- (b) Disagree Somewhat
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree Somewhat
- (e) Agree

9. The core values of the VPD are in alignment with my own personal values.

- (a) Disagree
- (b) Disagree Somewhat
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree Somewhat
- (e) Agree

10. The priorities within my work unit are aligned with the goals and objectives in the VPD Strategic Plan.

- (a) Disagree
- (b) Disagree Somewhat
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree Somewhat
- (e) Agree

11. The overall work of my Division is aligned with the goals and objectives of the VPD, as per the Strategic Plan.

- (a) Disagree
- (b) Disagree Somewhat
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree Somewhat
- (e) Agree

12. I am aware of my responsibilities in light of the VPD strategic plan.

- (a) Disagree
- (b) Disagree Somewhat
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree Somewhat
- (e) Agree

13. I feel that the senior management team effectively communicates the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan to its frontline staff.

- (a) Disagree
- (b) Disagree Somewhat
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree Somewhat
- (e) Agree

14. I feel that the strategic plan has meaning, in relation to my day-to-day activities at work.

- (a) Disagree
- (b) Disagree Somewhat
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree Somewhat
- (e) Agree

15. I feel that the VPD has effectively prioritized its goals and objectives within the strategic plan.

- (a) Disagree
- (b) Disagree Somewhat
- (c) Neutral
- (d) Agree Somewhat
- (e) Agree

16. What does the strategic plan mean to you? (*Select all that apply*)

- (a) Consistent Organizational Direction
- (b) Focused Priorities
- (c) Community Involvement
- (d) Employee Involvement
- (e) Additional work
- (f) Public Relations
- (g) Management Control
- (h) Other (*Free text Answer...*)

17. In your opinion, has the Department done enough to keep the strategic plan 'alive' and embed it into our organizational priorities?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

17(a). If yes, based on your experienced, how have they successfully accomplished this?

Free text answer...

17(b). If no, where would you say they failed at accomplishing this?

Free text answer...

18. In your opinion, does the VPD Strategic Plan have any impact on your day-to-day duties and responsibilities?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

18(a). If yes, how does it apply?

Free text answer...

18(b). If no, why not?

Free text answer...

19. How can the VPD Strategic Plan provide greater meaning to you in your day-to-day duties?

Free text answer...

APPENDIX B. SURVEY INVITATION

You are hereby invited to participate in an electronic survey to promote the furtherance of the Strategic Plan within the Vancouver Police Department (VPD). The focus of the research asks how the VPD can effectively incorporate its Strategic Plan into the day-to-day operations of the organization.

One of the key components to strategic planning is to involve as many people in the process as possible. The Strategic Plan 2004-2008 included input from all levels of the Department. We are now looking at building on that strategic plan, as we focus on five-year planning that takes us to 2010. To effectively do this, we are asking for your assistance and input.

An electronic survey is attached to this e-mail through the link below. It will take approximately five (5) minutes to complete. Please take the time to answer the questions as completely as possible. More information is contained in the preamble to the survey, accessible after opening the link.

<http://ipar.vpd.ca/Surveys/TakesSurvey.asp?SurveyID=5L1893L7941G>

Thank you, in advance, for your participation.

APPENDIX C. SURVEY PREAMBLE

You are invited to participate in this electronic survey to promote the furtherance of the Strategic Plan within the Vancouver Police Department (VPD). The focus of the research asks how the VPD can effectively incorporate its Strategic Plan into the day-to-day operations of the organization.

This research project is being conducted by Daryl Wiebe, and will assist the VPD with its strategic planning processes. It will also form part of the requirement for a Master of Arts degree at Royal Roads University (RRU). The researcher's credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning Ms. Nancy Greer, at (250) xxx-xxxx, or via e-mail at xxx@xxx.com.

This electronic survey is foreseen to take no longer than ten (10) minutes to complete. The questions will refer to the Strategic Plan of the VPD, including the relevance of the plan to your work, input into organizational goals and objectives, and strategies to make meaning of the content of the plan for 'frontline' policing.

All of the information collected will be recorded electronically, in a database within the computer network of the VPD. No external access is available to this information. The identity of all participants will remain anonymous. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential.

Information collected will be summarized and incorporated into the body of the final report. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University, in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts degree, the research findings will also be shared with the members and Executive of the VPD and the Vancouver Police Board. Further, the final thesis or a condensed executive report may also be submitted to external justice periodicals and journals for publication.

A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and will be publicly accessible. Additional copies of the final report will be available through the Planning and Research Section of the Vancouver Police Department.

There are no known or anticipated risks associated to your participation in this research. Conversely, your involvement as a stakeholder within the VPD will benefit the organization, as your input is both important and appreciated. You are not compelled to participate in this survey. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, without prejudice, simply by selecting the 'Exit' option. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this survey, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

- I have read the above information and consent to participate in the survey
- I do not wish to participate in the survey

APPENDIX D. LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear *[name of Prospective Participant]*,

My name is Daryl Wiebe and I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting related to the Strategic Plan of the Vancouver Police Department. This project forms part of the requirement for a Master or Arts degree at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning Ms. Nancy Greer, the MALT academic lead at RRU, at (250) xxx-xxxx, or via e-mail at xxx@xxx.com.

The objective of my research project is to assess the effectiveness of the Strategic Plan of the Vancouver Police Department, including an examination of methods to further embed the plan into the day-to-day policing duties across the organization. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University, in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts degree, I will also be sharing my research findings with the Vancouver Police Department. Further, the Vancouver Police Board, and possibly external law enforcement and justice periodicals, will also have access to the final report and findings.

My research project will consist of two separate components: an 'on-line' survey and a series of one-on-one interviews. The survey is foreseen to take no longer than ten (10) minutes to complete. The interviews are foreseen to take no longer than one hour to complete. The questions will include a discussion on the current strategic plan, how it has meaning to you and other frontline personnel, and how the plan can provide more meaning to your day-to-day work.

Your name was chosen at random, from a group of eligible participants working in a similar position in the organization, as a prospective participant for the interview. Your identity will remain confidential throughout this research, and none of the information obtained as a result of the research will be attributed specifically to you.

This project has the full support of the Chief Constable, and the Executive of the Vancouver Police Department. The results of this research will assist the Department as it moves forward with its strategic planning, taking us into 2010. Your involvement is intended to occur on company time, and at company expense, and you will be compensated accordingly as per the requirements of your respective collective agreements.

Information will be recorded in hand written notes, with audio recording to ensure accurate recordkeeping. All of the information will be summarized in the body of the final report, where appropriate, and remain in anonymous format. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless your specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. You have my assurance that all documentation will be kept strictly confidential.

There are no known risks to your participation in this research. Additionally, any and all conflicts of interest, be they real or perceived, will be managed within the research project. The regular use of Research Consent forms and Letters of Confidentiality, combined with an existing level of trust within the organization, should provide for assurances that the paramilitary rank structure of the organization shall have no impact on this research. Your open and candid involvement is essential for the accurate collection of data and the furtherance of strategic planning within the Vancouver Police Department. I am wholly committed to completely eliminating all elements of bias and conflict, should they arise.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes. A debriefing session will be held immediately following your interview. Further, you will also have an opportunity to review the transcribed notes from your session, to verify their accuracy and correct any errors or omissions.

You are not compelled to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please confirm your willingness to participate in my research project. I can be contacted at:

Name: Daryl Wiebe – Planning and Research Section,
Vancouver Police Department

Email: xxx@xxx.com

Telephone: (604) xxx-xxxx

Sincerely,

Daryl Wiebe

APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Following are the 11 core questions that formed the basis of the one-on-one interviews with the managers. Every participant was asked each of these questions, however, the answers provided to these core questions dictated where the dialogue went thereafter.

- Q1. What role do you see for strategic planning in policing?
- Q2. Please outline your involvement in the strategic planning process for the 2004 strategic plan.
- Q3. How has the strategic plan had an affect on your job, your Section and the role you Section plays within the broader organization?
- Q4. What does the VPD strategic plan mean to you?
- Q5. Where do you see the strategic plan resulting in organizational success?
- Q6. Where do you see the strategic plan resulting in failure within the organization?
- Q7. Where do you see your work, and the work of your Section meeting strategic goals and objectives?
- Q8. Has the leadership team done enough to keep the strategic plan alive? If so, how have they done that?
- Q9. What strategies can the leadership team develop, to enhance the profile of the strategic plan and to provide operational relevance to frontline personnel?
- Q10. What changes to your current business processes would enable greater attention to the strategic goals and objectives within the VPD?
- Q11. How can the VPD provide meaning to the Strategic Plan for you?

APPENDIX F. COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

An agreement between Daryl Wiebe (Researcher), and

_____ (*Participant*)

All personal and other confidential information accumulated by the researcher will remain strictly confidential. This information will be used only for the purposes of this research project, related to the Strategic plan of the Vancouver Police Department. It shall not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the research period and beyond it.

This agreement covers all recorded information, in all formats, regardless of the source. By definition, "all personal information" includes names, contact information, opinions, and any other information that could reasonably be presumed to identify an individual, or be linked to an identifiable individual.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as detailed in the *Letter of Invitation* and the *Research Consent Form*.

In the event that there is uncertainty whether information is personal or confidential, the researcher will err on the side of caution and not disclose such information without the express written permission of the participant involved.

Statement of Agreement

I have read and understand this agreement.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX G. RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

My name is Daryl Wiebe, and I am currently the Inspector i/c the Planning and Research Section for the Vancouver Police Department. This research project will assist the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) with its strategic planning processes and also forms part of the requirement for a Master of Arts degree at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be confirmed by telephoning Ms. Nancy Greer, the MALT academic lead at RRU, at (250) xxx-xxxx, or via e-mail at xxx@xxx.com.

This document constitutes an agreement to participate in my research project, the objective of which is to examine how the VPD can effectively incorporate its Strategic Plan into the day-to-day operations of the organization.

The research will consist of an electronic survey and six one-on-one interviews. The survey will include a blend of closed and open-ended questions, administered via the internal computer network of the VPD. The interviews will be comprised of open-ended questions, administered in a one-on-one setting. The research process is foreseen to last approximately two months.

The research questions will refer to current business practices within the VPD, how the organization and its members view the Strategic Plan and how the organization can strengthen and embed the Strategic Plan into the daily business practices of the Department. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts degree, I will also be sharing my research findings with the VPD as a whole, including all participants, and the Vancouver Police Board. The final thesis or condensed executive report may also be submitted to external justice periodicals and journals for publication.

Information collected will be recorded in hand-written format and/or audio taped, summarized where appropriate, and incorporated into the body of the final report. The identity of all participants will remain anonymous. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential.

A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and will be publicly accessible. Additional copies of the final report will be available through the Planning and Research Section of the Vancouver Police Department.

There are no known or anticipated risks associated to your participation in this research. Conversely, your involvement as a stakeholder within the VPD will benefit the organization, as your input is both important and appreciated. There are no known inconveniences to you, other than your time commitment as a participant in this study. This time commitment is not expected to exceed ninety (90) minutes for any one individual.

Given that this research is being conducted by an employee of the Vancouver Police Department, and within the work setting, the potential exists for a real or perceived conflict

of interest. While the Vancouver Police Department continues to operate in a paramilitary structure, your open and candid involvement is essential for the accurate collection of data and the furtherance of strategic planning within the Vancouver Police Department. The researcher is committed to completely eliminating all elements of bias and conflict, with the use of tools such as this Research Consent form and a Commitment to Confidentiality form.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by keeping all data in a locked file cabinet. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from the data. All data will be destroyed within one year of completion of the project by erasing all audiotapes, deleting all digital audio recordings and shredding all paper-based notes and transcripts. There is no other planned use for this data.

You are not compelled to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence. Your participation will have no bearing on your employment or advancement opportunities within the Vancouver Police Department. Additionally, if you withdraw from this research project your data will not be used in the final project, and all personal data will be destroyed immediately.

By signing this letter, you give free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions or concerns during the course of this research project, please feel free to contact the researcher or the supervisor at any time.

Daryl Wiebe – Researcher
Vancouver Police Department
(604) xxx-xxxx

Dr. Bjorn Leiren – Project Supervisor
A.W. Fraser & Associates
(604) xxx-xxxx