Weight-Room Safety Strategic Planning—Part 6

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Identifying-and-Selecting-Goals Meeting

The first portion of the meeting is devoted to identifying some strategic actions that could significantly benefit your loss reduction program. These actions are developed into goals. In the second portion of the meeting you will try to select the most important goals for your program.

Identifying Goals

Review the results of the SWOP (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, Problems) analysis and present your SWOP Graph (Graph 2, p. 37 in the previous issue). Do some potential actions become evident when you examine the Graph? Search the Graph for ways you might use your strengths and opportunities against your weaknesses, threats, and problems. The Graph reflects a real strength in teaching but also a big problem in the availability of strength drugs. Perhaps you could use your technique training programs to do some training about the penalties and side effects of strength drugs.

The weakness of the building being a fire hazard and the potential threats of probation and funding cuts, as shown in Graph 2, could be devastating to the program. Perhaps you could use one threat against another. Try to get the athletic administration to influence the university president to hold off on cutting funds because it looks like the athletic program may go on probation anyway, and that would automatically reduce the funding levels. Then try to get a portion of the remaining funds to remove the fire hazards in the building.

Try this method of idea generation on your SWOP Graph. Once the desired outcomes are identified, you can begin to define them as goals. Goals are broadly defined positions or conditions you would like to reach to accomplish your mission.

Is one of your strengths in jeopardy? If your football program is put on a very severe probation, the physical qualities of your recruits may go down, making them more susceptible to injury. To maintain your strength of having well-conditioned recruits, you may need to conduct some extra programs with the recruits especially to build joint strength, improve aerobic conditioning, and reduce excess body fat. A goal related to this effort might be that of developing programs for recruits who are entering the program with lower levels of conditioning.

Evaluate any special opportunities you may have. Perhaps one of your assistants has worked at another university. Take the opportunity to interview him or her on how safety, maintenance, and record keeping differ at the two schools. Your assistant can help you benchmark your facility against another one in the area of loss prevention. You may find some improvements that can be easily implemented. A goal for this process might be that of taking greater advantage of the knowledge and skills of the staff.

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Allow some brainstorming time for people to contribute ideas of what might be a good goal based on the specific conditions of your program. When the strategic planning team has finished listing potential goals, see if some of the goals can be grouped and eliminate those that are redundant.

If some of these goals can be easily accomplished with minimal resources and can contribute substantially to your safety efforts (such as wiping down the mats used for floor exercises with disinfectants to reduce the spread of skin rashes), set them aside for attention at a future meeting. These items are termed easy hits. They provide a considerable payback for a minimal investment and you should take advantage of them.

Don't try unnecessarily to build upon your strengths or eliminate your weaknesses if they will not help you take advantage of the opportunities, deal with the problems, or prepare your program for the potential threats.

**Selecting Goals**

List the remaining goals on a blackboard or flip chart. Generate open discussion on them. See if the group can rank them by level of importance. Try to identify the critical factors that could be of greatest benefit to your loss reduction program. Select the one or two goals likely to provide the most value in improving your safety program at this time. Does one goal offer a lot of synergy? In other words, does it help combat a couple of your weaknesses and solve a problem also?

Some of your weaknesses might be in records keeping or formulating policies. The installation of a computer system might allow you to keep better records; it would enable you to publish policies, automatically schedule equipment maintenance, and store maintenance records. You will of course need to get some computer training for your staff.

Do not select more than two goals. Your team will make visible progress by focusing on a limited number of goals. After selecting the goals you wish to pursue at this time, be sure all the other goals are written down. This list of potential goals will be returned to after you complete the selected goals.

### Sample Strategic Plan

**Goal:** Eliminate losses that stem from the use of illegal performance enhancement drugs (health side effects, legal suspensions, aggressive behavior, and injuries).

**Objective:** Eliminate the use of illegal performance enhancement drugs by our team by next year.

**Strategy 1:** Use our teaching skills to inform the athletes of the hazards.

- **Action 1:** Inform athletes of penalties of use and of any testing programs by Feb. 1.
- **Action 2:** Assistant coaches are to assemble relevant teaching materials by Feb. 1.
- **Action 3:** Hold a safety meeting to select and organize the materials by Feb. 15.
- **Action 4:** Have interactive teaching sessions with team by March 15.
- **Action 5:** Give each team member a copy of NSCA Steroid Position Statement Paper by April 15.

**Strategy 2:** Professionally observe the athletes and area for signs of drug use.

- **Action 1:** Staff is to learn about symptoms of drug use by March 1.
- **Action 2:** Symptoms or signs of use are to be discussed in the next safety meeting.

**Strategy 3:** Professionally respond to any signs of drug use.

- **Action 1:** With the help of your administration and the team physician, draft a written policy of how to respond to any signs of use by April 1.
- **Action 2:** Share your response plan with the athletes by April 15.
- **Action 3:** When the situation does occur, follow through with the written plan.

**Strategy 4:** Be vigilant; during the summer, create additional plans for the returning athletes.
you will deploy your resources to accomplish the objectives. Action plans are the steps to implementing the strategy. They assign specific tasks and deadlines.

Do not get too bogged down in the definitions of objectives, strategies, and action plans. Just keep cascading a goal down until you get it divided into some doable pieces and make assignments on them. The result will be a group of statements called a Strategic Plan. Refer to the Sample Strategic Plan in this article; it involves the idea of using your teaching strengths to fight the problem of the local availability of strength drugs.

The goal in the sample plan requires enough work that it would probably be the only goal attempted at this time. What we are trying to achieve is what the business world calls continuous improvement. Don’t overwhelm yourself and your team by having too many things to do. You have to keep up with your normal responsibilities, and then when you have a few minutes of extra time you know exactly where to spend them.

In addition to working on the goal, your increased focus on safety may reveal several other small hazards that need to be addressed. The combined efforts of eliminating the hazards and completing your goals will ensure that you keep making regular progress.

■ “Easy Hits” Meeting

Review the list of “easy hit” items identified at the goal setting meeting. These are items that could significantly improve your safety program with minimal effort. Assign these to your staff and give them the time, materials, and information they will need to accomplish them. Do not try to accomplish everything at once. Remember you are working toward continuous improvement.

■ Athlete Meeting

Now that you have created your strategic plan, hold a brief meeting after a workout session with the athletes and share with them the basic elements of your strategic plan. Tell them about the areas you will be focusing on and encourage them to report any hazards they see in the weight room or surrounding area to you or your staff.

■ Regular Safety Team Meetings

Begin holding a short 15-min meeting in your office twice a month with your assistants, perhaps in conjunction with some other meeting you usually have with them. These meetings should be held at a standing time such as 8 a.m. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays so everyone can clear their schedule for them.

In preparation for the first meeting, take the large Combined Loss Chart and circle which areas your goals are in. This is the chart that results from arranging Loss Charts 1–7 on poster board as described in the SWOP Analysis Preparation in Part 5 (Vol. 17 no. 2, p. 34). Post the chart in your office and display it at the staff meetings. It will remind you and your staff of ex-

### Strategic Planning Activity (A) and Meeting (M) Summary

| A1. | Select planning team members and notify them. |
| A2. | Assemble and distribute copies of the planning articles to the safety team. |
| M1 | Hold a Mission Statement development meeting. |
| A3. | Make a Combined Loss Chart from the 7 previously published charts. |
| A4. | Select the two athletes to participate in the SWOP analysis and invite them to attend. |
| M2 | Hold the first SWOP Analysis meeting, identify the items. |
| A5. | Prepare list of SWOP items and distribute to staff. |
| A6. | Prepare the SWOP voting ballots. |
| M3 | Hold the Second SWOP Analysis meeting, vote on the items. |
| A7. | Process the SWOP analysis data, make the SWOP Graph. |
| M4 | Hold the Identifying-and-Selecting-Goals meeting. |
| M5 | Hold the Strategic Plan Writing meeting. |
| M6 | Hold the “Easy Hit” meeting, review and assign the easy hit items listed during the goals meeting. |
| M7 | Hold the Athlete meeting, share major elements of the strategic plan with the athletes. |
| M8 | Hold regular Safety Team meetings twice a month as short follow-up meetings with your staff. |

Note. Meetings M1, M2, and M4 may require 2 or more hours and are best held off-site with some refreshments. They are difficult meetings. M3, M5, and M6 should only take an hour (with some outside preparation and follow up) and will be less draining. M7 is a 5-min gathering of the athletes after a workout. The ongoing M8 meetings normally take 15 min (with additional outside preparation and carry through).
actly where to put your extra efforts. You must of course remain vigilant in all areas. The chart is simply pointing out the areas that need a little extra attention. At these meetings, review progress on the goals and make new assignments as needed. Assign one of your assistants the responsibility of keeping minutes of these meetings.

Use the Combined Loss Chart as a tool when considering room design, equipment selection, administrative issues, professional development opportunities, fitness activities, and other issues. It will help you identify the important criteria and show you how each item fits into the whole scheme of things.

- **Future Planning**

After reaching your goals, schedule an extended regular safety meeting to determine whether there are any additional special opportunities for loss reduction at this time. If the safety team elects to pursue one of the special opportunities or selects additional items to work on from the list of goals developed in the goal selection meeting, develop action plans for them and repeat the process.

Repeat the SWOP process and develop a new list of potential goals every other year. It can also be reapplied if you accept a position at another school or if additional programs are placed under your direction. It will be much easier the second time around. Record your progress. You will be amazed at how much difference you can make by focusing on the most important items. A list of the various activities and meetings required for developing a strategic plan for loss reduction in your facility is included in this article.

This installment ends the series. My parting advice is, don’t try to accomplish everything at once. You and your staff still have your normal responsibilities to take care of, so don’t create a grueling schedule of work for yourselves. The trick is to be doing the right things with the few spare minutes that you do have. This planning method will help you identify the things to do.

Be vigilant, and good luck. If you are trying to apply this system and are having difficulties, or if you would like to share your progress with others, let us hear from you: Gary Polson. Strength Tech, Inc., P.O. Box 1381, Stillwater, OK 74076 (or call 800/443-6543). ▲

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