

New Castle County Board of REALTORS® 2009 Strategic Plan

January 13, 2009

Introduction & Summary of Work

The New Castle County Board of REALTORS® has spent the summer and fall of 2008 conducting a strategic plan. To assist with this initiative, the NCCBOR enlisted the assistance of Green Line Consulting, a planning and economic development firm located in Wilmington, Delaware. The Green Line team, which included participation by AWRitchie Associates, engaged in a comprehensive process, incorporating material review, a membership survey, individual interviews with representatives of key stakeholder organizations from the public and private sector, and member focus groups, as well as ongoing consultation with senior leadership from the Board of Directors¹ and executive staff.

The result is a document intended to serve the Board over the next 3-5 years, creating a framework within which decisions are made and making specific strategic recommendations. As discussed below, operationalizing the strategic plan will be the responsibility of the NCCBOR Board of Directors and senior staff. This document will serve to set the direction and provide a context within which these decisions can be made.

Relationship of Mission-Values-Vision

The following framework describes the elements of a strategic plan and their relationship to one another. We use this framework to develop a common language for, and a shared mental model of, NCCBOR's strategic plan. Each layer builds upon the one above. Values guide the pursuit of the Mission; Vision describes the desired future created by pursuing the Mission guided by the values; Strategy describes how the Vision will be accomplished.



Adapted from "Strategy Maps", Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton
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¹ For purposes of this document, the term "Board" refers to the New Castle County Board of REALTORS® as a whole. When referring to the NCCBOR's governing body specifically, the term "Board of Directors" is used. Also, references to "membership" refer to both REALTOR® and affiliate members of the organization.

Mission

A mission identifies the organization's reason for being, its purpose. It identifies the needs it meets and the difference it tries to make. It also frequently describes the organization's activities and programs, its products and services and the principal populations it targets.

NCCBOR's Mission

The New Castle County Board of REALTORS® (NCCBOR) purpose is to provide resources to all segments of its membership that help them succeed and prosper in a sustainable economic climate. NCCBOR:

- ❖ Provides services, tools, education, and programs to improve members' ability to serve their clients with the highest levels of professionalism, integrity, and expertise.
- ❖ Works collaboratively to ensure its members are able to conduct business within a framework of fair and reasonable laws and government regulations.
- ❖ Creates understanding among the residents of New Castle County as to the important benefits of working with a REALTOR®.
- ❖ Creates opportunities to develop positive, productive relationships among the members.

Values

Values are sets of beliefs the organization's members hold in common and put into practice. They often include statements about how the organization will value and interact with clients, supporters, the community, and each other. Values are more than words – they guide the organization in how it truly acts when performing its work.

NCCBOR's Values

As it pursues its mission, the New Castle County Board of REALTORS® is guided by these values:

- ❖ Protecting property rights and promoting ownership of real property contributes to a strong society and robust economy.
- ❖ Professional credibility is essential to our success and depends on our integrity, consistency, and commitment to excellence and continuous development.
- ❖ Active participation increases membership value by providing members opportunities to develop professionally and personally and to contribute to NCCBOR's success.
- ❖ Proactively pursuing and maintaining positive, productive relationships is a key contributor to business success for both members and the organization as a whole.
- ❖ We respect the diversity that exists in our community and believe we should reflect that in our membership and leadership. We also believe the diversity of the region's population and economy is a dynamic that NCCBOR should seek to uphold and strengthen.

Vision

Vision provides a compelling, easy to understand description of how the NCCBOR would like its world to be different in the next 3-5 years and the role NCCBOR intends to play in effecting that change.

NCCBOR's Vision

NCCBOR will be a key force in educating its members, creating high standards of professional excellence, interpreting the marketplace to membership and stakeholders, and promoting REALTORS® as an essential component of New Castle County's economy. Building on its core strengths, NCCBOR will, in the next five years, be:

- ❖ A key enabler of our membership's ability to prosper in an increasingly complex marketplace through the use of technological innovation.
- ❖ An active aggregator, interpreter, and synthesizer of information, considering a broad array of perspectives in our response to economic, political, and social factors affecting real estate in New Castle County.
- ❖ A catalyst and facilitator, engaging our individual, corporate, and affiliate members, both in soliciting opinions and guidance as well as providing information to increase their professional success.
- ❖ A proactive participant in regular dialogue with external stakeholders, including public agencies, business associations, and related organizations, collaborating with them on initiatives when doing so is in the interest of our membership.

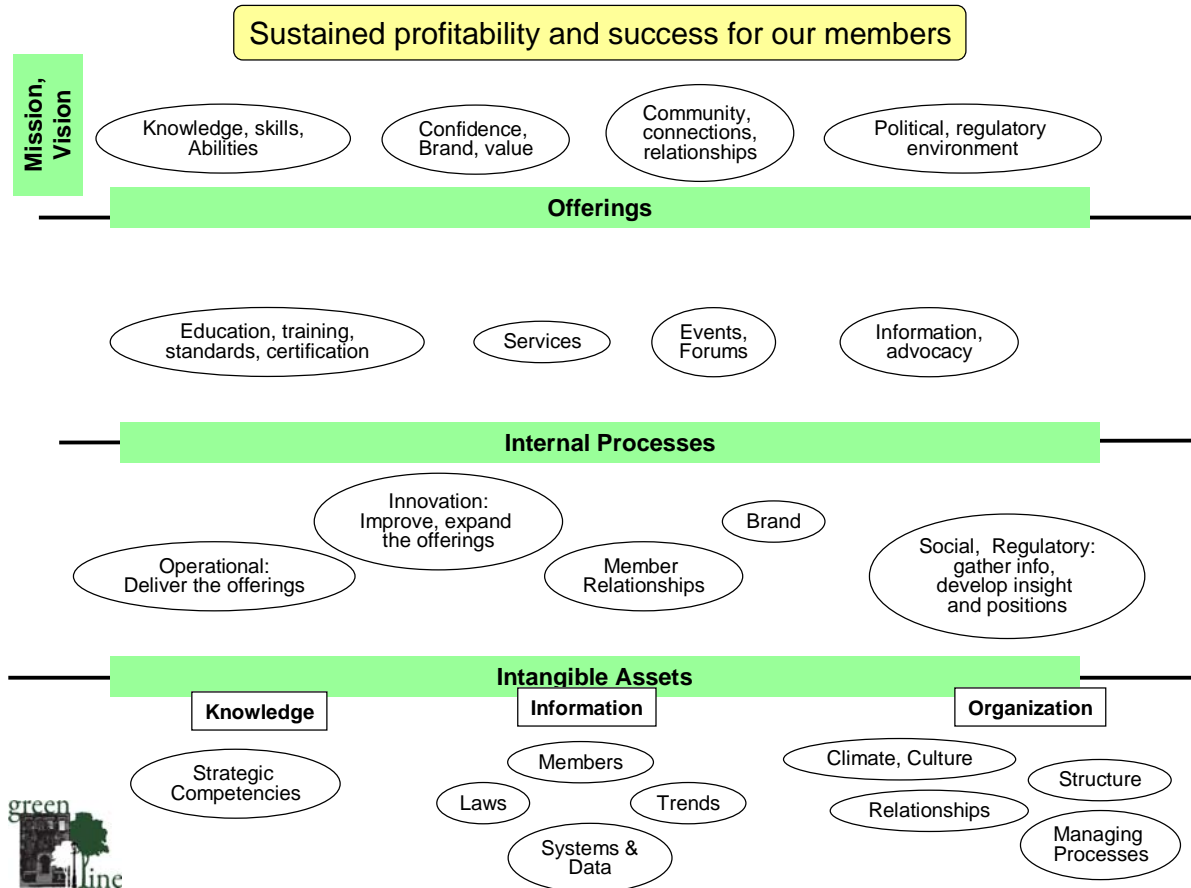
Strategy

Strategy is how an organization intends to create sustained value for its stakeholders. It describes a coherent set of objectives, actions and programs that explain how it will pursue its mission, guided by its values, and achieve its vision.

Strategy Map

A Strategy Map is a graphical representation of the strategy. It is composed of four layers or perspectives. Objectives in each of these layers are connected in a cause and effect relationship. Objectives in the Mission/Value and Offering layers can only be accomplished if they are supported by objectives in the Internal Process and Intangible Asset layers. Correspondingly, objectives at the lower layers need to have a reason for being – they need to support some higher layer objective. Below is the Strategy Map for NCCBOR followed by a short explanation for each perspective.

NCCBOR Strategy Map



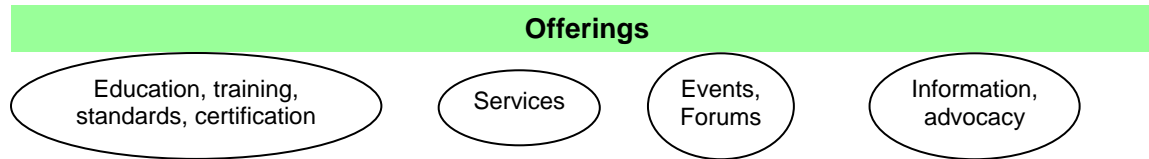
Mission/Vision Perspective

At the top is the Mission/Vision perspective. This captures the organization’s mission, its reason for being, and also identifies those key elements the organization believes most effect successful delivery of the mission.

For NCCBOR, the mission is fundamentally about enabling sustained profitability and success of its membership. To deliver on its mission, NCCBOR:

- ❖ Works to ensure a high level of knowledge, skills and abilities in the membership. This includes the skills and knowledge necessary for high levels of professional excellence and as well as the principles and behaviors that contribute to high levels of ethical conduct.
- ❖ Helps shape the reputation, or brand, the public associates with the profession and the membership. For NCCBOR the key elements of the brand are expertise, professionalism and ethical conduct. Together, these reinforce the benefits of working with a REALTOR®.
- ❖ Creates opportunities for developing positive and productive relationships, both for the membership as well as for NCCBOR as an organization.
- ❖ Helps shape the political and regulatory environment, ensuring members are able to conduct business within a framework of fair and reasonable laws and government regulations.

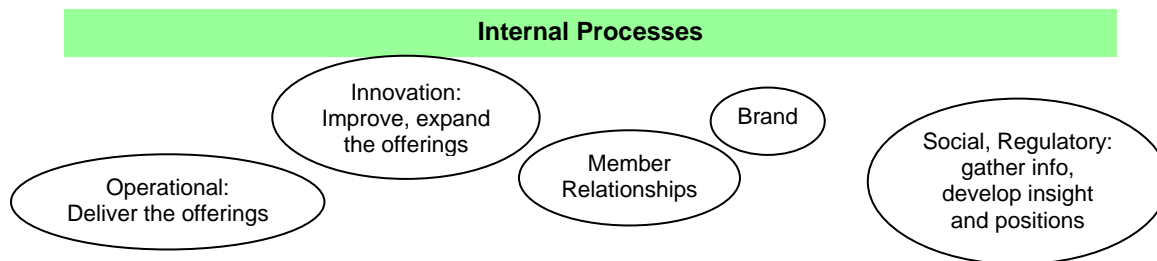
Offering Perspective



This perspective describes the specific products and services NCCBOR provides in support of its mission. For NCCBOR, these are:

- ❖ The education and training delivered via classes and other means and the standards of knowledge and ethics and certification vs. those standards.
- ❖ Direct services to the membership, e.g., lock box service and dispute resolution.
- ❖ The various events and forums NCCBOR sponsors or conducts. These can be social or informational and may be “face-to-face” or virtual.
- ❖ The aggregation, synthesis, and “sense making” performed on information about the highly dynamic and complex set of events that influence the real estate environment.

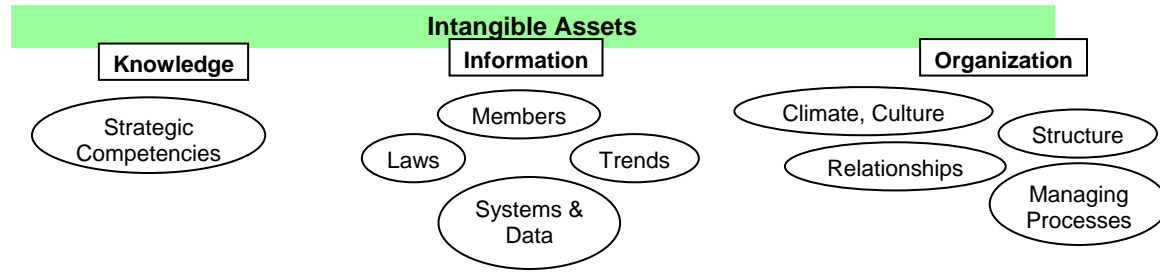
Internal Processes



The Internal Process perspective describes how the work necessary to deliver and adapt the offerings gets done. For the NCCBOR, the key internal processes are:

- ❖ The basic operational processes, e.g., the scheduling of classes or Food 4 Thought sessions, operation of the lock box service.
- ❖ The innovation processes, i.e., the processes used to expand and adapt the offerings to adapt to changing circumstances or take advantage of new opportunities. A simple example might entail adding a new class to the curriculum; a more complicated example might be developing a whole new educational focus area.
- ❖ Member Relations processes are the processes used to interact with and support the membership.
- ❖ Brand processes are those that monitor the brand and take action to keep it on target.
- ❖ The Social and Regulatory processes keep tabs on developments in politics, the community, the economic environment, and the real estate market. It synthesizes all this information and tries to make sense of it for the membership. When appropriate, it develops organizational positions on issues of importance to the membership.

Intangible Assets



The Intangible Assets perspective describes those key knowledge, information, and organizational assets on which NCCBOR's ability to do its work, deliver its offerings, and fulfill its mission rests. For NCCBOR, these are:

- ❖ The key competencies – the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the NCCBOR leadership and staff. This includes those directly associated with or employed by NCCBOR as well as its extended staff – the external resources it uses. e.g., consultants, teachers, etc.
- ❖ Information assets – what NCCBOR knows about its members, laws effecting real estate, market and other trends and, equally important, the systems it has for accessing that knowledge and making it available to those who need it.
- ❖ Organizational Assets include things like the reputation and relationships NCCBOR has with other organizations, the organizational structure it uses, and the managing processes the Board uses to conduct its business.

Strategic Objectives

Based on the material review, survey, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, leadership consultation, and understanding of best practices, twelve strategic objectives have been identified. These have been grouped into three basic categories: Education and Technology, Communication and Marketing, and Outreach and Advocacy. It should be noted that there are occasions where items share common characteristics with those in other categories. This is to be expected in a strategic plan resulting from the integrated framework used in this planning process. It is fully intended that these objectives will indeed relate to one another, as well as being grounded in the NCCBOR's Mission, Vision, and Values in order to point the direction to ways in which they can be operationalized. It should be noted that the objectives are not prioritized; they are listed below:

Education and Technology

1. Supporting the need to provide our membership with advanced technology skills to remain competitive in the regional economy, the NCCBOR will institute and staff a new technology center. This service will build on a presumed basic level of technological competence and focus on providing training on new hardware, software, and strategies to conduct business using technological innovation.
2. In recognition that understanding emerging economic trends, as well as the perspectives that inform them, is essential to anticipating and benefiting from changing dynamics in the marketplace,

the NCCBOR will modify existing mechanisms and where appropriate create new forums to present a diverse array of opinions affecting the real estate market in New Castle County. These may include “traditional” issues such as housing policies, regulations, and market dynamics (demographic and employment trends, for example) as well as related issues such as education, transportation, or public safety. These forums will also be used as an input into the development of the NCCBOR’s advocacy strategy.

3. In order to increase member’s knowledge of mechanisms that support property ownership, the NCCBOR will provide information on financial products/incentives offered by public & private sectors as part of its educational offerings. These will include public agency incentives and programs as well as financial products provided by the private sector as appropriate.

4. To ensure a consistent standard of excellence regardless of level of activity, the NCCBOR, through its Education Committee, and in conjunction with executive staff and the Board of Directors, will work with existing brokers and membership to institute a continuing education program targeted toward the needs of dual-career members.

Communication and Marketing

1. The ability to effectively communicate with REALTOR® and affiliate members is a priority of the strategic plan. In response, the NCCBOR will take better advantage of existing opportunities provided by the Board’s ongoing work program (education, networking, training, etc.) to disseminate information and solicit input from the membership. Examples may include informing members of Board initiatives, upcoming events, and policies, as well as soliciting input on potential advocacy actions or polling members on existing market dynamics.

2. In an effort to proactively engage the major brokerages as well as to increase opportunities to interact directly with membership, NCCBOR will design and implement a program to regularly visit its corporate members throughout the year.

3. Recognizing the need to balanced the call for increased engagement in advocacy issues with member needs and priorities, the Public Policy Committee, working in conjunction with executive staff and the Board of Directors will develop a mechanism for identifying issues affecting the real estate market in New Castle County. It will do so by soliciting input from membership and external stakeholders, and determining the extent to which the NCCBOR will participate in advocacy actions. This strategic objective will be coordinated with other education, communications, and advocacy actions.

Outreach and Advocacy

1. Proactive relationships with public agencies, private sector associations, and other stakeholders are an essential element of effective outreach and advocacy. Through such efforts, the NCCBOR can identify and pursue opportunities for strengthening the real estate market, as well as coordinate advocacy strategies on behalf of its members. The NCCBOR Executive Vice President will meet regularly with key stakeholders to be determined in conjunction with the Board of Directors. These meetings will be designed to exchange information and identify ways in which the NCCBOR and stakeholder organizations can more effectively work together. Any recommended actions will be developed by the EVP in coordination with the Board of Directors.

2. Effective advocacy requires that the positions of the NCCBOR be represented in appropriate public policy forums. These may include regularly scheduled public meetings, occasional public initiatives, and *ad hoc* forums, as well as individual meetings with public officials. The NCCBOR will allocate sufficient resources for representation at such meetings and events through paid staff, volunteer member representatives, and/or paid contractors. The specific work program will be developed by the Executive Vice President in consultation with the Board of Directors and will be coordinated with other strategic objectives contained in the strategic plan.

3. NCCBOR recognizes the importance of educating the general public on the value of using REALTORS® for property transactions, as well as the positive contribution of the real estate industry to the larger community. In addition, the NCCBOR believes that informed clients benefit themselves as well as create a more profitable environment for the REALTORS® with whom they are working. In response, the NCCBOR will identify mass communication tools to provide such outreach. Possible mechanisms could include a marketing campaign, Internet-based tools, or broadcast media opportunities. The product of this process will be the Executive Vice President and Board of Directors directing appropriate and sufficient resources to pursue the resulting public relations strategy.

4. As a way of expressing its support for the community, and in recognition of the many activities currently pursued by corporate brokerages and individual REALTORS®, the NCCBOR commits to developing an annual community program that will provide meaningful, substantive benefit to the recipients. This strategic objective is envisioned as a “hands on” participatory event. In pursuing this objective, the NCCBOR will actively consider the role of the Delaware Housing Opportunity Fund.

5. In governing the NCCBOR, it is important that there be a high value placed on continuity regarding its policies and initiatives, particularly given the one-year term for Board President. In addition, some policies and initiatives may take longer than one year to develop or complete. NCCBOR’s Past President, President, President-Elect, and Vice President will continue to meet regularly to ensure that this continuity exists.

Operationalizing the Strategy - Moving from Strategy to Action

This strategic plan has identified:

1. A Mission for NCCBOR which describes the organization’s overarching goal and the products and services it produces to fulfill the Mission.
2. A set of Values which guide the organization’s behavior and decision making as it pursues its Mission.
3. A Vision which describes a future state for the organization’s membership and the contributions NCCBOR will make to create the future.
4. A Strategy consisting of a Strategy Map and a set of Strategic Objectives, arranged into a set of cause and effect relationships. These describe how the organization intends to create its future.

While this plan is the starting point, more analysis, followed by a set of initiatives which translate the strategy to action, are required.

The additional analysis involves a closer look at the current state of capabilities in the Internal Process and the Intangible Asset layers of the Strategy Map. What needs to change or improve in the organization's Internal Process in order to achieve the Strategic Objectives that have been identified? What Intangible Assets (Knowledge, Information, and Organization) need to be built or strengthened? Such an analysis will likely yield additional strategic objectives beyond those already identified. Once this is done, specific initiatives (projects with plans) need to be developed to accomplish all the identified objectives. These are typically arranged into a program so that interdependencies and sequencing can be identified. And finally, the resources, financial and other, necessary to accomplish the initiatives need to be identified and budgeted. While the strategic plan is a critical element of directing this process, the responsibility for operationalizing it is the responsibility of the Board of Directors and executive staff.

Once all this is done, the strategic Planning process should be institutionalized into the Board's normal managing process to provide oversight for strategy execution as well as periodic adaptation to changing circumstances.

Ideally, the Board Executive Committee will review the strategic plan's progress quarterly, focusing on associated expenses, human capital needs, time line for implementation, and socialization of the plan. These meetings may also provide the opportunity to consider any necessary modifications to the plan. As previously noted, this document is designed to serve as the guiding policy document for the NCCBOR for the next 3-5 years. It is therefore recommended that in late 2011 or early 2012 the Executive Committee consider an updated or new strategic plan for the subsequent 3-5 years.