

## What keeps strategic plans from being useful? Laura B. Roberts, Roberts Consulting

### *1. Too ambitious*

Many plans are doomed the day they are completed – there is so much to do, it's dispiriting. So organizations ignore them rather than be taunted by how much there is to do.

### *2. Too bland*

When plans simply call for doing more of the same, with few changes or challenges, they are of limited usefulness.

### *3. Too general*

Some plans are so general that they “allow” the organization (or individuals within the organization) to do anything. They haven't succeeded in articulating institution-wide priorities and aspirations or any measures or indicators of success.

### *4. Disconnected from reality*

If the planning wasn't done with strong participation by board, staff, supporters and the community, it can simply be the wrong plan. Or times may have changed since planning was completed. Just because it says “Five Year Plan” doesn't mean it can't be changed before five years pass!

### *5. Poorly communicated*

The plan might be just right, but it may not have been communicated in a compelling way to everyone necessary for success – board, staff, funders, audience, press, etc.

### *6. Weak leadership or commitment from leadership*

Plans which call for change need a strong advocate who feels some ownership for the plan and works to make it successful. If the leader doesn't embrace the plan, it won't happen. Similarly, if it's seen as “someone else's plan” – the former chair, president, or director – it will be ignored.