

Strategic Planning 2.0: Now is the Time to Drive Performance with a Targeted Refresh

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In a time of relentless industry disruption, whether from the One Big Beautiful Bill, market volatility, emerging opportunities, or leadership transitions, healthcare organizations are under pressure to pivot faster and more effectively. In response, you need to adopt a more agile, iterative approach to strategy development: a **Strategic Plan Refresh**. Leaders must determine whether to prioritize and recalibrate an existing strategy through a Strategic Plan Refresh or undertake a comprehensive new strategic plan. Each path serves a distinct purpose and should be selected based on organizational context, resource availability, and time.

Understanding the Difference

Unlike a traditional full-scale strategic plan rebuild, which resets the entire strategic foundation for a healthcare enterprise, a Strategic Plan Refresh represents a targeted and time-bound approach responsive to immediate priorities. It enables leaders to course-correct and accelerate progress by using a shorter planning cycle that realigns current strategies with C-suite imperatives and evolving market conditions. A Strategic Plan Refresh, often performed annually, should emphasize speed, focus, and active feedback loops to renew clarity across the organization and achieve focused results.

Choosing between these two approaches is not just a matter of scope; it reflects how much transformation an organization truly needs. A refresh enables faster, targeted decision-making and is ideal when the strategic foundation remains sound. A full strategic plan is necessary when that foundation must be reimagined.

Why Consider a Strategic Plan Refresh

A refresh is ideal when an organization faces:

- **Leadership changes:** Realignment of roles, responsibilities, and priorities among new C-suite members
- **Market disruption:** Shifts in regulation, competition, or reimbursement dynamics
- **Affiliation activity:** Post-merger integration or divestiture requiring recalibration
- **Execution gaps:** Strategic misalignment across operations or services, inadequate accountability, or eroding margins

Rather than build a strategy bottom-up, a Strategic Plan Refresh centers on C-suite priorities and quickly cascades them throughout the organization. This is especially powerful in rapidly changing markets and environments where responsiveness and speed matter most. BDC Advisors successfully supports Strategic Plan Refreshes that provide clarity and actionable focus without the resource burden of extensive strategic plan development. In a recent refresh for a \$2.6B regional health system, BDC Advisors identified targeted opportunities to drive an additional 3.1% EBIDA improvement and close a ~\$280M cash deficit within two years.

Organizational Considerations

A healthcare enterprise will need to carefully consider multiple factors that influence the appropriate strategic planning approach, such as:

- **Size and complexity** of the organization
- **Market dynamics** and competitive positioning
- **Access to internal capacity and resources**
- **Governance structures** and decision-making agility

While smaller organizations, or those with more centralized leadership, may favor a Strategic Plan Refresh, larger and more matrixed systems often require full strategic plan development to drive alignment and activation.

Alternative Approaches to Strategic Planning		
	Strategic Plan Refresh	Full Strategic Plan
Rationale	• C-suite change • Market disruption (e.g., regulatory, competitive, reimbursement) • Misalignment across business units, service lines • Lack of execution clarity or accountability • Margin erosion	• End of current strategic plan duration (typically every 3–5 years) • Major transformation required (e.g., digital, value-based care, risk-based models) • Organizational redefinition (e.g., academic–community integration) • Financial sustainability challenges requiring operational overhaul • Board mandate
Goals	• Update existing strategic plan • Recalibrate current direction to reflect updated priorities • Prioritize key initiatives	• Build a new vision and roadmap for the organization • Align enterprise-wide around strategic goals and resource deployment
Scope	• Focused set of strategic questions • Top-down design anchored in C-suite priorities • Refinement of key performance indicators (measures, metrics, time-bound targets) • Market or financial model updates • May include targeted stakeholder input, but not broad engagement	• End-to-end strategic framework: mission, vision, values, goals, plans, measures • Comprehensive internal SWOT and external market analysis • Prioritization of strategic pillars and long-range investments • Scenario planning and risk sensitivity analysis • Integrated business unit, workforce, IT and capital plans • Development of key performance indicators • Deep organizational engagement across verticals
Dependency	• Often done in parallel with other efforts (e.g., long-range financial plan, operational redesign, service line optimization) • May act as a bridge to a full strategic plan in the future • Leverages pre-existing data and analysis • Can be performed on accelerated timelines and at lower cost • Involves less organizational change management	• Often precedes or follows reorgs or major investments • Will require extensive internal engagement and change management • Need to align with external messaging (brand refresh, fundraising, partnership strategy) • Requires greater investment and time commitment
Participants	• C-suite • Physician leaders • Select Board members • Strategic advisor / small consulting team	• Multi-tiered leadership engagement: Board, C-suite, SVPs, clinical leaders, directors • Frontline physicians and staff • Broader support required for analytics, facilitation, and engagement • Strategic planning firm
Duration	• 2–4 months (depending on scope) • Typically involves monthly structured workshops	• 6–12 months • Includes diagnostics, visioning, strategy formulation, and activation planning • Often multi-phased (e.g., discovery - design alignment - launch)



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Refresh Your Strategic Plan Today!

A Strategic Plan Refresh is an intentional, more agile approach to strategy execution that sends a powerful signal to internal and external stakeholders. It offers organizational clarity on key issues, such as committing to integrated delivery models / risk-based care, prioritizing capital investments, driving growth and expansion, increasing accountability, and reaffirming a focus on strategic partnerships and network development, among others. A well-executed refresh demonstrates strategic awareness, a proactive posture, and agility without the burden of developing a comprehensive strategic plan. As such, some healthcare organizations conduct them annually. You likely already have a strategic plan, but is it delivering the results you need? If your organization needs to recalibrate priorities, build momentum, and/or navigate transitions, a Strategic Plan Refresh is the right approach for your strategic planning arsenal.

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If you would like to discuss innovative approaches to strategic planning and opportunities, please contact **Bob Dickinson, Managing Director, BDC Advisors**, at (415) 971-7327 or bob.dickinson@bdcadvisors.com.