



SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY REPORT^A

Prepared by Dottie Bris-Bois

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^A This report is built upon a template derived from Results Now for Nonprofits: Purpose, Strategy, Operations, and Governance (Light, 2011).

SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIC PLAN

What we *will* do next.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TimeLine Theatre Company (TimeLine) dreams of joining the ranks of other legendary Chicago theatres that started small and grew into prominent arts organizations.¹ An award-winning theatre with nearly two decades of artistic success, TimeLine has the potential to be more than a theatre that produces plays about history. It could make history. Yet, doing so requires that the organization plan strategically.

The Great Strategies Report begins by summarizing the results of the Sustainable Strategy process and outlines what TimeLine is doing *now*, what they *could* do next, and what they *should* do next. Subsequently, this report articulates the strategies and goals that will launch TimeLine forward, thus putting the aspirations of its vision within reach.

The Great Start Report analyzes TimeLine's stakeholders, purpose, values, mission, current strategies, lines of business (LOBs), and success measures. This process proved that TimeLine is a promising organization with a clear competitive advantage. As Chicago's only theatre devoted to productions inspired by history, TimeLine's ardent staff is committed to exceptional productions that engage and unite curious Chicago theatregoers. Yet passion cannot sustain a business and the report revealed that TimeLine's lack of human and capital resources impact its overall effectiveness.

Using six tools to ideate and four methods to evaluate, the Great Ideas Report generated three great ideas for TimeLine: a festival around a historical holiday; performing matinees for student audiences; and building a new home for TimeLine. These ideas resonated with TimeLine because they promote the organization's new vision to be a preeminent Chicago arts organization, and are likely to attract national attention. Furthermore, they are pragmatic enough to achieve and idealistic enough to incentivize action.

The final narrative, The Great Strategies Report, reviews TimeLine's purpose, mission, LOBs, capital structure, and vision in order to illuminate TimeLine's foundation and future direction. Next, the strategies identified in the Great Ideas Report were fleshed out and evaluated against the external and internal environment. Consequently, it was determined that student matinees and a new facility would propel TimeLine forward—thereby paving the way to making TimeLine a preeminent arts organization.

PURPOSE

The heartbeat of any living thing sustains its existence. An organization is no different and its purpose is the heart that informs all other elements. In brief, purpose is the first step to strategy building.² To discover the organization's purpose, TimeLine's organizational values were analyzed and the elements of its mission were defined.

Values

Values are virtually useless without associated behaviors to clarify them.³ Although TimeLine formally states its values in its 2011-2014 Strategic Plan, the organization has not defined the behaviors that will embody them. In the chart below, I have linked TimeLine's stated values with behaviors that I believe are reinforcing.

Values	Collaborative	Exceptional	Fiscally Responsible	Respectful	Intimate
Behaviors	We are... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative • Inspiring • Team players • Creative • Partners to the community 	We are... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demanding of excellence • Innovative • Results-driven • customer-centric 	We are... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective managers of resources • Informed decision-makers 	We are... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing of diversity <i>(people and ideas)</i> • Effective listeners • Transparent • Fair 	We are... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links that connect art and audiences • Personal with those we serve

Mission

TimeLine's current mission is broad and lacks focus. A Strong mission should address three key questions: **(1.) Who TimeLine serves; (2.) What difference TimeLine makes; and (3) How TimeLine is different than its rivals.**⁴ Answering these questions crafted a new simplified Mission Statement:

*TimeLine creates a better understanding
for curious Chicago theatregoers
and unites audiences through history*

The targeted mission provides a stronger rationale for TimeLine's existence. For more information on TimeLine's new mission, see the Great Start Report.

STRATEGY

For TimeLine to consider its future, it must understand where it currently stands.⁵ To establish TimeLine's starting point, I examined their current LOBs and capital structure.

Lines of Business

If purpose is the heartbeat of strategy, LOBs bring the organization to life.⁶ The chart below identifies TimeLine's LOBs, the corresponding customer, and the difference it makes for that constituent:

Lines of Business		
Lines of Business	Customer	Difference
Annual Season	Chicago theatregoers	Gain knowledge and self-awareness
FlexPass Subscription	Avid Chicago theatregoers	Never miss a show; Guarantee your experience
MyLine Program	Patrons under the age of 35	Experience great theatre at a great price
TimePieces Reading Series	Chicago theatregoers interested in new work	See it first
Sunday Scholar Program	Thoughtful theatregoers	See more; Go behind the scenes
Living History Program	Chicago Public School students	Confident and competent learners
Company Artists	Core family of artists	Perform more; Create TimeLine's future
Research (Dramaturgy)	All TimeLine constituents	Ensure authentic experiences
Resource Development		
Annual Fund	Individual donors	Feel generous; Make history
Special Events	Individual donors	Feel generous; Make history
Sponsorship	Corporate donors	Access potential customers
Foundation Support	Foundations	Fulfill mission

Success Measures

Success Measures allow TimeLine to track its financial health and the number of clients served by LOBs. This information is found in the organization's most recent 990s, its annual report, and as described by staff leadership.

The chart below shows that TimeLine outspent its revenue in 2013. Even so, the total margin was less than 1%. Furthermore, TimeLine's assets exceed its liabilities and its working capital indicates that TimeLine could sustain its current spending for a short period. Also tracked in the chart are the LOBs and the number of clients each line served in 2013. For a more detailed analysis of TimeLine's success measures, please see the Great Start Report.

Mission Success Measures (\$ in thousands)	FYE 2011	FYE 2012	FYE 2013
Profit & Loss: Contributed Revenue \$	490	513	512
Non-contributed Revenue \$	657	835	849
Total Revenue \$	1,148	1,348	1,361
Total Expenses \$	1,055	1,270	1,372
Revenue less Expenses \$	93	78	(11)
Balance Sheet: Assets \$	911	1,065	1,053
Liabilities \$	346	421	420
Net Assets \$	566	644	633
Capital Structure: Total Margin	0.08	0.06	(0.01)
Current Ratio	2.1	2.1	2.1
Working Capital	391	482	480
Operating Reserves	335	395	380
Lines of Business: TimeLine Total Clients #			59,211
Annual Season of 4 Plays: Total Clients #			19,000
Flex-Pass Subscribers: Total Clients #			5,000
MyLine: Total Clients #			6,500
TimePieces Reading Series: Total Clients #			800
Living History Program: Total Clients #			750
Sunday Scholar Program: Total Clients #			400
Company Artists: Total Clients #			40
Research (Dramaturgy): Total Clients #			25,600
Annual Fund: Total Clients #			800
Special Events: Total Clients #			300
Corporate Sponsorship: Total Clients #			4
Foundations: Total Clients #			17
Government: Total Clients #			1

A

^A **Total Margin:** "This is the bottom line . . . the one [measure] that tough, no-nonsense managers of all stripes supposedly focus on single-mindedly"(McLaughlin, 2009, p. 83). Formula = Revenue minus Expenses [line 19] divided by Revenue [line 12]

Current Ratio: "The most widely recognized measure of liquidity . . . the ratio should be at least 1" (McLaughlin, 2009, p. 75). Formula = Current Assets (lines 1-9) divided by Current Liabilities (lines 17 to 19)

Working Capital: "Determines how long a charity could sustain its level of spending using its net available assets, or working capital, as reported on its most recently filed Form 990" ("Glossary," 2010). Formula = Unrestricted plus Temporarily Restricted Net Assets

Operating Reserves: A more conservative view of working capital because you use unrestricted net assets and exclude land, building, and equipment, and temporarily restricted assets (Blackwood & Pollak, 2009, p. 9). Formula = Unrestricted Net Assets minus land, building, and equipment plus mortgages and notes

VISION

Statement

To paint a picture of the *best* future, leaders must consider what is achievable based on what holds the organization back and what takes it forward.⁷ Brainstorming around these issues identified that TimeLine aspires to be:

A preeminent Chicago arts organization
and nationally recognized leader

This sentiment should become a “guidepost showing the way”⁸ and direct TimeLine’s current and future efforts. For more information on the brainstorming process and the construction of the vision statement, please refer to the Great Ideas Report.

Strategies

Current Strategies

	Better Space for Staff	Insightful Productions	Sustainable Growth
People	Employees	Educated Chicago theatregoers	All stakeholders
Product	Boost morale by creating a better workplace	Increase knowledge through deep cultural experiences	Strengthening all facets of the organization
Place	Onsite at TimeLine	At our theatre	At our facility and around the city
Price	N/A	Competition based	N/A
Proposition	Supporting productivity	Deliver entertaining ways to revisit history	Maintain TimeLine’s place among great Chicago theatres
Plan	Underway	Underway	Underway

New Strategies

	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
People	Families and culture-seekers	Students	Funders (Individuals, corporations, and foundations)
Product	Access to culture by taking performances outdoors	Amplifying teacher lesson plans through live storytelling	Making history through a worthwhile investment
Place	At a city park on July 4 th weekend	At our theatre during school hours	On Chicago’s north side
Price	Economic value	Competition based	Economic value
Proposition	Low-cost and highly accessible	Uniquely aligning with CPS history curriculum	A space worthy of TimeLine’s artistry

	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Chicago Park District and Department of Cultural Affairs (By 1/1/2019) • Conduct site visits to determine location (By 4/1/2019) • Establish creative team to curate productions, events, and programming (By 3/1/2020) • Create outreach team to build new family audience (By 3/1/2021) • Publicize through paid and free media outlets (By 4/1/2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a corporate sponsorship and foundation strategy (By 6/1/2015) • Formalize group sales practices (By 9/1/2015) • Create marketing materials for teacher mailings and eblasts (By 1/15/2016) • Build a larger network of CPS teachers and referrals (By 4/1/2016) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a consultant to ensure success (By 6/1/2015) • Develop major gift, corporate, foundation, and planned giving strategy (By 8/1/2015) • Develop communication plans and marketing materials (By 11/1/2015) • Celebrate donors and keep stakeholders updated on progress (At least twice per year during campaign life - approx. 3 years)

REPORTS

GREAT START REPORT

What *are* we doing now?

Get Ready

Imagine if no one ever told you about the people, places, and events that have shaped who you are. Without history we lose the one thing we all share: the circumstances that have led to this very moment in time. TimeLine Theatre Company (TimeLine) dramatically brings history to life on stage—but to flourish—the organization’s business practices must be as exceptional as the art it produces.

First and foremost, strategy building should establish a competitive advantage.⁹ To do so, Michael E. Porter suggests that organizations establish a unique position, tailor activities to strategy, choose what *not* to do, and find fit across activities.¹⁰ According to Henry Mintzberg, Bruce Ahlstrand, and Joseph Lampel, competitive advantage is gained when an organization decides how to plan its course of action, position its products, establish a pattern (or not), choose a perspective, and ploy to leverage power.¹¹

The Great Start Report synthesizes elements that Porter, Mintzberg, and many other strategic planners endorse to ensure that proper planning is results-driven.¹² In doing so, TimeLine can evaluate its stakeholders, purpose, values, mission, current strategy, lines of business, and success measures. Consequently, TimeLine can pinpoint what the organization is doing now in order to consider what it could and should do next.

Plan to Plan

In order for the Great Start Report (and additional planning reports) to be successful, Michael Allison and Judy Kaye list numerous conditions ideal for effective planning. Among these are establishing that no high-impact decision is already underway, that resources are available to implement a new strategy, and that the right mix of participants are involved. Most importantly, Allison and Kaye insist that commitment from top leadership and the willingness for them to evaluate the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is essential.¹³ Fitting the criteria, TimeLine’s staff is dedicated to the process and eager to share data and insights.

Stakeholder Analysis

TimeLine must consider internal and external stakeholders as part of the strategic process. This encourages commitment and interest; objective positions; foundations for future work; and open dialogue.¹⁴ Once established, strategic planners should identify the goals and power of each group.¹⁵ TimeLine’s stakeholders are summarized below:

Stakeholder	Principal Goals	Interest	Power
Theatre Patrons: 25,000 in the Chicago metropolitan area	Experience excellent and enlightening theatre	Mid	High
Staff: 13 nonprofit employees	Valuable work experience; Financial compensation	Mid	High
Company Artists: 40 actors, artisans, and directors	Enhanced artistic experience and stake in the organization	Mid	Low
Funders: foundation, corporate, government and individual donors	Return on investment	High	High
Board: 21 Chicago-area members	Ensure proper governing of the organization	Mid	High
CPS Students: 500	Become better students using drama-based strategies	Mid	Low
Partners: space rental	Generate a portion of revenue from TimeLine's audience	Low	Low

TimeLine's internal stakeholders are staff, company artists, and board members. Externally, patrons, students, funders, and rental partners have a stake in the organization. Funders have the highest power since TimeLine has not built an endowment and therefore relies heavily on current and future aid to safeguard its efforts.

Purpose

The heartbeat of any living thing sustains its existence. An organization is no different and the purpose is the heart that informs all other elements. In brief, purpose is the first step to strategy building.¹⁶ To discover the organization's purpose, I have analyzed the organization's values in combination with the elements that define its mission.

Values

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Mission

Before TimeLine can consider the future, it must understand why its service matters.¹⁸ This vital step is the bedrock of strategy building and ensures sound decision-making in regard to activities, governance, and management structure. The mission should address three key questions: **(1.) Who it serves; (2.) What difference it makes; and (3) How it is different than its rivals.**¹⁹ TimeLine's current mission is broad and lacks focus. However, answering 'who, what, and how' will provide better rationale for TimeLine's existence, resulting in a more targeted mission.

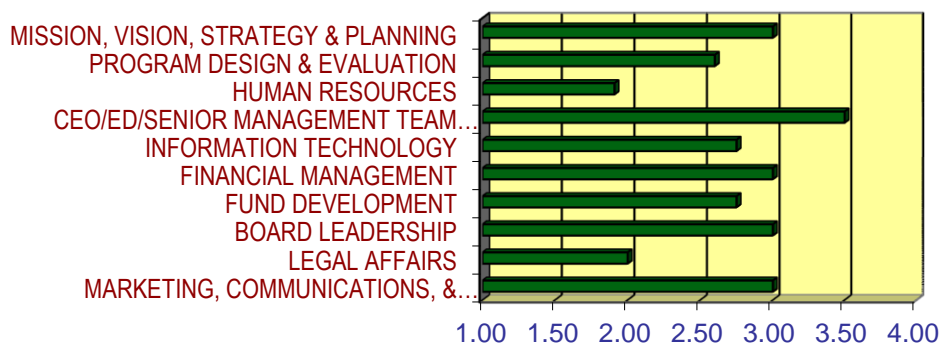
Who? TimeLine's current mission fails to identify any customer. Although all stakeholders served via programs or outreach are valuable, the mission should identify the *primary* customer.²⁰ As TimeLine is dedicated first and foremost to producing plays, its primary customer is its audience. Generally, this audience is well-versed in Chicago's theatre offerings and is interested in new work inspired by history or the plays in the American canon that have defined it. Simply put, **TimeLine's primary customers are curious Chicago theatregoers.**

What Difference? Answering what difference we make in the lives of our primary constituents insures that focus lies outside of the organization.²¹ Therefore, the impact for TimeLine's theatregoers should extend beyond the performance. TimeLine presents theatrical stories about events that have shaped our global community, while also giving individuals greater self-awareness of his or her place in time. More succinctly, **TimeLine audiences better understand themselves and their collective past.**

How Better? The third element of mission is to identify what edge TimeLine has over competitors.²² To establish TimeLine's unique and valuable position, I first used the SVP Capacity Assessment Tool to track the organization's internal strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, I used the 'Four Questions' method prescribed by Michael Hitt, Duane Ireland, and Robert Hoskisson to list the organization's greatest resources, capabilities, core competencies, and competitive advantages.

SVP Capacity Assessment Tool²³

The SVP Capacity Assessment Tool measures 10 primary aspects of the organization. To ensure the accuracy of the assessment (summarized below), TimeLine's general manager and director of marketing and communications were consulted.



TimeLine's robust management team is the pillar that informs its other strengths. By building a strong culture, leadership has established its mission, vision, and strategic plan. The strong culture established by the theatre's management trickles down to the rest of the organization and guides all staff members in their daily activities. There is also a valiant effort by all employees to share TimeLine's mission and vision frequently with external stakeholders, such as funders and theatregoers.

The theatre's leadership also values financial management, striving to maintain resources and grow existing capital. Lara Goetsch, TimeLine's director of marketing and communications, works hand-in-hand with the organization's chief financial officers. Since joining the team in 2006, she has tripled annual earned income and increased subscriptions by 330%.²⁴ As the organization seeks to become a Chicago institution, Ms. Goetsch's current focus is getting local and national recognition for the organization, which will boost the SVP marketing rating even higher.

Although, TimeLine's management is inspiring, its lack of human capital and resources are weakening the organization. In regard to human capital, not only does TimeLine operate without an HR manager, but all staff members have similar backgrounds, resulting in a homogeneous work force.

Furthermore, without a surplus of resources, incentives to motivate employees are rare. Additionally, the SVP graph shows the lack in resources extends beyond human capital and impacts program evaluation, information technology, and legal affairs. Without fund development, TimeLine will lose any competitive edge. Moreover, improper resources may lead to staff 'burnout,' which may threaten TimeLine's strong culture.

Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool

In addition to the SVP tool, TimeLine also used the Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) to analyze the organization's operations and strategy. Using nine raters, the following is an overview of TimeLine's basic functionality:²⁵

OCAT Summary Results		Avg.	Level
1	Aspirations	3.0	Moderate
2	Strategy	2.7	Moderate
3	Leadership, Staff, and Volunteers	2.8	Moderate
4	Funding	2.6	Moderate
5	Values	3.6	High
6	Learning and Innovation	3.0	Moderate
7	Marketing and Communication	3.2	Moderate
8	Managing Processes	2.6	Moderate
9	Organization, Infrastructure, and Technology	2.1	Basic

The OCAT can also delve deeper to show the highest and lowest scores:

OCAT Summary Results		Avg.	High/Low
1	Aspirations	3.0	
2	Strategy	2.7	
2.2	Aligning theory of change	3.0	High
2.3	Logic model	2.0	Low
2.7	Specific goals aligned to mission and vision	2.0	Low
2.13	Use of strategic plan	3.0	High
3	Leadership, Staff, and Volunteers	2.8	
3.6	CEO external recognition	4.0	High
3.18	Board contribution to the organization	2.0	Low
3.25	Board operations	3.0	High
3.29	Diversity of staff skills and experience	2.0	Low
3.30	Staff quality	3.0	High
3.35	Pipeline of talent	1.0	Low
3.37	Incentive systems	2.0	Low
3.39	Talent management plan	1.0	Low
4	Funding	2.6	
4.1	Fundraising skills	3.0	High
4.2	Fundraising systems	2.0	Low
4.3	Strategic funder base	3.0	High
4.4	Sustainable funder base	3.0	High
4.6	Financial management systems	2.0	Low
5	Values	3.6	
5.5	Orientation toward external stakeholders	4.0	High
5.7	Organizational impact	4.0	High

OCAT Summary Results		Avg.	High/Low
6	Learning and Innovation	3.0	
6.4	Research skills: data gathering	3.0	High
6.6	Monitoring of landscape	3.0	High
6.12	Identify new program opportunities or adjustments	3.0	High
7	Marketing and Communication	3.2	
8	Managing Processes	2.6	
8.4	Regulatory compliance	2.0	Low
8.6	Financial controls	3.0	High
8.9	Insurance	2.0	Low
8.10	Backup systems	3.0	High
8.11	Disaster preparedness	3.0	High
9	Organization, Infrastructure, and Technology	2.1	
9.3	Cross-functional coordination	4.0	High
9.6	Information technology (IT)	2.0	Low
9.8	Effective use of social media	3.0	High

TimeLine’s aspirations and values; as well as its ability to learn and market itself are its highest indicators. Yet the organization’s strategic abilities, managing processes, and technology assets are quite weak—therefore, greatly inhibiting the strengths it possesses. For example, the organization has a vision statement in place that describes its aspirations, but doesn’t have a step-by-step strategy to achieve it. And just as was reported in the SVP analysis, TimeLine’s small staff lacks the resources to fully operate at a high level. An overworked staff (albeit passionate) paired with outdated technology, makes it difficult for TimeLine to operate efficiently. As a result, most tasks are accomplished, but with only a rudimentary process in place.

Four Questions

In order to magnify your strengths and mitigate your weaknesses, you must know what they are. To do so, Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson’s ask ‘Four Questions’ that reveal the organization’s greatest resources, capabilities, core competencies, and competitive advantages. Subsequently, organizations can evaluate assets and strengths in order to discover its unique and valuable position.²⁶

What Resources? In the heart of Lakeview East—amid restaurants, bars, and cafes—TimeLine sits at the corner of Broadway and Wellington. Easily accessible by foot, car, bike, or public transportation, the theatre attracts both neighborhood locals and Chicago theatregoers from around the city, making its location a key tangible asset. TimeLine’s employees are another strong tangible resource. More than administratively strong, most employees also serve the theatre in an artistic capacity in the form of directors, actors, dramaturges, season planners, producers, and teaching artists.

These multi-faceted employees are the lynchpin that has secured another resource—TimeLine’s reputation. As an award-winning theatre (50 Jeff Awards) and an incubator

for new work (nine world premieres and 18 Chicago premieres), TimeLine's reputation is an intangible resource able to attract new patrons.

What Capabilities? Even though TimeLine does not have a physical box office or recommended ticketing and donor tracking technology, the organization effectively manages events and customers. Furthermore, even with a small staff, the organization prioritizes customer service to ensure positive experiences and return visits.

What Core Competencies? To identify TimeLine's core competencies, it must test the activities that define the organization against how valuable, rare, costly to imitate, and non-substitutable they are. Considering its resources and capabilities, TimeLine's largest strength is its artistic staff that drives the organization's core activities: the plays it produces, its commitment to Chicago actors, its dedication to engage audiences, and the undertaking to bring drama-based strategies into the classroom.

What Competitive Advantages? Following is a qualitative case for the strength of each strategy:

	Competitive Advantage(s)			
	Exceptional Theatre Inspired By History	Works with Chicago Actors	Engages Audiences	Develops Art in Schools Programs
Valuable	Yes, unites audiences; increases self-awareness	Yes, champions Chicago talent	Yes, pre- and post-show activities spark dialogue	Yes, fosters learning
Rare	Yes, only theatre in Chicago devoted to this undertaking	No, many theatres only work with local artists	Somewhat, but immersive theatre is becoming more popular	No, many theatres offer art in classroom opportunities
Costly to Imitate	Somewhat, any theatre can produce plays about history	No, any theatre can use local artists	Yes, requires human and financial resources	No, most likely funding is available
Non-substitutable	Yes, the mission requires that the theatre only do plays inspired by history	Yes, company members become integrated within the organization and must be local	Yes, engagement efforts have become part of its reputation	Yes, interacting with the next generation is a stated goal in the strategic plan

We can now answer the third element of mission: how better? As evident in the chart above, the core competency that has passed the test and is therefore, the company's competitive advantage is being **Chicago's only theatre company devoted to producing exceptional productions inspired by our shared history.**

Mission Statement

After identifying TimeLine’s primary customer, the difference for that customer, and the competitive advantage, we can assemble the pieces to form a new mission.

Mission Statement		
Elements	Old Mission	New Mission
Who	Unclear	Curious Chicago theatregoers
What Difference	Provocative theatre and educational programs that engage, enlighten, and entertain	Who better understand themselves and their collective past
Competitive Advantage	Present stories inspired by history that connect with today’s social and political issues	Chicago’s only theatre company that unites curious theatregoers with exceptional productions inspired by our shared history
Simplified Mission		
Better Understanding For curious Chicago theatregoers United by history		

The new mission in the chart above is recommended as it clarifies who TimeLine serves and strengthens the customer difference and competitive advantage. For internal use, the simplified version is suggested, as it is so easy to remember.

Current Strategy

Current strategy isn’t about planning for the future; it’s about understanding where you are today.²⁷ To establish TimeLine’s starting point, I analyzed their Lines of Business (LOBs) and then reviewed the organization’s success measures.

Lines of Business

If purpose is the heartbeat of strategy, LOBs bring the organization to life.²⁸ Furthermore, each LOB must pass the customer difference test and should be viewed as “ends, not means.”²⁹ The chart below identifies TimeLine’s LOBs, the corresponding customer, and the difference it makes for the constituent.

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Lines of Business	Customer	Difference
Annual Season	Chicago theatregoers	Gain knowledge and self-awareness
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Sponsorship	Corporate donors	Access potential customers
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Success Measures

Success Measures allow TimeLine to track its financial well-being and the people served by LOBs. This information is found in the organization's most recent 990s, its annual report, and as described by staff leadership.

The chart below shows that TimeLine had more expenses in 2013 than total revenue. Despite this minimal debt, TimeLine has maintained its healthy ratio, working capital, and operating reserves. Also tracked in the chart are the lines of business and the number of clients each line serves. In addition to the hard data found in 990s, TimeLine's leadership confirms that all programs have seen growth, with subscriptions most rapidly growing from year-to-year.³⁰ As TimeLine continues to track success, I recommend that qualitative analysis (return patrons, resolved customer issues, etc.) also be tracked.

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Corporate Sponsorship: Total Clients #	4
Foundations: Total Clients #	17
Government: Total Clients #	1

A

Summary

Already thinking about tomorrow, TimeLine has established that it hopes to “continue the extraordinary legacy of Chicago theatre companies that started small, dreamed big and matured into prominent institutions.”³¹ As an award-winning theatre with nearly two decades of artistic success, TimeLine just might get there. In any case, it can now firmly establish where it is *today* by examining this report’s insight on stakeholders, purpose, values, mission, and current strategies.

^A **Total Margin:** "This is the bottom line . . . the one [measure] that tough, no-nonsense managers of all stripes supposedly focus on single-mindedly"(McLaughlin, 2009, p. 83). Formula = Revenue minus Expenses [line 19] divided by Revenue [line 12]

Current Ratio: "The most widely recognized measure of liquidity . . . the ratio should be at least 1" (McLaughlin, 2009, p. 75). Formula = Current Assets (lines 1-9) divided by Current Liabilities (lines 17 to 19)

Working Capital: "Determines how long a charity could sustain its level of spending using its net available assets, or working capital, as reported on its most recently filed Form 990" ("Glossary," 2010). Formula = Unrestricted plus Temporarily Restricted Net Assets

Operating Reserves: A more conservative view of working capital because you use unrestricted net assets and exclude land, building, and equipment, and temporarily restricted assets (Blackwood & Pollak, 2009, p. 9). Formula = Unrestricted Net Assets minus land, building, and equipment plus mortgages and notes

GREAT IDEAS REPORT

What could we do next?

Warren Bennis proclaims that the “single defining quality of leaders is the capacity to create and realize a vision.”³² Indeed, superior leaders are often synonymous with great visionaries, as in the case of Walt Disney and Winston Churchill. Further proving vision’s validity, research confirms that 88 percent of executives use vision to guide their firms.³³ Therefore, this report seeks to empower TimeLine Theatre Company (TimeLine) with a strategic process that enables the organization to articulate its vision. Like a compass, the vision will then inform TimeLine’s course of action.

Vision Statement

To paint a picture of the *best* future, leaders must consider what is achievable based on what holds the organization back and what propels it forward.³⁴ Brainstorming around these issues will identify TimeLine’s driving forces. Subsequently, a vision statement will generate, as well as several other ideas that might be advantageous strategies.³⁵

Ideate

The first step to determine TimeLine’s vision is ideation. Because this process is so vital, I used six different tools to develop a myriad of options that TimeLine can collect and prioritize: Customers, BOBs, Good Questions, Stop Fix, SWOT, and BAM.

Customers

Analysis

Nothing beats talking directly with customers to understand the people who determine your success.³⁶ However, the rise of social media has also given a voice to constituents. To understand customer preferences, I used Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Facebook.

Predominately, self-identified veteran theatregoers (TimeLine’s primary customer), echoed sentiments like, “not a bad seat in the house,”³⁷ “unbelievable theatre,”³⁸ and “best small theatre in Chicago.”³⁹ A standout post claimed that TimeLine “engages every brain cell and sends you away thinking.”⁴⁰

Possible Ideas

Even so, disappointed customers remarked about scarce parking, bad box office experiences, and trouble finding the theatre, thus giving TimeLine some ideas about what they can fix.

BOBs

Investigating the best of the best (BOBs) in your industry reveals your competitor's strengths and stimulates ideas for your own organization.⁴¹ There are numerous theatres TimeLine could have examined, but ultimately Goodman Theatre and Alley Theatre were chosen, as both organizations are financially excellent⁴² and committed to linking art and audiences.⁴³

Analysis

The following table compares TimeLine's Lines of Business (LOBs) with the BOBs:

Best of the Best		
TimeLine Theatre Company	Goodman Theatre (Chicago, Illinois)	Alley Theatre (Houston, Texas)
	Lines of Business	
Annual Season of 4 Plays	Annual Season of 8-9 Plays	Annual Season of 8-9 Plays
FlexPass Subscribers	Subscribers	Subscribers
MyLine	Student Subscriptions	SCENE
TimePieces Reading Series	New Stages Readings	ActOUT
Living History Program	General Theatre Studies	Young Playwright Exchange
Sunday Scholar Program	Context	Talkbacks
Company Artists	The Artistic Collective	Alley Acting Company
Research (Dramaturgy)	Goodman Creative Partners	Alley Conservatory
Annual Fund	Annual Fund	Annual Fund
Special Events	Special Events	Special Events
Sponsorship	Sponsorship	Sponsorship
Foundation Support	Foundation Support	Foundation Support
	Planned Giving	Planned Giving
	GeNarrations	Capital Giving
	Youth Arts Council	Student Matinees (At Alley and touring to schools)
	Young Critics	Young Performers Studio
	Commissions of New Work	Alley Play Makers (Camp)
	Playwrights Unit	Alley Slam Poets
	Latino Theatre Festival	Staging STEM
	Presenting successful work from other theatres (From U.S. and abroad)	360° Workshops and Residencies
	Access Performances	Access Performances
		Rentals
	Financials	
Revenue: 1,360,995	Revenue: 23,291,558	Revenue: 15,388,217
Expenses: 1,371,786	Expenses: 23,107,444	Expenses: 15,338,000
Net Revenue: (10,791)	Net Revenue: 184,114	Net Revenue: 49,417
Net Assets: 632,951	Net Assets: 38,715,519	Net Assets: 43,375,356

Best of the Best		
TimeLine Theatre Company	Goodman Theatre (Chicago, Illinois)	Alley Theatre (Houston, Texas)
Competitive Advantages		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicago’s only theatre devoted to work inspired by history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicago’s largest and oldest nonprofit theatre National and International recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texas’s largest nonprofit theatre Revenue generating education programs

Take Aways

Comparing TimeLine to its BOBs illuminated several additional LOBs, which TimeLine could replicate or revise to fit its needs. Imperatively, both BOBs have twice as many annual productions supplementing their earned income. Additionally, both BOBs have built security, as evident by their net assets. Granted, both BOBs are older and established, but TimeLine will safeguard its efforts by building an endowment.

Furthermore, the majority of Goodman and Alley’s LOBs are low-cost, low-staff initiatives like programs for patrons under 35 or community blogs. Each BOB also is dedicated to education initiatives. Finally, each BOB has one or two high-risk, high-reward programs like Goodman’s Latino Festival or Alley’s Conservatory—which inspired TimeLine to brainstorm big ideas that will reach new groups of people.

Good Questions

Another tool for TimeLine’s ideation is the Ansoff matrix,⁴⁴ which stimulates ideas by considering opportunities around the table’s four quadrants. Additionally, it’s helpful to think about the quadrants in the form of questions. Joseph Schumpeter suggests considering what your organization can create, improve, reach, tap, and establish.⁴⁵

Great Ideas from the Ansoff Matrix		
	Current products	New products
	Market Penetration	Product Development
Current Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase annual productions Expand education programs Apply for more funding/sponsorship Expand MyLine programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Festival around historical holidays Student matinees Digital study guides and playbills Resource center for further study
New Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a larger theatre in a new neighborhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with DePaul Screen films inspired by history Start a playwriting contest Build neighborhood partnerships Create student productions Start a theatre camp Sell vintage clothes from historical

When looking at the results of the Ansoff Matrix, it’s clear that the ideas generated in market penetration are low hanging-fruit. However, market development and product development are the “sweet spot” of our ideation.⁴⁶ This is because the ideas in this quadrant are much easier than diversification, but still allow TimeLine to branch out.

Focusing on the market and product development quadrants, we see a few high-risk, high-reward ideas (inspired by our BOBs). A festival around a historical holiday (e.g. Presidents’ Day; Veterans Day) or partnering with other causes (e.g. a historical show that looks at the AIDS epidemic that, in part, raises money for the AIDS Foundation) would likely gain local and national exposure.

Stop Fix

As discussed in the Great Start Report, choosing what *not* to do is essential to strategy.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is crucial to consider what to stop or fix. In building an ideal portfolio of LOBs, TimeLine should strive for attractive programs with a strong position. These robust programs should support mission-critical programs that are less attractive.⁴⁸ In the table below, the MacMillan Product Matrix⁴⁹ analyzes TimeLine’s current portfolio in terms of attractiveness, alternative coverage, and competitive position.

Great Ideas from the MacMillan Matrix				
Program Attractiveness				
High			Low	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Season • FlexPass Subs • Fundraising 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby Displays • Research • Company Artists 	
Alternative Coverage				
High		Low	High	Low
Strong Competitive Position	<i>Aggressive Competition</i>	<i>Aggressive Growth</i>	<i>Build Up Best Competitor</i>	<i>Soul of the Agency</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Season • FlexPass Subs • Fundraising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby Displays • Research 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company Artists
Weak Competitive Position	<i>Aggressive Divestment</i>	<i>Build Strength or Sell Out</i>	<i>Orderly Divestment</i>	<i>Foreign Aid or Joint Venture</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming for audiences under 35 • Scholar Sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Work Reading Series 	

As reflected in the chart above, TimeLine should cut TimePieces; ramp up education programs; and work to secure more shows, subscribers, and funding.

SWOT Analysis

The first step of the General Electric approach to vision begins with comprehending the capabilities of your organization and the needs of the market.⁵⁰ One widely accepted

way of discovering where your organization stands is by a conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The 'SVP Assessment' and 'Four Questions' from the Great Start Report uncovered the following strengths and weaknesses:

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicago's only theatre dedicated to plays inspired by history • Artistically driven administrators • Brings art and culture to CPS classrooms • Works with talented performers • Award-winning theatre • Easily accessible (public transportation, restaurants, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity doesn't meet demand • Staff is spread too thin (worry of burnout) • Not enough foundation/corporate support • Lack of diversity (staff, performers, audience) • Programs are underdeveloped because of lack of resources (money and staff)

Opportunities and Threats

External factors impact the industry at large. Using a PEST (political, economic, sociocultural, and technological) analysis,⁵¹ I identified the following trends for TimeLine:

	Opportunities	Threats
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resurgence in subscription/membership models (e.g. Netflix, Hulu) • Economic recovery • Majority groups shifting • New restaurants/cafes in Lakeview • Real Estate available • New citywide cultural plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for arts in schools • Competition among Chicago cultural offerings (funding/leisure dollars) • Entertainment easily accessible (home/digital platforms) • Increase in nonprofits • Divide between storefront theatres and institutions

BAM

By identifying internal and external factors, the BAM process further illuminated possible solutions for the things that hold TimeLine back and enhancements for the ones that propel it forward.

BAM Ideas		
Ideas (Affinity Grouped)	Group Name	Voting
Increase admin space; make exterior look more like a theatre; generate a larger audience by having more seats to sell;	A New Home for TimeLine	3

BAM Ideas		
Ideas (Affinity Grouped)	Group Name	Voting
increase season of work; implement a box office; obtain a liquor license; create a resource center for students/life-long learners; gain new donors through a capital campaign		
Go after a Regional Tony Award; increase advertising; strengthen branding; advertise Jeff Awards; promote strength of artistic staff; capitalize on being the only theatre solely devoted to plays inspired by history; tour productions; report dramaturgical research and audience impact findings	Strengthen Reputation	2
Create a festival of plays around a historical holiday; partner with other social/health causes; begin an annual playwriting competition	Extraordinary Events	1
Search for new hires with finance backgrounds; cut unnecessary LOBs; identify additional funding opportunities; ask bigger theatres for advice; partner with other storefront theatres on events to lessen financial burdens	Get in the Black	0
Cut unnecessary programs; implement staff incentives; create a structured volunteer program; hire additional interns; invest in HR, develop employee reviews	Prevent Staff Burnout	0
Partner with universities and city colleges to find interns, actors, volunteers; look at information on website to ensure it promotes equality; align season of work with diversity initiatives	Focus on Diversity	0
Have enough seats to accommodate growing audience; market subscriptions more; have teachers, students, subscribers and donors write entries for a monthly blog; survey audiences to find out their likes and dislikes	Gain Customer Loyalty	0
Late night historical satire; history trivia nights; screen movies inspired by historical events; develop a young professionals board; implement student matinees; start a theatre camp	Engage the Next Generation	0
Expand student programs; implement student matinees; develop teacher workshops; invite teachers and students to Sunday performances that feature scholars	Program Development	0
Update website; increase use of videos; drive patrons to social media; create digital study guides and playbills	Strengthen Digital Assets	0

The BAM process generated 60 ideas, which I organized into 10 affinity groups. What remains at the conclusion of our ideation is that TimeLine is most interested in extraordinary events, strengthening its reputation, and securing a new and bigger home.

Statement

Based on all of our brainstorming, we can see a pattern and a vision that feels right for TimeLine. TimeLine wants to be **“a preeminent Chicago arts organization and nationally recognized leader.”** This sentiment should become a “guidepost showing

the way”⁵² and direct the theatre’s efforts as it narrows down the hundreds of ideas brainstormed in the previous section.

Vision Ideas

Collect

Now that we have used the six tools to ideate, the next step is to collect the credible ideas from that process. The chart below lists 28 achievable, yet idealistic suggestions:

All Ideas	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new venue • Advertise subscriptions • Ask bigger theatres for advice • Become part of the citywide cultural plan • Cut reading series • Cut unnecessary LOBs • Festival around historical holiday • History trivia nights • Identify low-cost, low-staff LOBs • Identify PR opportunities and capitalize on being the only theatre solely dedicated to presenting plays inspired by history • Implement staff incentives • Improve strategies for Sunday Scholars and MyLine programming • Increase season offerings • Late night historical satire • Partner with other causes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with universities and city colleges (to recruit staff, volunteers, interns, and performers) • Apply for more funding • Patron/student blog • Revamp education program • Seek additional sponsorships • Set up a resource center for patrons to visit the theatre outside of scheduled performances to encourage further learning • Start a theatre camp • Start an administration volunteer program • Strengthen reputation • Student matinees • Tour productions • Update box office and ticketing system • Update website

Evaluate

It turns out that decisions made quickly can be as valuable as decisions made cautiously and deliberately.⁵³ Therefore, intuition is the first step in evaluating the credible ideas generated in the collection process. The table below leaves TimeLine with 12 great ideas to consider.

First Cut

First Cut	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new venue • Festival around historical holiday • Increase season offerings • Strengthen reputation • Cut unnecessary LOBs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student matinees • Start an administration volunteer program • Become part of the citywide cultural plan • Identify PR opportunities • Late night historical satire

First Cut	
• Partner with other causes	• Obtain more funding

Contenders

The Contenders process puts our top 12 ideas into the Payoff Matrix.⁵⁴ The four quadrants in the chart below separate ideas based on big or small pay-off and easy or tough to implement. As a result, TimeLine chose six contenders (highlighted). These ideas represent a mix of easy and hard to do, but all are expected to have a big pay-off.

		Contenders	
		Hard to Do	Easy to Do
Big Pay-off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new venue • Festival around historical holiday • Increase season offerings • Strengthen reputation • Partner with other causes • Obtain more funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut unnecessary LOBs • Student matinees • Start an administration volunteer program • Identify PR opportunities 	
	Little Pay-off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late night historical satire • Work with the city to become part of the citywide cultural plan

Finalists

To select six finalists, I have narrowed down the contenders and selected only ones expected to deliver a big pay-off. Reaching beyond intuition, I used the Weighted Decision Matrix⁵⁵ to measure the finalists against a criterion that’s important to TimeLine.

Criteria	W T	Finalists					
		A New Home	Student Matinees	Increase PR	Cut Unnecessary LOBs	Admin. Volunteer Program	Festival Around a Historical Holiday
Plays to competitive advantages	5	20	15	15	25	5	25
Brings Vision Statement to life	5	25	25	25	5	10	25
Mission fit	4	4	20	4	12	4	20
Profitable	3	15	9	12	15	15	15
Fundable	4	20	20	4	4	4	20
Achievable	3	12	12	12	15	12	12
Total		96	101	72	76	50	117

Great Ideas

Using six tools to ideate and four methods to evaluate, I discovered three great ideas for TimeLine:

A festival around a historical holiday – TimeLine imagines an outdoor summer festival on July 4th weekend. The organization is most excited about exploring this strategy because of the potential outreach to new audiences and PR opportunities.

Perform student matinees – Student matinees would simply remount a production from TimeLine’s season and allow the organization to have a greater impact with Chicago Public School (CPS) history students.

Build a new and better home for TimeLine – A new home for TimeLine would better serve its growing audience and provide a platform that is more appropriate for TimeLine’s vision.

These ideas promote TimeLine’s new vision to become a preeminent Chicago arts organization and are likely to attract national attention. Furthermore, they are pragmatic enough to achieve and idealistic enough to incentivize action. It is the hope of this report that these strategies will propel TimeLine forward in order to seize its aspirations.

GREAT STRATEGIES REPORT

What should we do next?

TimeLine's ascent to become a preeminent Chicago theatre must begin by implementing strategies that allow the organization to dramatically grow. The Great Ideas Report brainstormed hundreds of ideas. Of those, three strategies were determined to fit TimeLine's mission and reinforce its vision. The Great Strategies process builds these strategies and evaluates if they are fundable, competitively advantageous, and achievable.

Build

Describing the 6 P's (people, product, place, price, proposition, and plan) will allow TimeLine to articulate the proposed strategies and outline their essential elements and benefits.⁵⁶ This process will prepare TimeLine to pitch the strategies to external stakeholders.⁵⁷

Current

TimeLine's current strategic plan strives to develop a better environment for employees, create unique and insightful productions, and generate sustainable growth.

Strategy	Current Strategies		
	Better Space for Staff	Insightful Productions	Sustainable Growth
People	Employees	Educated Chicago theatregoers	All stakeholders
Product	Boost morale by creating a better workplace	Increase knowledge through deep cultural experiences	Strengthen all facets of the organization
Place	Onsite at TimeLine	At our theatre	At our facility and around the city
Price	N/A	Competition based	N/A
Proposition	Support productivity	Deliver entertaining ways to revisit history	Maintain TimeLine's place among great Chicago theatres
Plan	Underway	Underway	Underway

TimeLine should only pursue strategies that link to the primary customer.⁵⁸ Furthermore, operational strategies (internal strategies) like building a better environment for employees or creating sustainable growth must reach beyond operational effectiveness and create a unique and valuable position.⁵⁹ Certainly, a comfortable staff and sustainable growth can make an impact, but do they support TimeLine's vision?

Alternatively, the new strategies for TimeLine support its coveted future, and potentially create a competitively unique and valuable position:

New

Strategy	New Strategies		
	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
People	Families and culture-seekers	Students	Funders (Individuals, corporations, and foundations)
Product	Access to culture by taking performances outdoors	Amplifying teacher lesson plans through live storytelling	Making history through a worthwhile investment
Place	At a city park on July 4 th weekend	At our theatre during school hours	On Chicago's north side
Price	Economic value	Competition based	Economic value
Proposition	Low-cost and highly accessible	Uniquely aligning with CPS history curriculum	A space worthy of TimeLine's artistry
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Chicago Park District and Department of Cultural Affairs (By 1/1/2019) • Conduct site visits to determine location (By 4/1/2019) • Establish creative team to curate productions, events, and programming (By 3/1/2020) • Create outreach team to build new family audience (By 3/1/2021) • Publicize through paid and free media outlets (By 4/1/2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a corporate sponsorship and foundation strategy (By 6/1/2015) • Formalize group sales practices (By 9/1/2015) • Create marketing materials for teacher mailings and eblasts (By 1/15/2016) • Build a larger network of CPS teachers and referrals (By 4/1/2016) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a consultant to ensure success (By 6/1/2015) • Develop major gift, corporate, foundation, and planned giving strategy (By 8/1/2015) • Develop communication plans and marketing materials (By 11/1/2015) • Celebrate donors and keep stakeholders updated on progress (At least twice per year during campaign life - approx. 3 years)

By creating a summer festival, TimeLine can penetrate the market by serving its current customer (curious theatregoers) and also develop a new market of family audiences and culture-seekers. The proposition of a low-cost and highly accessible event creates a high value that will, presumably, interest many customers. Therefore, the strategy offers TimeLine the visibility needed to become a preeminent Chicago arts organization.

Because TimeLine's current education initiatives work one-on-one or in small groups, the organization makes a big impact—but only for a small number of students. By giving learners the opportunity to come to TimeLine for student matinees, TimeLine can round out its education programming and expand its reach. By investing in the next generation, TimeLine is more apt to become the national arts leader it aspires to be.

Creating a new facility is TimeLine's only internal strategy, but will have the greatest impact for its theatregoers. A capital campaign that engages individual donors, corporations, and foundations will provide a much-needed new space and secure the endowment funds that will sustain TimeLine as it expands into the future. In essence, the strategy will create a space worthy of TimeLine's artistic ambitions.

Test

External Environment

Studying the external environment uncovers the opportunities and threats that help or hinder the success of new strategies.⁶⁰ TimeLine's primary threat is competition among cultural offerings. Although rivalry among theatres is mild, there are 20 theatres in Lakeview competing for leisure dollars.⁶¹ Furthermore, with the onset of the city's Cultural Plan, offerings throughout Chicago are on the rise.⁶²

Industry Environment

An industry is "a group of firms producing products that are close substitutes."⁶³ Therefore, rather than examining the theatre industry at large, TimeLine should only test industries offering similar services as the proposed strategies. Furthermore, it is only necessary to evaluate the strategies impacted by the external environment (a festival and student matinees). Consequently, the industries to test are summer festivals offering live entertainment and field trip opportunities for CPS students.

In addition to defining the industry, Susan Oster recommends researching, evaluating relations among participants, and identifying funding group power to establish the likelihood of success.⁶⁴ Upon researching the festival industry, hundreds of family events were discovered, but only a fraction offer live entertainment in the summer.⁶⁵ Field trip options are not as plentiful. However, notable Chicago institutions host the bulk of recommended activities,⁶⁶ which may make the market difficult to enter.

The Chicago Cultural Plan and Chicago Park District have created a systemized entry into the summer festival market. This structure also prevents too many organizations from scheduling events in the same area at the same time,⁶⁷ thereby making relations among festival participants moderate. The relations in the field trip industry also appear moderate, as organizations offering this service often have a different primary customer—and therefore a separate principal revenue generator.

Funding group power is also moderate for festivals and student matinees, as both strategies are likely to attract a diverse group of funders. For example, Square Roots Festival has 13 festival sponsors⁶⁸ and Chicago Shakespeare Theater has 10 education program sponsors,⁶⁹ indicating these initiatives are attractive and highly fundable.

The findings from the industry research are summarized in the table below:

Strategy	Industry Environment		
	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
Industry Description	Summer festivals for families with live entertainment	Field trips for CPS students	N/A (internal)
Participant Relations	Moderate	Moderate	N/A (internal)
Funder Power	Weak	Weak	N/A (internal)
Fit to Strategy	Somewhat Attractive	Attractive	N/A (internal)

Because the festival market is so dense, it is only somewhat attractive. Field trips, however, are more attractive as there are fewer opportunities for history students.

Competitor Environment

Competitors are the agencies that offer similar products to similar customers.⁷⁰ In addition to identifying rivals, it is valuable to know their LOBs, competitive advantages, and the likely response if and when TimeLine implements the new strategies.

TimeLine's primary festival competitor is Old Town School of Folk Music (Old Town). Each year the organization produces the Square Roots Festival, a three-day event during the second weekend in July. This family-friendly festival features 60 music acts that range from indie rock, international acts, and Old Town teachers and students.⁷¹ TimeLine's festival would be theatrically-driven and would occur only on July 4th weekend. Therefore, Old Town School of Folk Music is not likely to respond.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) is TimeLine's primary competitor for student matinees. CST has more than 20 years of experience producing student matinees, serves more than 40,000 students annually, and is the go-to field trip for more than 2,500 English and Drama teachers.⁷² It is unlikely CST will respond since TimeLine's network is significantly smaller and only with history classes.

Competitor	Competitor Environment		
	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
Competitor	Old Town	CST	N/A (internal)
Lines of Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes • Concerts • Square Roots Festival • Field trips • Music store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8-9 show season • Shakespeare in the Parks • Tours to schools • International work 	N/A (internal)
Competitive Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertainment by kids for kids • 17 years of experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve 40,000 students annually • 22 years of experience 	N/A (internal)

	Competitor Environment		
	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
Competitor	Old Town	CST	N/A (internal)
Likely Response	Not likely to respond. Their festival is music-centered and on a different weekend.	Not likely to respond. Their network is massive and catered to English and drama students.	N/A (internal)
Fit to Strategy	Attractive	Attractive	N/A (internal)

As summarized in the chart above, the competitive environment is not an imminent threat to TimeLine. Therefore, both a festival and student matinees remain attractive.

Internal Environment

In addition to determining the external environment, TimeLine must consider its internal abilities. By adapting Clara Miller's Iron Triangle, TimeLine can analyze mission drift, organizational capacity, capital structure, and risk orientation to evaluate if it can carry out the proposed strategies, while maintaining its current initiatives.⁷³

Mission

TimeLine exemplifies a purpose-centered organization, as there is a clear connection between productions (the primary revenue generator) and the organization's educational programs and research initiatives. Therefore, any new LOBs (in this case a festival and student matinees) should also relate. To evaluate, I revisited the MacMillan Product Matrix⁷⁴ and tested the new strategies in terms of program attractiveness, alternative coverage, and competitive position.

A festival for TimeLine is highly attractive (aligns with the mission), has high alternative coverage (many competitors), and a strong competitive position (uniquely linked to a historical holiday), making it mostly attractive. Should TimeLine pursue this strategy, it will have to aggressively compete to ensure the strategy's success.

The market for student matinees is competitive, but the strategy aligns with TimeLine's mission. TimeLine also has a unique position as an arts organization focused on history teachers—therefore, making matinees very attractive. Furthermore, the Great Ideas Report identified a need for aggressive growth for TimeLine's education programs, which would be satisfied with the conception of student matinees.

Capacity

Clara Miller defines organizational capacity as "the ability of an organization to simply operate its business."⁷⁵ To determine if TimeLine can execute its new strategies, TimeLine must identify any lack in resources that would prevent success. To evaluate, I reviewed the takeaways from the SVP Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool,⁷⁶

'Four Questions,'⁷⁷ and the SWOT analysis from the Great Start and Great Ideas Reports.

Previous reports found that TimeLine has great marketing and administrative skills, as well as a strong artistic vision that would support a festival. Yet, with resources already spread thin (human and capital), the assets necessary to curate a successful festival don't seem to exist, making this strategy unattractive.

Student Matinees, however, would require very few resources, as TimeLine would simply remount an existing production. The assets necessary are a company of actors available during school hours, staff to book reservations, and staff to greet schools upon arrival and departure. As resources needed are minimal, this strategy is attractive.

Finally, TimeLine's current facility is its weakest asset. Patrons find it difficult to locate, seating is limited and does not meet the needs of a growing audience, and it fails to support the theatre's vision. TimeLine's unique position affords theatregoers with a space to relive historical moments that have defined our past. Therefore, TimeLine needs a space that will play to its biggest strength: producing exceptional theatre.

By investing staff resources (time and effort) into a capital campaign, TimeLine will develop deeper relationships with current funders and gain new funders in the process. A campaign will draw upon human resources that are already spread thin, but the payoff of raising money for a new venue and simultaneously establishing an endowment will strengthen all resources in the long run. As a result, this strategy is attractive.

Capital

Understanding TimeLine's capital structure will illuminate the overall health of the organization.⁷⁸ To evaluate, TimeLine should refer to the success measures chart in the Great Start Report (and summarized on pages 4-5 of this report). Although, TimeLine needs to build its operating reserves, TimeLine is fit to maintain its current initiatives and to pursue its less expensive strategies: student matinees and creating a new facility.

Risk

Albert Einstein said, "A ship is always safe at shore, but that is not what it's built for."⁷⁹ Yet decision makers must establish the best time to invest in risk-taking initiatives. TimeLine's general manager shared that the organization is currently taking few risks, as they recently decided to allocate most resources into the production budget to stay competitive with other midsize theatres.

Additionally, I reviewed TimeLine's SWOT analysis and SVP Capacity Assessment. TimeLine has a growing list of funders, but obtaining enough funding has been challenging. Because every strategy proposed relies on funding, TimeLine must determine which ones are *most* fundable.

Finally, I used the Trussel Financial Vulnerability Quick Test, to see if net assets have dropped significantly over the past three years.⁸⁰ TimeLine's assets dipped in 2013, but since 2011 have risen nearly 12%—therefore passing the test with flying colors.

Based on various tools, TimeLine is risk averse. However, TimeLine can afford to make a small investment and I recommend 15 percent of operating reserves (\$57,000) be invested in fundraising initiatives to support student matinees and a new facility.

Great Strategies

Decide

Analyzing the external environment revealed that a festival and student matinees are attractive strategies to pursue. However, because the festival market is so saturated, student matinees are slightly more attractive.

Strategy	External Environment		
	Festival	Student Matinees	New facility
Industry Environment	Somewhat Attractive	Attractive	N/A (internal)
Competitor Environment	Attractive	Attractive	N/A (internal)
Fit to Strategy	Mostly Attractive	Attractive	N/A (internal)

Following the external analysis, TimeLine's strategies were tested against the organization's mission, capacity, financial health, and risk orientation. In almost all categories, a festival was deemed unattractive. However, student matinees and a new facility became priorities as reflected in the table below:

Strategy	Internal Environment		
	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
Mission Drift	Mostly Attractive	Very Attractive	N/A
Organization Capacity	Unattractive	Attractive	Attractive
Capital Structure	Unattractive	Attractive	Attractive
Risk Orientation	Unattractive	Attractive	Attractive
Fit to Strategy	Unattractive	Attractive	Attractive

The Change or Die Checklist⁸¹ asks eight questions for TimeLine to consider. Like the MacMillan Matrix,⁸² it helps decision makers choose what *not* to do.⁸³

Strategy	Change or Die Checklist		
	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
Is the practice better than what you are doing now?	No, but would create visibility	Yes, it would expand programs	Yes, a facility is greatly needed
Is it really worth the time, disruption, and money?	No, lack of staff and capital resources	Yes, strategy is easy to implement	Yes

	Change or Die Checklist		
Strategy	Festival	Student Matinees	New Facility
Is it best to make only symbolic changes instead of core changes?	No, core changes are more important	No, TimeLine is committed to new initiatives	No, this core change would be positive
Is doing it good for you, but bad for the company?	Yes, the cost of a festival would likely exceed revenue	No, the expanded reach would benefit the organization	No, a new building would benefit all activities
Do you have enough power to make it happen?	No, resources spread too thin	Yes	Maybe, dependence on funders is very high
Are people already overwhelmed by too many changes?	Yes	No, it would not require huge staff resources	Maybe, but a new facility is expected to boost morale
Will people be able to learn and update as it unfolds?	Maybe, staff is smart, but overworked	Yes, staff would learn how to interact with students	Yes, clear planning would take place prior to launching
Will you be able to pull the plug?	Yes	Yes	No
Fit to Strategy	Unattractive	Attractive	Attractive

The analysis concludes that TimeLine should pursue two of the three strategies initially proposed: student matinees and a new facility. However, this does not mean that a festival isn't a great idea—now is simply not the time to pursue it. When TimeLine has additional staff and resources, a festival would be a mission-driven idea to reevaluate.

Great Strategies

By completing the Great Strategies Process, TimeLine has prioritized student matinees and building a new facility. These two strategies will propel TimeLine forward as it strives to realize its vision to become a preeminent Chicago arts organization and nationally recognized leader. Furthermore, this report has created goals for each strategy in order to build an action plan that will give TimeLine the momentum to start moving toward the future it seeks.

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