

Chapter 1.5

Winning story

Swimming New Zealand

**Mike Byrne – Chief Executive
Swimming New Zealand**

“The start of something extraordinary”

Swimming New Zealand is the national sports organisation responsible for Swimming from the paddling pool to the podium in New Zealand. Our purpose is to develop, promote, govern and lead swimming in New Zealand. Swimming New Zealand has 187 clubs and a membership of 21,500.



What have you done over the years to establish your goals, objectives, values, and strategy for the future success of aquatics?

Our strategic planning in recent years has featured six key steps, including:

- 1/ We started with an analysis of the current environment and conducted a survey across a representative sample of stakeholders from the industry. Participants included swimmers, coaches, teachers, clubs, regions, technical officials, Swimming New Zealand management and staff, and representatives from external stakeholders and partners. The survey had an excellent response rate (over 75% of questionnaires distributed were completed) and provided fantastic input, which reflected the passion these stakeholders have for the success of swimming. The Board, staff and membership of Swimming New Zealand are thankful for their contributions.
- 2/ We collated summary level information on our current state from various sources of information, including the survey results, an internal review of the Education unit, an external review of the High Performance unit, and various other sources of information about our business and the environment we are operating in.
- 3/ The Board & CEO then met for a full-day strategy session. The session included measuring our perceived progress against the ambitious goals we set four years ago to be the leading sport by 2008. The Board and CEO also assessed important learnings and outcomes from the review process.
- 4/ We reviewed Swimming New Zealand's purpose – the reason we exist – and refined it to accurately reflect our core business. This led to our vision (our description of where we want to go).
- 5/ From this we identified the five key challenges that Swimming New Zealand needs to address in the next four years to advance our purpose and contribute to achieving our vision. Each challenge was clearly defined in terms of its scope, meaning and that its level of priority for Swimming New Zealand.
- 6/ From this we developed the five strategic goals we need to accomplish to address these challenges. This included identifying performance indicators against which we can measure progress and launch initiatives to make sure we are making progress.

How has developing a mission and vision helped focus the New Zealand Swimming Federation?

Developing the mission and vision for Swimming New Zealand has underpinned the strategic plan we have developed for the sport for the next four years. This plan has now become a helpful source of consultation with regions and other stakeholders.

In addition to this strategic plan, we have developed a detailed business plan and budgets that detail the specific actions we need to take in the coming year to move us toward realising our vision. The business plan details what we will do, who will do it, the investments needed to resource those plans, and the deadline for completion.

The business plan also covers the regular 'business as usual' tasks we need to carry out as a national body. We will review our strategic plan and write a new business plan for each of the three remaining years of the strategic plan.

What values has your federation created to establish a strong work ethic and internal culture?

Swimming New Zealand's values and associated behaviours are as follows:

1/ Open and honest

- Tells it like it is (no spin)
- Speaks up and is open to other points of view
- Has candid and constructive conversations based on facts
- Takes the time to explain issues and answer questions
- Aims for no surprises
- Mistakes and non-delivery are communicated early

2/ Delivers on promises

- Does what they say they will do
- Makes it easy for people to do business with us
- Actively challenges and eliminates practices and policies that don't add value
- Promotes flexibility and a 'can do' approach

3/ Treats everyone with fairness and respect

- Builds trusted relationships with all stakeholders
- Actively listens and responds appropriately to our stakeholders
- Makes decisions in a reasonable and consistent manner
- Actively promotes the health and wellbeing of SNZ staff with a balance between personal and work life

4/ Is passionate about excellence, best practice and achieving world class results

- Always strives for the best outcomes for SNZ
- Invests time to ensure that SNZ is always deploying best practice

**5/ Works as a team and collaborates
for the benefit of our stakeholders**

- Actively shares ideas and information across the organisation
- Capitalises on opportunities to achieve more for our stakeholders
- Values a diverse workforce and each employee's unique contributions to the team
- Actively supports and speaks up for colleagues, the organisation's decisions, and the communities we work with

**6/ Takes ownership and holds themselves
accountable (for all of their actions)**

- Has pride in what they do
- Accepts responsibility for their actions

What tools did you find useful when creating your federation's strategy?

We followed an established methodology for strategic planning as described above.

What did you learn during this process?

We learned how important it is to follow a rigorous, structured process. Taking time out from operational activities and getting the Board together for a couple of days of strategic thinking are vital. The presence of an independent facilitator means that the SNZ team can stay focused and ensures that we follow the correct process.