

America's Blood Centers

Connecting strategy to the daily work

How a national association turned a three-year strategic framework into the daily, monthly, and board-level rhythm of its work.

91%

Key results and initiatives on track or complete, six months in

< 1 hour

To input the operational plan into StratSimple

2

Board-member CEOs who brought StratSimple to their own organizations

THE CHALLENGE

The planning was never the problem. Excel was.

Kate Fry has led America's Blood Centers for ten years and has never been short on strategy. Every three years, facilitator Lowell Aplebaum helps her build a strategic framework; every year her team turns it into an operational plan. The problem was never the planning. It was everything after: plans lived in Excel, and the board saw a stoplight chart with no way to look deeper.

"We'd be really committed for the first three or four months, and then it would just gradually fade off. I'd have to constantly remind my staff, 'go fill in this Excel form,' and even then it was clunky. We had no way of tying the pieces together."

— Kate Fry, CEO, America's Blood Centers

At the end of ABC's November 2025 retreat, she asked Lowell if he knew of any platforms that could help them track the plan. He pointed her to StratSimple.

THE SOLUTION

One framework, one plan, one place to run it

ABC loaded its framework into StratSimple and built the year's operational plan beneath it: four objectives, 13 key results, and 31 initiatives, each with a named owner, a target, and a due date. Membership, revenue, and event KPIs sit alongside, so the plan and the numbers live in one view.

"Every single member of our staff, not just senior management, sees the same thing. They all know exactly what the priorities are. They all know where we are on our KPIs. It's open to our board and our members."

— Kate Fry, CEO, America's Blood Centers

The result is a plan the whole organization can see: a three-year framework, an 18-month operational plan beneath it, and one dashboard shared by staff, board, and members.

AT A GLANCE

ORGANIZATION

America's Blood Centers
(americasblood.org)

MISSION

Amplify and advance the contributions of community blood centers to individuals, communities, and the healthcare system.

PROJECT

3-year strategic framework with 18-month operational plans

FACILITATOR

Lowell Aplebaum
VistaCova.com



Kate Fry

CEO, America's Blood Centers

All quotes in this case study are from Kate.

Why ABC Chose This Approach

Adaptive, not static

A three-year framework sets direction. An 18-month operational plan, refreshed regularly, decides what gets done.

Transparent to everyone

Every staff member, every board member see the same plan, the same priorities, and the same KPIs.

Prioritization is critical

Work that doesn't map to the plan gets a conversation. Sometimes it stays. Often it goes, and staff can use their time to focus on the real priorities.

Board-ready reporting

Board reports pull straight from the plan: what's aligned, what's healthy, and what isn't.

“ It makes prioritization so much easier. You have to say no to things in order to be able to say yes. A lot of organizations just add more and more with each strategic plan. We're constantly talking with our staff and our board about what we're doing that isn't aligned with the plan. **”**

— Kate Fry, CEO, America's Blood Centers

HOW IT WORKS

The plan sets the agenda at every level

On-going

Owners keep the plan current

Owners get automated reminders, staff post progress updates directly into StratSimple, and finished work gets checked off in the plan. “There's an inherent sense of gratification in checking these items complete,” Kate says.

EVERY MONTH

Staff meetings open with the report

The monthly staff meeting starts with the StratSimple report and the month's “cause for applause.” Day-to-day project work then runs in ABC's project management tool.

EVERY BOARD MEETING

Board time spent on valuable discussions

Kate presents the KPIs and strategy report first, skips everything that's green, and spends the board's time on what needs attention.

EVERY YEAR

The plan resets after the retreat

After the staff retreat, the operational plan is refreshed and its major objectives shape the next board agenda. Every third year, the framework is rebuilt with Lowell.

The Outcome

Two thirds of the year's plan done at the halfway mark

Six months in, the point where the old Excel plan used to fade, 91 percent of the goals were on track or complete. One initiative more than tripled its goal. The plan now guides how Kate coaches staff members, where the team's time goes, and what the board talks about.

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Our plan literally guides every single thing we do. Every month at our staff meeting, the first thing we do is review the StratSimple report and say, where are we? Then we go through the next month's objectives. We can have real discussions because everybody knows where we are and what's coming next.

— Kate Fry, CEO, America's Blood Centers

The board noticed, too. Two ABC board members, CEOs of two of the largest community blood centers in the country, saw the reports Kate was bringing to board meetings and adopted StratSimple to run their own strategic plans.

“
These are massive organizations, and they saw the reports we were bringing to the board meeting, how easy it was to say here's how things align, here's what's healthy, here's what's not. And they said, 'We don't have anything like this for our strategic plans.'

— Kate Fry, CEO, America's Blood Centers

“Organizations spend tens of thousands of dollars designing their strategic plans, and then what? Then they don't have anything. Anybody looking for direction, focus, and accountability in carrying out their plan would benefit from StratSimple.”

— Kate Fry, CEO, America's Blood Centers