

## **Using Megapanning in CSO Projects— Bringing Social Sectors Together for Measurable and Sustainable Social Impact**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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Civil Society Organizations (CSO) can improve their effectiveness and add measurable value to society by using a megapanning approach as the guiding criteria for their organizational planning. This article shows how Asociación

Conciencia, a leading Argentinean CSO, has used megapanning to clarify its vision, mission, align its goals and programs and update its mission and programs over more than twenty years of critical social changes in Argentina.

### **Megapanning as the Starting Point for Organizational Design**

Roger Kaufman's megapanning model (Kaufman, 1998, 2000; Kaufman et al., 2003) recommends that the design of any organization (be it a private company or a non-profit association) follow three stages: megapanning, macroplanning, and microplanning. Megapanning defines an agenda that will add measurable value to external clients and society. Based on this mega orientation, macroplanning helps the organization define its mission and programs. Finally, at the microplanning stage, the organization defines specific and measurable objectives for programs, projects, and activities that will align with mega and macro level results and consequences.

By aligning all that an organization does, produces or delivers with an ideal vision—mega—of the society

it wants to build, the organization ensures that it will continuously add value to all stakeholders and the society in which they live.

### **The Conciencia Case**

Asociación Conciencia is a non-partisan, non-profit, civic association that was founded in 1982 in Argentina with the conviction that responsible political participation is a citizen's undeniable duty.

In 1983, with Argentina's impending return to democracy after almost five turbulent decades of constitutional interruptions, Conciencia's founders saw a unique opportunity to attain their vision for a better future for all Argentineans. Conciencia's vision was that of an Argentinean society where every person takes an active and responsible role in the civic life of the country and helps build and consolidate a truly democratic system with equality of opportunities and success for all.

Conciencia's mission is to make people aware of their role as a citizen by transmitting democratic and republican ideals that enable them to exercise their rights and responsibilities by actively participating in community and civic life and adding value to their country and community.

## **Using Megapanning in CSO's Projects**

In pursuing its ideal vision for Argentinean society during two pivotal decades in the consolidation of a stable democracy, Conciencia's mission naturally evolved in order to better address new and critical social challenges.

When Conciencia was created in 1982, Argentina was at a turning point in its history. After almost ten years under the last military dictatorship, and more than 50 years without a democratically elected president completing a constitutional term, Argentina was eager to return to democracy. It was then that Conciencia's early leadership recognized that this was the opportune time to define a shared ideal vision of future Argentinean society as a starting point for the establishment of the organization's mission and goals.

Using the main elements from Kaufman's Minimal Ideal Vision (MIV) as a common framework, Conciencia's leaders and members defined a shared vision for Argentinean society. Finally, after comparing their communities' realities with the MIV elements, the association agreed on an ideal vision of a society living in a well-consolidated democracy. Based on this ideal vision, Conciencia identified and prioritized gaps between the requirements of a stable

democracy and the current situation of the country.

The highest ranked priorities for action identified through this process included the need to nurture democratic skills, attitudes and behaviors, to identify opportunities for social participation, and to develop methodologies for collaboration among different social stakeholders to effect shared goals.

Throughout the years, from 1983 to 2005, Conciencia has continuously updated its needs assessments as it identifies and responds to the evolving challenges in the evolution toward a stable and fully participative democracy.

## **Four Stages of the Road to Democracy: Major Updates in the Mission**

Conciencia identified four major periods of change in social priorities:

### *1982-1990*

In 1982, when Conciencia started, the main concern was the great lack of citizen participation in decisions relevant to society as a whole. Because so many had been deprived of basic democratic experiences such as voting or holding their elected government officials accountable, most Argentineans were unprepared for active and productive participation in a democratic political system and were hesitant to engage in open discussions about social and political issues.

### *1990-2001*

After the first ten years of democracy, even though democracy had been in place and working through two presidential periods, Conciencia identified weaknesses such as the

imbalance of the three branches of government and the institutional development of the Legislative and Judicial branches that limited citizens' trust in justice and the rule of law.

### *2001-2003*

In 2001, Conciencia observed a great gap between what Argentinean society wanted and what the political parties and the government accomplished, a crisis that became evident with the resignation of President De la Rúa and the riots of December 20, 2001. This shook the entire country and severely damaged the credibility of political parties and dampened citizens' hopes of realizing a better future through democratic participation.

### *2003 to the present*

In 2003, Conciencia faced the challenge of addressing the aftershocks of a major economic and social crisis by finding participative alternatives to the proliferation of *piquetes*—a non-violent but disruptive social protest where large groups of people block access to streets and buildings—that collided with the constitutional principle of freedom of circulation.

## **Using Mega as a Guiding Principle through Turbulent Times**

By using its mega-level goals as a compass to navigate through turbulent times, Conciencia was able to continue pursuing its ideal vision for Argentina while updating its macro and micro-level goals (macroplanning) through each period as social challenges arose and priorities shifted.

During the 1982-1990 period, Conciencia focused on promoting citi-

zen participation by creating educational and community programs that helped build individuals' capacity to impact their community and to mobilize them to participate in community building and development.

During the 1990-2000 period, Conciencia launched initiatives and programs to foster legislative and judiciary performance in order to restore citizens' trust in the rule of law and establish a more effective system of checks and balances.

During the crisis of 2001-2003 Conciencia introduced programs and initiatives that enabled different social sectors to collaborate constructively in solving community problems. From 2003 until the present, Conciencia has been actively working on promoting respectful ways of expressing social protest as a direct contrast to the proliferation of *piquetes*.

Throughout the shifting focus of its macro and micro goals, Conciencia used its ideal vision (megaplanning) of achieving a truly democratic society that guarantees its citizens' survival, self-sufficiency, and quality of life as a guiding star. This was key for staying on course through turbulent times and aligning its activities to consistently add value to all social stakeholders and society.

Table 1 shows the evolution of Conciencia's ideal vision from 1982 to 2003 and also the societal gaps that existed between this vision and the reality at the time. Conciencia proactively redefined its mega vision as required by the achievements and the crises in the Argentinean society.

During the macroplanning stage Conciencia formulated its organizational mission and developed measurable goals and programs in

**Table 1**  
**Conciencia's Ideal Vision**

| Goals   | Status at the time (gaps)  |
|---|--|
| a. All citizens will participate responsibly in all decisions relevant to society (1982)  | a. The vast majority of the population did not know how to participate in the political life   |
| b. All citizens will be able to live in a well consolidated democratic system (1990s)   | b. Democracy was "formally" established but needed to be consolidated and strengthened (1990s)   |
| c. All citizens will perceive a relationship between their demands and governmental policies (2001)   | c. Crisis of political representation ends in an institutional crisis in December 2001   |
| d. All citizens will express disagreement with political decisions in a peaceful and non-disruptive way (in a way that does not negatively affect other fellow citizens) (2003) | d. Proliferation of "piquetes," a new way of social protest that involves interrupting the free circulation of vehicles and people while the protest lasts |

response to social needs. During the microplanning stage, Conciencia's program teams began to identify the products, actions and resources required to achieve the association's goals.

Conciencia successfully implemented educational and participative programs based on its strategic and tactical plans. *Interaction for a Project* is a set of performance improvement programs inspired by General Electric workouts (Ulrich, Kerr & Ashkenas, 2002) for developing joint community-improvement projects among different social stakeholders, such as government, unions, educators, health services and non-governmental organizations (NGO); *Collaborative Democracy* workshops are designed to create collaborative partnerships among women, political and social leaders in the solution of community problems; and *Citizen Deliberation forums*, which are participative programs designed to increase citizens' involvement in con-

trolling and interacting with public officers. Following its ideal vision of an integrated, democratic society, all Conciencia programs seek to promote dialogue among different sectors and generations, enabling them to design their own solutions to the problems affecting their communities.

### **How Conciencia has Benefited from Using Megaplanning**

Using the concept of ideal vision has been of critical importance for Conciencia. Following conventional planning practices and models, organizations tend to develop around the products or services they already sell or provide, and it is only afterwards that they try to relate those products to a mission. Such practices usually generate gaps between existing products and services and the organization's ability to innovate in order to continue adding value to stakeholders and society.

Differentiating three planning levels (megaplanning, macroplan-

**Table 2**  
**Aligning Mega, Macro and Micro Planning Elements in**  
**Conciencia's Planning**

| <b>Megapanning</b>  |   | <b>Macroplanning</b>   | <b>Microplanning</b>  |
|---|---|--|---|
| Basic Ideal Vision elements, according to R. Kaufman  | Ideal Vision of Argentina, according to Asociación Conciencia   | Conciencia's mission   | Conciencia's objectives   |
| There will be no loss of life or elimination or reduction of levels of well-being, survival, self-sufficiency, and quality of life from any source, including:<br>Example—Riots | A society where everyone participates responsibly in the civic life of the country and helps build and consolidate a truly democratic system with equality of opportunities for all. (This contributes indirectly to the reduction of riots, for example) | Solution to the problem (what):<br>Promote responsible civic participation<br><br>Strategy (how): through implementation of formal and non formal educational programs that include activities in which all the population can try different ways of participation | To carry out the implementation of formal and non formal educational programs that teach people how to participate in a democratic system.<br><br>Examples:<br>1. Interaction for a Project<br>2. Collaborative Democracy<br>3. Citizen Deliberation Forums |

ning and microplanning) helps organizations to respond more effectively to changes in the environment without losing their strategic focus. The megapanning approach combines the benefits of maintaining a guiding set of strategic goals with the advantages of changing tactics in order to anticipate and respond to social change.

These characteristics of the megapanning approach have enabled Conciencia to anticipate and respond to the social and political challenges posed by the tumultuous transition of Argentinean society from dictatorship to democracy while keeping its new tactical responses aligned and focused on the strategic goals and vision.

## Results

Since its foundation, *Asociación Conciencia* programs reached more than 600,000 teachers; 3,000,000 students and 60,000 families, becoming one of the leading Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in Latin America in the area of citizen education and democracy.

## Concluding Remarks

Conciencia's success over the years can be attributed in great part to its use of the megapanning model, which enabled the association to maintain a steady focus on adding social value while at the same time provided the necessary flexibility to adapt to multiple changes in the demands of the society and the stakeholders.

**Table 3**  
**Aligning Vision, Mission, Programs and Results**  
**in Conciencia's Planning**

| Conciencia's Ideal Vision element  | Conciencia's mission  | Conciencia's programs   | Results   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>A society where everybody participates responsibly in the civic life of the country and helps build and consolidate a truly democratic system with equality of opportunities for all.</p> | <p>Solution to the problem (what):<br/>           Promote responsible civic participation</p> <p>Strategy (how): through implementation of formal and non formal educational programs that include activities in which all the population can try different ways of participation</p> | <p>Formal and non formal educational programs that "teach" people how to participate in a democratic system. Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interaction for a Project</li> <li>2. Collaborative Democracy</li> <li>3. Citizen Deliberation Forums</li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of riots; new channels for participation</li> <li>• Social leadership trained and empowered</li> <li>• Communities' improvement (Bariloche, Pico Truncado, Tartagal, Aguaray)</li> </ul> |

As the Conciencia case indicates, Civil Sector Organizations may benefit from adopting a megapanning approach as a key success factor to address social change, navigate effectively through turbulent times, and ensure lasting social transformation.

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