

Designing Purpose into Politics

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Introduction

Agenda

- Client context and presenting problems
- Approach
- The Work
- Outcomes

Themes

- Building an organization while discovering the purpose
- The rare opportunity of Org Design in politics
- The benefit of partnering with the client and putting them to work

Client Context and Presenting Problems

The role of the Borough President has been weakened and now is what you make of it

- Advocates broadly for borough needs across city and state government, as well as private and nonprofit sectors
- Advises the Mayor of New York City
- Advocates for borough needs in the annual citywide budget
- Comments and makes recommendations on land-use review procedure
- Introduces legislation to the New York City Council
- Appoints members to Community Boards and other commissions

The presenting problem showed a desire for the client to better understand his potential

- Mark Levine had **won the primary** and was preparing for his transition from City Councilmember to Manhattan Borough President
 - This manifested as a **shift in identity and remit**
- His office would have a **new purpose**, much of which was yet to be discovered
- His staff would **scale from 8 to 55** to meet chartered function demands



The problem could be split into two areas with certain non-negotiables

Purpose and Strategy

- Mark Levine's new office needed to establish relevancy with Manhattanites in order to be a credible player
- It had to grow its focus from previous work in the City Council to meet the demands of a much larger constituency
- All the while, it had to maintain the public persona and values that had made Mark Levine successful in the City Council

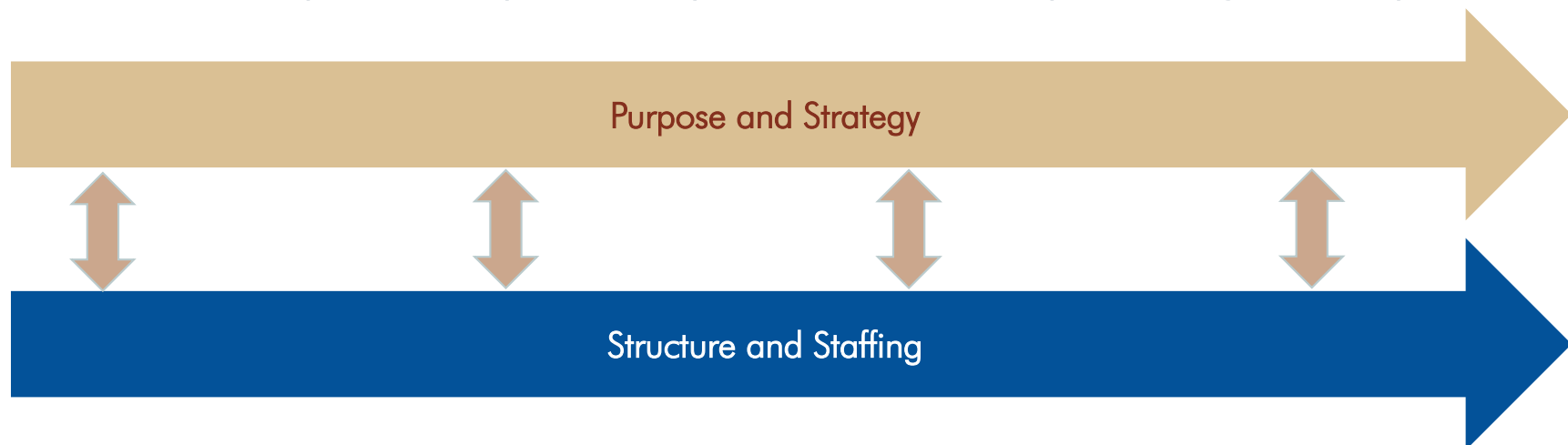
Structure and Staffing

- The office had to be **stood up and staffed** in a short timeframe
 - Uncertainty about who from the previous administration would stay meant multiple scenarios were necessary
- Job descriptions had to be written and posted quickly but kept general enough to allow for flexibility in the structure later
 - The war for talent was fierce as administrations turned over

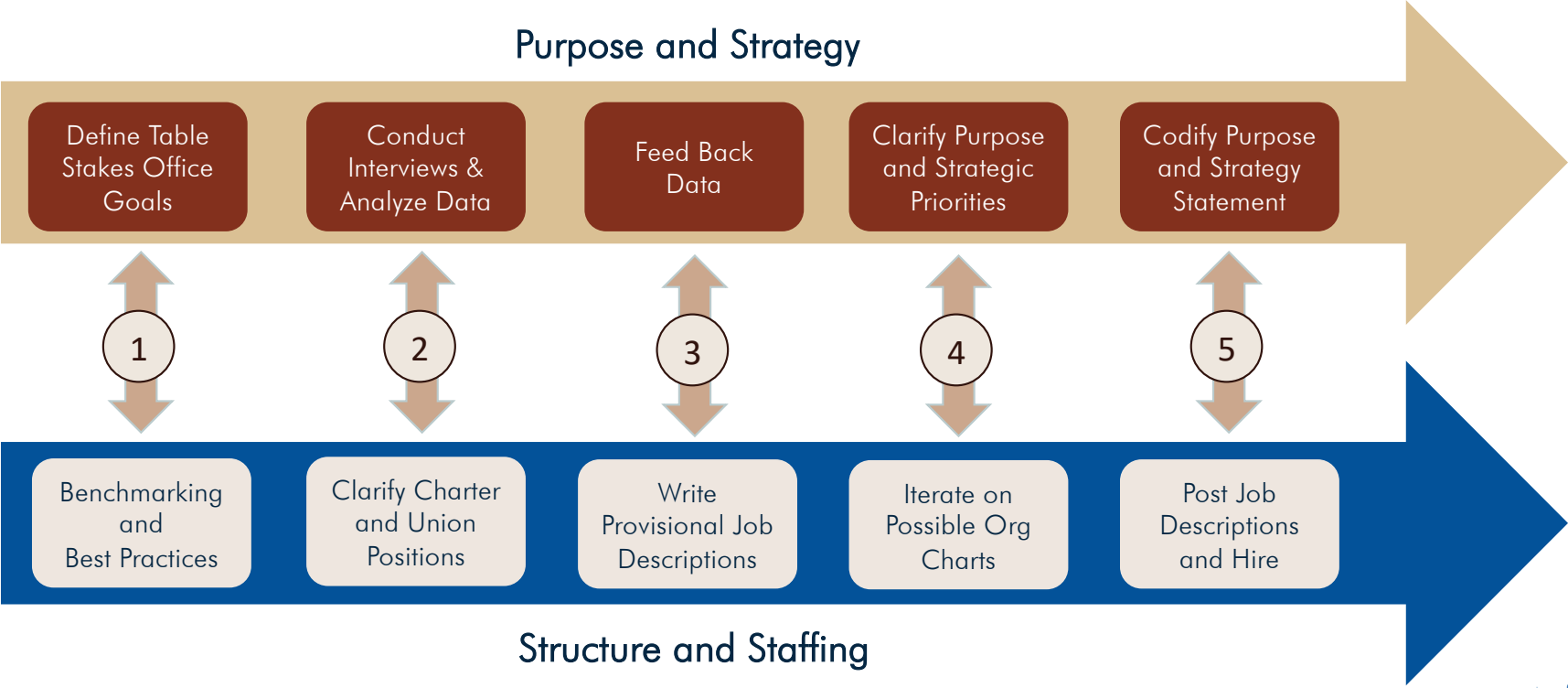
Approach

Simultaneous Focus on Strategy and Structure

- In an ideal world, we would hold off on structure and staffing until we had a clear strategy for the Borough President's Office
- Instead, we pursued parallel paths with multiple integration points



Our process married steps from each workstream to create a unified approach



The Work

Step 1: Level set by examining other BPs' work and what is core to Mark's goals

Define Table Stakes Office Goals

- Be relevant in the lives of Manhattanites
- Advocate for key needs of constituents
- Bridge Upper and Lower Manhattan
- Elevate the voice of the underrepresented
- Differentiate from other Borough Presidents with an eye toward higher office in 8 years

Benchmarking and Best Practices

- Examine previous Borough Presidents' organization structures and outcomes
- Review other political offices for innovative structural organizations
- Ground in best practices of organization design and acknowledge where we will fall short

Step 2: Discover the current reality and opportunities created by circumstance

Conduct and Analyze Interviews

- Seek to match office's purpose with high-impact opportunities for Manhattanites
- Interviewed likeminded stakeholders, including Mark, his staff, trusted advisors, and community members
- Conduct qualitative data analysis of interviews to isolate strategic possibilities

Clarify Chartered and Union Positions

- Understand constraints to structure by determining necessary and discretionary positions
- Astutely determine which unionized civil servants would stay and which would resign
- Assess available headcount
- Put out soft feelers for candidates

Interview Guide

1. What do you think should be the high-level goal for Mark Levine's BP administration?
2. What are the top 5-10 issues we should be prioritizing in this office?
3. What would make you most proud of this office?
4. What has Mark and his team traditionally done well in politics?
5. What do they need to do better or differently to have a successful time in the BP office?
6. What do you want Mark to be a public authority on?
7. What do you want the *NY Times* to say about this administration in 7 years?
8. How do you plan on identifying when we have achieved our goals?
9. What skills and abilities do you think you need to improve or develop to meet the challenges ahead?

Step 3: Focus on new knowledge to power next steps across both workstreams

Feed Back Data

- Meet with Mark Levine to share how his responses to the interview compared with the emergent themes
- Share data with key senior staff to digest and weigh opportunities and capabilities to determine best direction

Write Provisional Job Descriptions

- Focus on known positions (either chartered or best practice) and begin directing them toward the data emerging from the interviews
- Create enticing job descriptions that could be floated to key candidates in transition

Step 4: Turn growing knowledge into clear options and decisions for a path forward

Clarify Purpose and Strategic Priorities

- Engage senior staff in a brainstorming process to discover the purpose and strategic priorities
- Mark makes the final decision on purpose and strategic priorities

Iterate on Possible Org Charts

- Use what we have decided upon for the purpose and strategic priorities of the office to outline the best structure with clear roles
- Hiring is now imminent, and position descriptions need to be codified fully

Step 5: Activate the new organization in time for Mark's inauguration

Codify Purpose and Strategy Statement

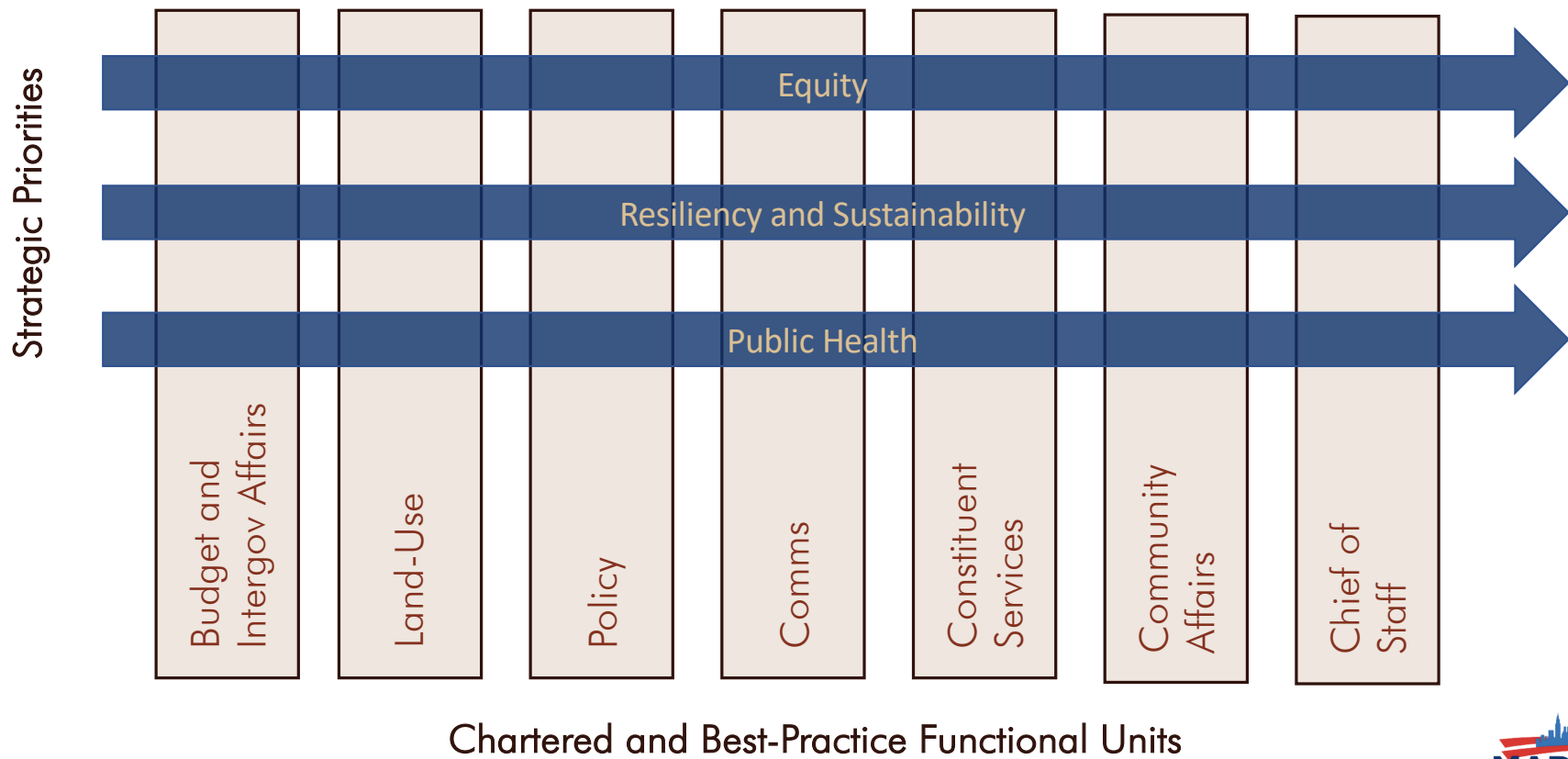
- Produce memo to staff highlighting the purpose and strategic priorities for the office:
 1. Equity: Bridge the equity gap that has been a horrifying reality in NYC for generations
 2. Resiliency and Sustainability: Prepare Manhattan for the climate of the future
 3. Public Health: Focus on humane policy and support

Post Job Descriptions and Hire

- Engage in a speedy recruitment, interviewing, and vetting process to fill roles in time for inauguration

Outcomes

Organization Model



The Current Situation

- The strategic priorities drive decision making across the verticals
 - Divisional and cross-divisional decisions are aligned to the priorities
- Collaboration across the verticals is inconsistent
 - A significant volume of inputs reach the office from the 1.8 million people in Manhattan
 - They each go to their own contact person for a single issue
 - This makes it challenging to work cross-functionally on the strategic priorities