

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

STARTING WITH “WHY?”

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Our current political and social landscape is changing quickly and unpredictably, and SGIM needs to focus our activities to address issues at the forefront of our field in the coming years. We want to respond. . . but we do not have the organizational bandwidth to do so. This is why Council and staff are engaged in an indepth strategic planning effort. . . .



Some of you may be familiar with Simon Sinek. His 2009 TED talk (available on YouTube) focused on helping individuals find their why—their purpose, cause, or set of beliefs that inspire them to do what they do. Sinek introduced a model of three concentric circles with WHY at the center, HOW

in the middle circle, and WHAT in the outer circle.^{1,2} He calls this the *Golden Circle* and has since applied the same model to organizations. The work our SGIM Council and staff are doing during our “sabbatical year” focus very much on our why, how, and what.

In my first *Forum* column as your president, I spoke of the need for us to have a clear vision as an organization—SGIM’s WHY. Having a well-defined focus will allow us to concentrate our efforts on initiatives we are uniquely positioned to lead successfully and enable us to respond to the important challenges that face us as a profession. SGIM’s reality is that as an organization we have been stretched too thin and have had many “WHATs” that were not integrated into an organizational strategic plan. Our current political and social landscape is changing quickly and unpredictably, and SGIM needs to focus our activities to be in a better position to address issues at the forefront of our field in the coming years. We want to be able to respond to these types of cutting-edge issues that define who we are as an organization and profession, but we do not have the organizational bandwidth to do so. This is why Council and staff are engaged in an indepth strategic planning effort in this, our “sabbatical year.”

Coming out of the June Council retreat, our commitment as a Council for the coming year is to ensure that SGIM’s organizational structure and focus align with our mission, vision, and values. We took the findings and

SGIM Organizational Goals



recommendations from the Pyramid audit of our society’s communications quite seriously—the issues raised in the report were sobering and required what may seem to be drastic action.³

I want to share with you how the planning efforts are proceeding. During the June retreat, Council and Staff took a considerable amount of time to review and revise the mission and vision statements that I shared with you in my September column. Our next step was to reexamine the strategic goals and priorities for the organization to further identify how we could be most effective in the work we do as an organization and how we can best serve our members.

In developing the strategic plan, we revisited the strategic priorities developed in 2015 and used them as the starting point to develop a set of organizational goals (HOW) and current tactics (WHAT) to achieve these goals.⁴ Below are the current working goals and tactics in the SGIM strategic plan:

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Foster the development of future leaders in academic general internal medicine.

- Develop an integrated, comprehensive portfolio of career development initiatives
- Run programs to stimulate interest in careers in general internal medicine
- Offer awards to recognize innovators, scholars, and leaders in academic general internal medicine

Promote high-value, evidence-based, person-centered, population-oriented approaches to improving health.

- Strengthen and leverage the organizational infrastructure for catalyzing and disseminating evidence-based innovations in clinical practice, research, advocacy, and education

Advocate for our vision of a just health system that brings optimal health for all people.

- Conduct advocacy with an emphasis on vulnerable and underserved patients and communities
- Advocate for policies supporting the ability of general internists to provide optimal care in ambulatory and hospital settings
- Develop advocacy-related education messages to communicate to members

Ensure SGIM financial health and employee satisfaction.

- Align organizational structure and workload to make effective use of resources and foster growth
- Enhance employees’ satisfaction and fulfillment with work

I want to commend the Council members and SGIM staff who par-

ticipated in these discussions—we had very intense and rigorous conversations. These strategic goals will form the backbone for identifying/refining tactics and articulating high level performance metrics for SGIM so we can chart our path as an organization. In service of this strategic planning process, we will tackle four major initiatives in the “sabbatical year” focused on organizational renewal:

1. SGIM leadership will continue to respond to the recommendations from the Pyramid communications audit. An oversight committee chaired by Tom Gallagher has started working on our implementation strategy.
2. The Finance Committee, chaired by Mark Schwartz, has been working on a long-term strategic plan for financial sustainability and growth for SGIM. They are examining and developing targets for all sources of revenue, keeping well within our external funds policy.
3. A steering committee, chaired by Mitch Feldman, will reassess our career development programs in order to develop a more cohesive overall strategy and sustainable business model for these programs. As you may have seen in my message in GIM Connect, SGIM has declared a temporary hold on new enrollments in existing career development programs. We have outstanding content to which many of you have contributed and for which SGIM has become known. We are at a key time-point to ensure coordination and synergy in the pedagogical approaches and logistics of implementing these programs.

We will be calling on committees and commissions to help us as we get into the details of this work.

4. Council will complete the strategic planning work by identifying tactics and metrics for each strategic goal. As part of this effort, Council will ask committees and commissions to map their current programs and initiatives to this plan, articulating measures that would help us benchmark our progress in meeting these goals.

In the coming months, we will share the outcomes of these four initiatives and continue to share information about the process the Council is using to do this work. We expect this strategic planning process to strengthen the organization so that it is better able to serve our members and pursue new opportunities to keep SGIM at the cutting edge of issues in general internal medicine.

References

1. Sinek S. Start with why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action. https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action. Posted September 2009. Accessed August 24, 2018.
2. Sinek S. *Start with why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. New York, N.Y.: Portfolio, 2009.
3. Corbie-Smith G, Jetton F, Bass E. Looking inward and moving forward: Results of SGIM’s communications audit. *SGIM Forum*. 41(6):3,15.
4. Chin M. Who is SGIM? Focusing on six strategic priorities. *SGIM Forum*. 38(8):3,13.