

SubTeam: Operations **Level:** Basic **Time Required:** 45 minutes

Title: What is Operations and Why Should I Care?

Learning Objectives: Understand...

- *The difference between operations and strategy*
- *How does operations support Team 2537*
- *What are the FIRST values*
- *How you can support operations*

Reference Material:

FRC Awards

Gracious Professionalism Video 1:20

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hw3M0BCtb-k>

Business Plan

<https://cmoe.com/strategy-vs-operations-understanding-the-difference/>

Instructions: Read the following and follow the links to supporting resources.

Part One: The Two Engines of any Organization Strategy and Operations

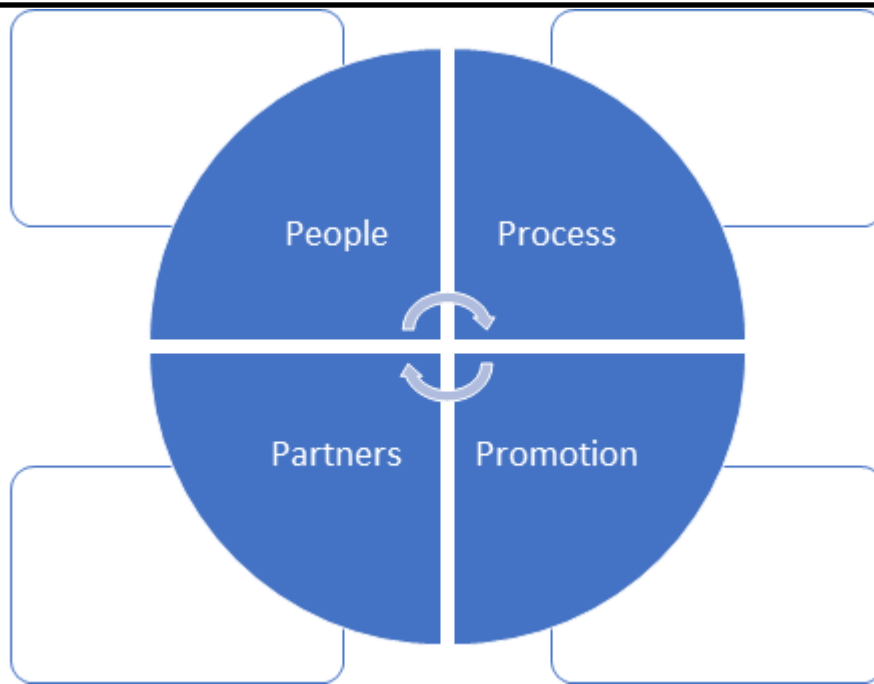
Understanding both strategy and operations is critical in any organization. Typically, there is tension between the two due to lack of understanding of the important role that both can play.

The metaphor of a two-engine boat can help clarify. “Think of operations and strategy as two separate, but related, engines on a boat. Both engines propel the boat forward. While forward movement can occur with only one engine, the boat moves faster and is more responsive if both engines are running efficiently. Each engine is important, and each engine requires fuel, maintenance, and skillful attention so the boat’s ability to deliver results is optimized.”

Think of Team2537 as a big boat. If we focus all of our attention, effort, and resources solely on one side of the business, we put the whole organization at risk.



Operations: The purpose of the operational engine is to keep the current activities in the organization moving and functioning at peak levels including funding levels. Without operations, our team would not have the resources to exist. We focus on the four Ps: People, Process, Partners, Promotion.



Exercise: Identify why each of these four components are important for a successful robotics team.

Strategy: The purpose of the strategy function is to identify sources of competitive advantage (how can we perform activities differently, better, and at a lower cost compared to our competitors?). In a business, the strategy function typically takes a long-term view, 3-5 years out. However, on the robotics team strategy is applied to each annual competitive season.

Part Two: Objectives of Operations

Our objectives include:

1. Raise funds by acquiring and maintaining sponsors.
2. Pursue FIRST awards and demonstrate our commitment to FIRST values.
3. Recruit new and diverse team members.
4. Build a more robust and cohesive community.
5. Increase STEM awareness and education through service to the community.

Part Three: Operational Functions

The functions of Operations include the following:

Fundraising and Sponsor Relations: supports Team 2537 by acquiring resources and funds and focuses on marketing and campaigning for the team. The fundraising goal for 2017-2018 is \$16,000. The annual operating budget is typically a minimum of \$40,000. In a corporate model, this is the equivalent of the sales and marketing function which is responsible for generating revenue for the organization.

Outreach: coordinates, plans, and staffs community outreach events to educate others on robotics and to create interest in STEM related fields. Team 2537 participates in community events with different audiences and we need to vary our approach with different age groups. Outreach is an important component of being a FIRST robotics team and is the most important aspect of winning the most prestigious FIRST award, The Chairman's award.

Communications: includes maintaining our team website, maintaining social media channels, creating videos, developing flyers. External communications are important because they keep us connected with stakeholders in our community including current and potential sponsors.

Awards: focuses on which awards can and will be sought after for the season and develop a strategy for each. Awards we have pursued in the past include the Entrepreneurship award, Chairman's award, and Dean's list awards. Review the available list of awards here [FRC Awards](#)

Team Building: focuses on creating a cohesive team by sponsoring events that help the team get to know each other, have fun, and eliminate stress. Team spirit is a focus area and we look for creative ways to demonstrate our team spirit at competitions.

Recruiting: actively recruits diverse students to participate in the team and showcases the value and benefits of membership.

Part Four: FIRST Values

There are two key values that all FRC teams are asked to follow. The values are important when training all team members. The operations team can help set the right tone for a values-based culture.

The FIRST values are:

- 1. Gracious Professionalism**

Watch Dr. Woodie Flowers explain in this video:

[Gracious Professionalism Video 1:20](#)

- 2. Coopertition®**

FIRST defines *Coopertition* as, “displaying unqualified kindness and respect in the face of fierce competition. *Coopertition* is founded on the concept and a philosophy that teams can and should help and cooperate with each other even as they compete.

Coopertition involves learning from teammates. It is teaching teammates. It is learning from Mentors. And it is managing and being managed. *Coopertition* means competing always, but assisting and enabling others when you can.”

Watch the video and ask some experienced students some examples of coopertition in FIRST robotics.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hw3M0BCtb-k>

Part Five: How You Can Support Operations

1. Read the Team 2537 [Business Plan](#)
2. Sign up for at least one outreach event annually
3. Practice the FIRST values
4. Help with fundraising efforts. Help to recruit one new sponsor. Ask neighbors, family, friends, etc. to support the team.

EXERCISE:

Gather some competitive intelligence. Watch the video of another FIRST team who is well known to learn what they did to win the Chairman's award. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvUX7DZcjEI>

Discuss: 1. What are the key themes? 2. What techniques did they use to tell their story?