



## We Have Always Done It That Way

Things about associations we must change



## 101 Things About Associations We Must Change

- ⑩ Five independent thinkers
- ⑩ Changing the way we think
- ⑩ Changing the way we lead
- ⑩ Changing the way we manage
- ⑩ Changing the way we execute
- ⑩ Changing the way we work together
- ⑩ Changing the way we involve others

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Changing the way we lead

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## Strategy and Planning Are Not The Same

- ⑩ Perhaps the way we have always done strategic planning is no longer serving us
- ⑩ Combining strategy and planning is dangerous
- ⑩ Strategy is incredibly important and relatively stable and constant
- ⑩ Planning is a means to an end and should be much more flexible
- ⑩ Combining the weight of strategy to the plan creates dangerous inflexibility
- ⑩ When plans are too linked to strategy they invite blind commitment

## No More Excuses

- ⑩ Real leaders do not make excuses
- ⑩ Take responsibility for whatever is going on – good and bad – regardless of whether actually responsible for those circumstances
- ⑩ Think clearly about what is and creatively about what is possible
- ⑩ Don't wait for conditions to irrevocably deteriorate before taking action, even if action involves risk

## Presidential Agendas Be Gone

- ⑩ Constructing initial discussion with incoming chief elected officer
- ⑩ Start with current strategic priorities
- ⑩ What ideas the chief elected officer has to move the strategic priorities forward
- ⑩ Ideas, not mandates
- ⑩ Establish a culture in which leaders understand the appropriate way to "make their mark" is to advance the association, its members and the industry, not their own personal agenda

## ⊕ Avoiding Disruptions

- ⑩ Too often we steer away from disruptions
- ⑩ We want things to go smoothly and as planned
- ⑩ Universal acclaim and positive feedback sought
- ⑩ Embrace disruption rather than avoid it
- ⑩ Disruptions are more valuable than the positive feedback
- ⑩ Disruptions open our eyes to new possibilities and support confronting the truth
- ⑩ Without disruptions we would continue doing what we have always done
- ⑩ Which is more important comfort or success?
- ⑩ Move toward, not away from disruptions

## ⊕ Discount

- ⑩ Stop putting so much focus on member discounts
- ⑩ Associations originated without such benefits
- ⑩ People associated for the sake of associating
- ⑩ Create an image that makes members proud to be members of the organization and the industry
- ⑩ Pride could be the reason for joining

## Boards We Can't Afford

Boards that are so deeply embedded in the machinery of governance that they fail at their primary role: Develop a sharp and comprehensive vision of the world in which the organization operates – for better or worse – so they can make more intelligent strategic choices.

- ⑩ We can't afford Boards that:
  - ⑩ Tolerate denial, nostalgia & myopia
  - ⑩ Defer difficult choices to the future to keep the peace
  - ⑩ Value the superficial over the substantive
  - ⑩ Interfere with or prevent the pursuit of innovation
- ⑩ We need Boards that:
  - ⑩ Recognize and accept the emerging reality of profound, accelerating & intensifying disruption and discontinuity
  - ⑩ Confront divisive issues & accept constructive conflict
  - ⑩ Embrace the privilege of board service as its own reward
  - ⑩ Are guided by a strategic mindset & entrepreneurial spirit

## Fearing Rejection

- ⑩ We fear rejection & want to please everyone
- ⑩ We don't want to offer something of value unless we know that people will show up and provide glowing evaluations
- ⑩ But, path to that high-value endpoint will often take one through rejection and frustration
- ⑩ We learn, grow and are successful in life by trying and sometimes failing
- ⑩ Associations forget this & are reluctant to experiment
- ⑩ We only learn what works if we risk being rejected

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Changing the way we think

## When Will We Learn

- ⑩ Strategic panning is never, never, never going to help our organizations to the next level of success
- ⑩ Strategic planning is a profound waste of time and resources that must be jettisoned in favor of new and different approaches that fit with a new and still shifting reality
- ⑩ The future cannot and should not be predicted
- ⑩ Our long-term success depends on cultivating a deep capacity for creating the future
- ⑩ Pursuing innovation costs less than trying to build a strong and sustainable brand
- ⑩ Being an innovator is a strong and sustainable brand

## ⊕ When Will We Learn

- ⑩ The only way to gain greater influence is to give up virtually all control
- ⑩ We never really had control in the first place
- ⑩ Risk cannot and should not be avoided
- ⑩ It is not possible to really lead without taking risks
- ⑩ We need to learn how to learn and help our members do the same
- ⑩ We have always done it that way is no longer a sufficient response
- ⑩ We've always done it that way was never a sufficient response in the first place

## ⊕ Why Innovation?

- ⑩ Innovation is the most critical capability for an association to develop today to maximize their opportunities for success tomorrow
- ⑩ Creating a culture of innovation is all about unleashing the passion of staff and volunteers
  - ⑩ Passionate people innovate freely
- ⑩ Creating and effective innovation culture is a shared responsibility
- ⑩ An effective innovation culture is all about finding the right balance of freedom and discipline
- ⑩ Creating an effective innovation culture is not enough to make innovation happen
- ⑩ It is the CEO's responsibility to make the case for innovation to the Board
  - ⑩ CEO's must directly challenge their boards to accept the core belief that growth depends on innovation. Without growth there can be no success

## Think Like an Entrepreneur First, Like an Association Exec Second

- ⑩ Think like an intellectual capitalist
- ⑩ Instead of identifying yourself by the products you sell, define yourself as an entrepreneur with a specialty in a particular area
- ⑩ This shift allows you to come up with creative responses to others' needs – opening you up to the possibility of doing anything that will create value, not simply acting as a channel for industry goods and services

## Changing the way we involve others

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## Sometimes Research Is Not Enough

- ⑩ Sony boom box focus group – yellow or black
- ⑩ Customers don't always articulate what they really want or need
- ⑩ Yet, how often do associations base decisions solely or primarily on survey or focus group results
  - ⑩ Conference topics
  - ⑩ Program ideas
  - ⑩ Product
- ⑩ Sometimes questions are loaded
- ⑩ Sometimes questions are too vague
- ⑩ Sometimes members just don't know what they want
- ⑩ Sometimes they don't know how to communicate their needs to us

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## May I Have Your Attention Please!

- ⑩ Attention economics: how much of our customers' attention do we receive rather than how much of their money
- ⑩ Framing products and services within the concept of gaining attention may help better target members' interests and ultimately increase revenue and member satisfaction over the long run
- ⑩ Attention questions:
  - ⑩ How much of our members' attention do we want?
  - ⑩ How much should we have?
  - ⑩ How much do they give us now?
  - ⑩ What are they paying attention to?
  - ⑩ What will it take for us to be front-of-mind with our members?
- ⑩ Focus on getting and retaining members' attention & money will follow

## No More Committees

- ⑩ Eliminating committees is a simple high impact idea
- ⑩ Committees are pockets of bureaucracy
- ⑩ The totality of the committee structure is the underpinning of an organization's "infrastructure of the status quo"

## No More Committees, Con't

- ⑩ Create collaborative groups
- ⑩ Six to eight members max
- ⑩ Equal number of staff and volunteers working together
- ⑩ No chairs – use co-facilitators, one staff and one volunteer rotating monthly
- ⑩ Duration of no less than 3 and no more than 4 months
- ⑩ Ability to reorganize and continue with at least 50% turnover
- ⑩ No reports, only conversations
- ⑩ Mutual evaluations