101 Things About Associations We Must Change

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

Strategy and Planning Are Not The Same

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

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

Presidential Agendas Be Gone

- Constructing initial discussion with incoming chief elected officer
- Start with current strategic priorities
- What ideas the chief elected officer has to move the strategic priorities forward
- Ideas, not mandates
- 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 Distruptions

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

Discount

- Stop putting so much focus on member discounts
- Associations originated with out such benefits
- People associated for the sake of associating
- Create an image that that makes members proud to be members of the organization and the industry
- 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.

- We can’t afford Boards that:
  - Tolerate denial, nostalgia & myopia
  - Defer difficult choices to the future to keep the peace
  - Value the superficial over the substantive
  - Interfere with or prevent the pursuit of innovation

- We need Boards that:
  - Recognize and accept the emerging reality of profound, accelerating & intensifying disruption and discontinuity
  - Confront divisive issues & accept constructive conflict
  - Embrace the privilege of board service as its own reward
  - Are guided by a strategic mindset & entrepreneurial spirit

Fearing Rejection

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

When Will We Learn

- Strategic planning is never, never, never going to help our organizations to the next level of success.
- 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.
- The future cannot and should not be predicted.
- Our long-term success depends on cultivating a deep capacity for creating the future.
- Pursuing innovation costs less than trying to build a strong and sustainable brand.
- Being an innovator is a strong and sustainable brand.
When Will We Learn

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

Why Innovation?

- Innovation is the most critical capability for an association to develop today to maximize their opportunities for success tomorrow
- Creating a culture of innovation is all about unleashing the passion of staff and volunteers
  - Passionate people innovate freely
- Creating a successful innovation culture is a shared responsibility
- An effective innovation culture is all about finding the right balance of freedom and discipline
- Creating an effective innovation culture is not enough to make innovation happen
- It is the CEO’s responsibility to make the case for innovation to the Board
  - 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

- Think like an intellectual capitalist
- Instead of identifying yourself by the products you sell, define yourself as an entrepreneur with a specialty in a particular area
- 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
+ Sometimes Research Is Not Enough

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

+ May I Have Your Attention Please!

- Attention economics: how much of our customers’ attention do we receive rather than how much of their money
- 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
- Attention questions:
  - How much of our members’ attention do we want?
  - How much should we have?
  - How much do they give us now?
  - What are they paying attention to?
  - What will it take for us to be front-of-mind with our members?
- Focus on getting and retaining members’ attention & money will follow
No More Committees

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

No More Committees, Con’t

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