

Strategic Plan guides STMA's future

THE STMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS met for an extra day and a half during its summer 2011 board meeting to formulate their vision for the future. That vision is captured in the association's 2012-2014 Strategic Plan, which is outlined below. The 2007-2011 plan is complete, and its accomplishments were outstanding (see "President's Message" on page 7). Some elements of the new plan build on concepts that were introduced in the previous 5-year plan; other elements clearly are new for STMA. The goal of this plan, as it has been for its previous plans, is to take STMA to the next level in advancing the association, its members, and the industry.

Consultant Joe O'Brien, CAE, facilitated the development of this plan, as he did the creation of the just completed 5-year plan, and a shorter 2-year plan that helped guide STMA for 2005 and 2006. O'Brien says he is amazed at the progress

of STMA. "When I helped to facilitate the plan for 2005 and 2006, the items that were identified in that plan are very different from those in this plan. STMA attacked those issues, accomplished those goals, and set higher and higher expectations," says O'Brien. "I am impressed how far the STMA has come in such a relatively short amount of time."

The STMA Board is vigilant in reviewing its strategic plan's progress during each board meeting. During these reviews, the Board also discusses how the industry and other factors may be impacting the plan, and makes adjustments accordingly.

The plan guides Board's discussions on partnerships and collaboration efforts. Any organization that STMA is considering an alliance with is examined relative to a fit with the Strategic Plan. Any new program or service idea that is brought

to Board is vetted against how it fits into the plan and whether its adoption will help STMA achieve its goals. The plan also serves as the basis for performance evaluation for CEO Kim Heck and her staff. Because the plan sets very specific milestones, the achievement of the plan can be quantitatively measured.

As the Board discussed the association's future, it determined that a 3-year plan is more nimble and realistic in this economy and for the rapid pace-of-change the industry is experiencing. The new plan is organized into four platforms that set the overall direction and focus for the association. Within each platform are goals and objectives. Within each objective there is an action plan with timing (short, mid, or long-term) and committee/committees assigned to help achieve the plan. Noted below are the platforms, goals, and objectives.

STMA Strategic Plan 2012-2014

STRATEGIC PLATFORM I: Attract and Retain a Vibrant and Engaged Membership

Goal: Grow and sustain a membership at 3,800 by the conclusion of 2014

Objective 1: Recruit non-members who fit into STMA's current membership categories.

Objective 2: Use our membership growth initiative to help chapters grow.

Objective 3: Tap into markets that are involved on the periphery of sports field management.

Objective 4: Increase the membership retention rate from 71 percent to 80 percent.

PLATFORM II: Be Recognized as the Leader in Industry Education

Goal: Provide educational resources that are vital to the success of members and advance the profession

Objective 1: Develop education that is relevant, affordable and accessible.

Objective 2: Develop significant learning opportunities at the national and regional conferences.

Objective 3: Develop an educational platform around safety.

PLATFORM III: Gain Recognition and Respect for Members and the Profession from External Audiences

Goal: To increase awareness of the profession and visibility of members with employer groups, the media, sports organizations, athletes, and international organizations.

Objective 1: Create an association-wide marketing and public relations plan.

Objective 2: Use the environmental stewardship of members to raise awareness of the profession and enhance the image of STMA members.

Objective 3: Protect and advance the work of members through government relations outreach.

Objective 4: Develop relationships internationally that will raise the awareness of STMA.

Objective 5: Leverage the CSFM program to enhance recognition and status of certified members.

PLATFORM IV: Create Excellent Value for Commercial Partners

Goal: To validate the importance of commercial members to STMA

Objective 1: Provide a conference and exhibition that meets exhibitor expectations relative to timing, floor traffic, and the cost/value proposition.

Objective 2: Provide sponsorship opportunities that achieve commercial partners' goals.

Objective 3: Provide information to commercial partners about STMA members that helps them grow their businesses.

Ten Common Reasons Strategic Plans Fail

By Leo J. Bottary

WHILE THE DATA on strategic plan failure rates is all over the map, suffice it to say it's HIGH! Below you'll find ten common reasons strategic plans fail. It's likely that the last strategic initiative to fall short in your organization could be attributed to one (or some combination) of these 10 causes.

1. History - You have to be mindful of your history when it comes to launching strategic initiatives. If you're the kind of organization which, just a year ago, launched a new initiative with great fanfare only for it to have died an unceremonious death, then your employees are not likely to be fooled again. They're smarter than Charlie Brown, who as you recall was repeatedly foiled by Lucy every time he was asked to kick the football. If your announcement is met with rolling eyes and a collective groan, then you stand little chance of real success no matter how brilliant the plan.

2. People/Culture - Knowing what to do in the abstract is usually the easy part. Knowing what YOU can do based on the unique skills and mindset of your team is an entirely different matter. Understanding your people, the culture and sub-cultures within your organization, and shared vision/values are essential to developing a plan that stands a chance of success. Failure to do so is a recipe for disaster. Dave Logan's research on "tribes" in his book *Tribal Leadership* offers a practical framework for understanding and working with your culture to achieve what Peter Senge describes as the difference between apathy/compliance and commitment/enrollment.

3. Leadership - How committed is your lead-

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ership team to the success of the strategic plan? Not just in terms of what they say when the plan is announced, but how they communicate (words & actions) during the life of the plan. What signals do they send to the employees? As Kouzes and Posner might ask: How is your leadership modeling the way? If employees sense that the leadership's commitment is tepid, then that's what leaders can expect in return.

4. Discipline - Let's say you've got committed leaders and employees. That's great, but commitment to achieving strategic goals is still not enough. The question is: Do they have the discipline necessary to make real behavioral change? Jim Collins refers to this in terms of "disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action." So in individual terms, someone might be committed to losing ten pounds, yet lack the discipline to do what's necessary to achieve the goal and maintain the weight. It's no different in organizations. David Maister says that without discipline your strategic plan will have all the teeth of a typical New Year's resolution.

5. Communication - Most strategic-related communications, even if thoroughly planned and executed, are designed only to create clarity around what management wants the employees to do (which by itself can be a tall order). As a result, the communication efforts fall woefully short of the mark. Good strategic communication should have one goal: To make sure everyone in the company sees the strategic plan NOT

as just the leadership's plan, but as THEIR plan. Failing that, you're asking your employees to be more committed to your goals than their own. Not sure that's very realistic.

6. Monitoring, Measurement, Feedback – Even the best conceived strategic plans require adjustments along the way. It's critical to monitor the plan's progress, measure outputs as well as outcomes, and obtain feedback from all your stakeholders. It's also essential to consider unintended effects. For example, is success in one area of your company undermining results elsewhere in the organization? Are you realizing short-term gains at the expense of long-term growth? Have you considered delays, both positive and negative, that could result in outcomes you may have to wait months or years to fully understand? So if your organization didn't listen along the way and lacked patience, it was likely accompanied by a failed effort.

7. Lack of Flexibility – While it's helpful to have all the right systems in place to track your progress, it's all for naught if you lack the will, the flexibility, and the triggers necessary to make adjustments along the way. Over time, and presented with solid evidence, you can't be afraid to depart from the original plan. Keep the goal, change the plan, not the other way around!

8. Milestones/Rewards - Most strategic initiatives of any consequence take time. Even for the most disciplined among us, we need to be motivated and inspired to achieve a longer-term

goal. Consider what it takes to keep your people on track. How do you stay focused on the goal and celebrate your progress? What are the best milestones and rewards for your plan? Your organization? You can't let your organization lose steam.

9. Bad Planning - Make a list of the people in your organization who were involved in developing your last strategic plan. Who were they? How deep did you go in the organization? How wide? What was the extent of their involvement? OR, did the senior leadership team develop the plan on its own and then announce it to the organization? How did that work for you? Off-site huddles by the senior management team to develop a strategic plan often result in developing a plan that has no chance of success.

10. Bad Plan - Sometimes plans fail because they are simply bad plans, and I would argue that they are often bad plans because we don't tend to get everyone involved that we should. We either fail to tap into the collective talents and dedication of our people or we misjudge the external environment and the response of our stakeholders. It can make employees feel isolated and the leadership look out of touch.

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STMA Adopts Environmental Policy Statement

AT THE FALL BOARD MEETING, the STMA Board of Directors adopted an Environmental Policy Statement that includes an environmental mission, vision, principles and goals. This policy lays the groundwork for STMA's efforts in developing environmental programs for members and in creating partnerships with other organizations.

The statement was developed by the Environmental Committee during the previous eight months under the leadership of Chairman Kevin Trotta. Members of the committee include Pam Driver, Beth Guertal, Ph.D., Mark Lucas, Scott MacVicar, David Minner, Ph.D., Kevin Mercer, Paul Patterson, Jim Sluiter, John Sorochan, Ph.D., Gwen Stahnke, Ph.D., Mike Tarantino, CSFM, Waldo Terrell, Vickie Wallace, Clint Waltz, Ph.D., and Rich Watson. The Committee's next steps are to develop action plans that will provide a roadmap to achieving the set goals.

ENVIRONMENTAL VISION STATEMENT: An environmentally sustainable sports field industry for present and future generations.

ENVIRONMENTAL MISSION STATEMENT: To

practice and promote environmental stewardship and education in the management of sports fields and facilities.

PRINCIPLES

Education is a key to continued improvements in environmental performance

Leadership means performance beyond compliance

Sustainability is not an established set of practices. It's a goal.

Natural resource stewardship benefits current and future generations

We can reduce, reuse and recycle

Prosperity and pollution can be disconnected

Sports turf provides communities with social and economic benefits

Appropriately managed turfgrass enhances air and water quality

Best Management Practices are tools for reduced environmental impact

IPM affords a sensible approach to managing turfgrass pests

Trends in equipment and vehicle develop-

ment promise continued reduction in environmental impact

GOALS

Sustainability. Ecologically compatible, socially desirable and economically viable sports turf

To advance environmental awareness and provide educational opportunities for sports field managers

Pursue alliances and collaborations that foster the STMA's Environmental Mission

Encourage participation in stewardship and certification programs

Openly communicate our actions and intentions

Encourage research that integrates environmental stewardship and sports field management

Continual improvement in STMA's environmental performance and leadership

STMA members are invited to use these principles as appropriate and promote their stewardship within their facilities and their communities.