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Strategic Planning Will Be Critical to AAPL's Future Success



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In this month's Officer Forum on page 6, AAPL President Jim Devlin, CPL, shares a high-level view of the planning meeting held in February.

Those conversations were open, honest and sometimes difficult — but all for the good of the association. We could not allow elephants to remain in the room without truly understanding why they exist and if they should exist in the future. All of us — volunteers, staff, board, ExCom and members — want AAPL to succeed and to be the best association it can be. Getting there will take time, plenty of conversations about our “why” and effective strategic planning.

Offering a simple, yet clear, definition of a strategic plan, Richard Mittenthal, president and CEO at TCC Group, said: “A strategic plan is a tool that provides guidance in fulfilling a mission with maximum efficiency and impact. If it is to be effective and useful, it should articulate specific goals and describe the action steps and resources needed to accomplish them.”

It is important to know what we are doing as well as why we are doing it.

Creating strategic goals ensures that we have alignment throughout every area of the association — from leaders to volunteers to staff. We all need to be moving in the same direction to drive our association forward, and we need to be agile enough to move during times of change.

Research from the American Society for Association Executives has shown that younger members of the workforce are seeking volunteer opportunities that are more in line with microvolunteering, which involves quick on-demand tasks that don't require an ongoing commitment. Millennials value free time. They want to jump on a task force or a project and then be done. They are not looking to commit multiple years to be on a committee.

ASAE research also revealed that millennials will be joiners of associations, and since their generation is larger than Generation X, associations could have more members than in the past several years. However, if the millennials do not find what they want from existing organizations, they may choose to form their own association instead of joining

existing associations. ASAE found many drivers of change that associations should consider in their planning, such as diversity and inclusion, new forms of work, fast data and declining trust, just to name a few. These drivers of change can help education association leaders and staff more effectively prepare for the future, and plan for needs to begin now.

During the SWOT analysis that William Pawlucy, CAE, of Association Options LLC walked the group through in February, it was clear that by improving our governance and committee structure many of our other goals could be more easily achieved. Evaluating our current structure was identified as our first challenge to tackle. A modern governance structure is a critical factor for our success. We will rely on best practices and our team at Association Options to help guide us through a process that will result in the best solution for AAPL. As part of our governance structure review, Association Options is already helping us review our bylaws and policy manual for any needed updates and to bring cohesion to the documents.

AAPL is a strong association with a proud history built on volunteer leadership, community and local affiliates. We look forward to committees and volunteers playing key roles in focusing on member needs, while volunteer leaders govern our association and staff members manage it. The model we currently have may change, but our values will not. ▲

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