



CASE STUDY: Mega Issues

American Dental Hygienists' Association

The Issue

The [American Dental Hygienists' Association](#) was proposing a comprehensive bylaws revision. When revisions were tried in the past, they had failed. There were member factions that were resistant to change but the volunteer leaders and staff of ADHA knew that a bylaws revision was necessary to modernize the organization. In order to successfully navigate the revision, they would need a process that was transparent, would grow trust and break down silos of members, and create buy-in and ownership of the revision.

Why Tecker International?

ADHA had a relationship with Tecker International that began with strategic planning and leadership development which had introduced ADHA to knowledge based decision making, metrics and data driven planning. When faced with the bylaws revision, ADHA knew TI had tools to create a dynamic and transparent process that would provide information and buy-in needed to modernize and move the organization forward.

What was the TI process?

Tecker International (TI) defines these strategic "mega" issues as overriding issues of strategic importance that cut across multiple goal or outcome areas. They address key questions leaders must ask and answer, illuminating choices of strategy the organization must make and the challenges which will need to be overcome in moving toward future goals. The TI process involves using the group's collective experience and expertise to answer four critical questions. These answers serve as a knowledge base for informed and confident group discussion.

1. What do we know about our **stakeholders' needs, wants, and preferences** that are relevant to this decision?
2. What do we know about the **current realities and evolving dynamics** of our environment that is relevant to this decision?
3. What do we know about the **capacity and strategic position** of our organization that is relevant to this decision?
4. What are the **ethical implications**?

The association creates choices which are framed as discrete but not necessarily exclusive alternatives. Assessment is conducted by descriptively identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative.

ADHA and TI brought together its House of Delegates to answer these four questions and to create choices and the advantages of those choices. The TI-facilitated discussion allowed randomly selected small groups to consider questions and possible solutions. In addition, the small groups had the opportunity to share their thinking with the larger group.

What were the outcomes of the mega-issue discussions?

It was a success. It provided the information, input and buy-in needed to move the bylaws revision smoothly forward.

But the bylaws revision wasn't the only outcome. The mega-issue process led to a stronger board and staff relationship—both sides committed to the future success of ADHA. It marginalized the small but loud group of members adverse to change. It helped clarify the roles of the House of Delegates and Board of Directors—the board runs the organization and the House of Delegates speaks for the profession. And most importantly, it gave the organization a positive way to discuss big issues. It has given strategic discussions a structure in which consensus can be built while respecting the diversity of opinions.

In the years since the first mega-issue discussion, it has become the culture of ADHA. Mega-issue questions are either developed by the board of directors or can be the outcome of consultant reports and recommendations. The members of the House of Delegates look forward to the opportunity to participate and make recommendations for consideration by the board of directors.

From the Client

The best part of the mega-issue process is the opportunity to hear all voices and opinions. Group discussions are often driven by whoever is speaking the loudest. The mega-issue process provides quiet members the opportunity to have input.

We would recommend any organization facing big issues engage Tecker International. They have helped to contemporize ADHA and given us a process to take contentious issues and make decisions in an equitable way. We have enough experience to conduct the process ourselves. But, TI consultants bring a neutral voice and an important external perspective. Having outside support to facilitate the process also allows the staff to participate in the process as part of the team.

For more information about how TI can help your organization tackle mega-issues, contact info@tecker.com. You can also explore resources on knowledge based decision making on the [TI website](#).