



CASE STUDY: Strategic Planning

Association of Marketing Service Providers

The Issue

The drop in mail volume and the financial situation of the US Postal Service was having a ripple effect with the members of the [Association of Marketing Service Providers](#) (AMSP)—an over-supply and under-demand of mail and fulfillment services. There were more and more consolidations. The landscape didn't look promising but it didn't have to spell the end of the association. There were strategic options available but discovering them and agreeing to change would take the assistance of a professional, qualified, experienced facilitator to work with the staff and board of directors.

Why Tecker International?

AMSP went through a process of vetting and investigating options for consultant services. TI was selected because of its experience working with associations in general and those in similar positions—facing substantial changes in order to remain relevant in a changing environment.

What was the TI process?

In general, TI's process consisted of crafting a comprehensive strategic direction based on the balance between what doesn't change – the timeless principles of the organization's core purpose and core values, and the vision that drives change – and what the organization seeks to be or become within a longer-term planning horizon. With AMSP, significant time was spent defining their envisioned future which conveys a yet unrealized vision for the organization. It consists of a big audacious goal—a clear and compelling catalyst that serves as a focus point for effort and a vivid description which is vibrant and engaging description of what it would be like to achieve the big audacious goal. To come to these conclusions, facilitated sessions included creative and engaging exercises for the groups.

Once defined, the linkage of strategic judgments continues into the three to five year horizon, through the development of a formal strategic plan, in which the organization must articulate the outcomes it seeks to achieve for its members and stakeholders. How will the members be different as a result of what the AMSP does? Who will benefit and what will the likely results be?

The long term envisioned future smoothly transforms into the goals for the organization. Additional facilitated group work creates objectives and strategies. Most organizations have plans and ideas that exceed the available resources. Therefore, a critical element of the strategic planning process is to prioritize objectives and strategies to identify those things which are most critical to the immediate future success of the organization.

What were the outcomes of AMSP's strategic planning sessions?

AMSP developed plans for its future in two distinct strategic planning sessions. The first laid the groundwork for larger future changes. It was conceptual work for the volunteer leaders and staff to come to agreement that the association was not sustainable in its present form. Where the association had been successful in the past would have to change significantly to be successful in the future.

Time revealed that many of the assumptions and projections from the first session proved true and it was time to focus on specific strategies and tactics. In part two, the exercise was no longer intellectual and became more about how to re-brand and re-position the organization. This plan was more about concrete strategies for implementing the vision developed in the first session. Both sessions—with 18-24 months in between—were necessary.

The final results included new vision, mission, goals, objectives, strategies; a new name and tagline and a rebranding and repositioning campaign. TI worked with AMSP to understand the structure and importance of communicating the changes and processes with the members. Member input was included in all phases of the changes. When the plans were brought to a vote of the membership, only two members objected. The new rebranded association confidently continues to address the needs, wants and preferences of its stakeholders.

From the Client:

TI had the right tools. But the real success was a combination of the tools and the consultant's efforts to understand and gain knowledge about AMSP. It allowed him to match the TI tools with what we needed most. The research conducted prior to the sessions ensured no time was wasted. He quickly and uniquely was able to develop a culture of trust. He had the credibility, knowledge and experience to guide us in the right direction.

It's work. But we enjoyed working with TI. We really enjoyed our time together and we look forward to working with them in the future. Making it enjoyable is the magic that made the outcomes really good. The process becomes something that's not burdensome or difficult. We would happily recommend TI to all associations—not just those facing major changes. Even if things are going well, a facilitator should assist with strategic planning.

For information on how Tecker International can assist your organization in thinking and planning strategically, contact info@tecker.com.