

We Need Your Help to Redefine AMA's Business Strategy!

Why does the AMA need to redefine its strategy? AMA continues to be an association with a declining membership and a membership whose average age rises every year. AMA is not unique in the association world. Most associations, both in and out of the aviation environment, are experiencing the same phenomenon.

Today's generation is looking for instant gratification and there are many competitors vying for their disposable income. Video games attract the attention of young people at the expense of other activities including model aviation. Online social networking is replacing meetings. Electronic communication has replaced the physical camaraderie of being with others who share a common interest. The associations that not just survive but also thrive will be the ones that recognize and react to these changes. The world is changing and AMA must adapt to the world "outside" of ours, not the other way around. While AMA has made some effort to adapt to these changes, the effort has not had the positive impact for which we had hoped.

AMA needs to act to address these concerns and to find a solution to return the organization to growth. Two major risks associated with a declining member base are loss of revenue, resulting in a decline in programs and services, and a "smaller" voice when advocating for our members. Some associations are accessing their reserve accounts to remain fiscally afloat and others are reducing personnel and cutting back on services to members. This is not the time to cut costs by making any changes to reduce the value, benefits, products, and services provided to AMA clubs and members.

AMA's revenue level must increase to support and maintain the increased inflationary costs in providing product and services to the membership and offset the revenue loss resulting from the current trend in membership decline. In a declining economy, an increase in member dues is *not* the answer. We must explore potential sources of new revenue streams.

Development, implementation, and optimization of profitable non-dues revenue programs may require us to think and act in an entrepreneurial way. Non-Profit is a tax status, not a mission statement. Organizations that succeed do so because they are willing to shift to a new

paradigm; the ones that fail are those that refuse to see beyond the traditional ideas. It was said "not accepting the status quo will create an environment where innovation and entrepreneurial spirit will flourish."

Today most associations include in their strategic plans new initiatives that will require entrepreneurial skills, especially when those goals involve revenue. The non-profit traditionally generates non-dues revenue from affinity programs, sponsorship, advertising sales, products and services, grants, and donations. These traditional sources are not always successful in meeting the needs for additional revenue without a major shift to an entrepreneurial strategy. Non-profits have found that their boards and staff need to have members who are able to perform as entrepreneurs. Smart boards recognize that to acquire the absolute best level of expertise, the association may need to go outside to acquire individuals possessing these required qualities and form a task force to work with the board and staff.

How does the AMA plan to change its strategy? As a result of the success of the AMA Membership Dynamic program and the members who volunteered some of their time and specific expertise to help our committees, we believe that our best resource for bringing the necessary changes to the AMA business strategy should come from our membership. The latitude to consider all factors without fear of confinement to the "traditional box" can best be achieved by a task force primarily of individual members who have business expertise in desirable areas specific to the defined mission.

This idea was presented to the Executive Council (EC) during the January 2010 meeting and approved by the board. We were charged with creating an elite AMA Strategic Task Force (STF) empowered to recommend comprehensive changes to AMA's business model. The initial STF focus will be directed toward developing strategies and initiatives for increasing revenue streams and membership.

"Agents of Change"—the AMA Strategic Task Force: The STF core group will consist of one AMA EC member to lead/facilitate the STF, one AMA senior staff member to provide liaison between the STF and all AMA departments, and six team leaders who have individual executive work experience

in any of the following areas: association management, marketing, finance, revenue/resource, information/technology, and legal/regulatory. In addition to the STF core group, the selected team leaders may choose individuals as members of their teams to aid them in their work.

Each STF executive team leader will review the AMA business strategy with their team members and apply their areas of expertise along with other team leaders to the development of programs and initiatives to accomplish the STF mission.

If you are willing to volunteer some of your free time and expertise to serve as an AMA STF team leader or team member, you will be ensuring the future of your Academy and the sport of aeromodeling. We recognize the need for flexibility in terms of your participation in the work group, so the primary interaction will utilize online discussion threads, periodic Web conferencing, and collaboration software. Any expenses incurred by the STF or its team leader members in the performance of the STF mission would be funded by the AMA.

STF Membership Application and More About Membership Roles: Download the AMA STF application and STF member role information that can be found as a link on the opening page of the AMA Web site (www.modelaircraft.org). Return the application to the e-mail address on the form.

All applicants will be considered for STF membership. The applications will be reviewed by the AMA president and EC. They will select the initial core group of team leaders. These team leaders will then make additional selections for their team members from the remaining applicants. Those who are not selected will have their applications kept on file in a database and, as the need arises, may be solicited again for STF membership.

We would appreciate your participation in this important Strategic Task Force. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Dave Mathewson at president@modelaircraft.org or Andy Argenio at brandshobby@gmail.com. **MA**

—Dave Mathewson, AMA President
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