

in the final analysis

“Although some organizations today may survive and prosper because they have intuitive geniuses managing them, most are not so fortunate. Most organizations can benefit from strategic management, which is based upon integrating intuition and analysis in decision making.”

—Fred R. David, *Strategic Management: Concepts and Cases, Instructor Review Copy*

I’ve quoted many different sources for my editorials over the years—scientists and engineers, artists and authors, politicians and philosophers, poets and musicians, experts and visionaries, movie stars and cartoon characters—but I never cited an “instructor review copy.” That’s kind of weird, right? Such is the sausage-making that goes into “In the Final Analysis.” But I digress. Wait a minute. Can I digress from making a point before I even start to make the point? Hmmm, disregard these opening sentences and indulge me to start again. . . .

Each year around this time, the TMS Board of Directors hunkers down to engage in strategic planning to help guide the future of the Society. Developing and, more importantly, *executing* a well-devised strategic plan is a best practice for any successful organization. TMS has been doing it for decades. While subject to variation, our strategic planning process generally looks something like this: The Board of Directors considers and prioritizes the Society’s needs, opportunities, and challenges. A set of tactics that show promise for helping to meet the goals are identified and prioritized. The financial requirements to implement the tactics and achieve the desired results are calculated and prioritized. (We do a lot of prioritizing as our aspirations can be greater than our bandwidth and must be modulated out of practical necessity.) Volunteers and staff members execute the tactics and provide regular progress reports. Typically, TMS undertakes a full revision of the plan every three years and an incremental revision every year as existing tactics are executed or recast and new ones are conceptualized. When we are not in the process of creating or updating the plan, we are in the process of implementation, measurement, and reporting. It is all very orderly.

As I write, a new full version of the TMS Strategic Plan is under development. It will set the path from today to 2021—the year that TMS turns 150 years old when one counts our formative years as a component of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers. This year’s strategic planning process was especially energizing as Society leadership worked hard to engage not only Board members in the planning, but also the chairs of numerous committees within the Society. This engagement took the form of asking the large number of engaged volunteers a trio of questions: “What one aspect of TMS do you definitely want to keep?” “What one aspect of TMS would you change?” “Concerning what you would change, what tactic or tactics would you recommend that TMS could employ?” The responses made for excellent reading and supplied sweeping and thoughtful perspective on what should be next for TMS.

It would be premature for me to preview the results right now (that will come after MS&T18). But, if you promise to be discrete, I will share a few tidbits. The top three things that we should keep? Our grassroots volunteer construct, the quality of TMS meetings (especially the Annual Meeting & Exhibition), and the Society’s focus on diversity and inclusion. The top three areas where we can make improvements? We could broaden our organizational scope and cover more areas, we can make improvements to the programming experience at the Annual Meeting & Exhibition, and we can better orient and communicate with volunteers. All great observations.

So, that is some of what is explicit and implicit from the responses to the first two rounds of Q&A. The rubber really hits that road with the third question—i.e., what should we do to achieve change? For the moment, I can’t yet share those insights as they are still in the Instructor Review Copy. (The digression wasn’t such a digression after all.)

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