

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS

"Just because you made a good plan, doesn't mean that's what's gonna happen."

—Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift has conquered the popular musical world several times over. As a performer and cultural influence, she has proven an unstoppable force that, upon meeting an immovable object, persuaded the immovable object to willingly yield to her talent, insight, and business savvy. Did Ms. Swift set out to conquer the world in 2004 when she first performed as a 14-year-old at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe? I don't know, but I would not be the least bit surprised if she did. She's smart, and many in the smart set are avid planners. While the TMS Board of Directors once visited the Bluebird Cafe, albeit without Ms. Swift being on stage, our Board is very much among the planning set as well.

As I write, I have been in planning conversations with our new TMS President, Jud Ready of the Georgia Institute of Technology. The focus of the dialog is setting the groundwork for the TMS Board of Directors retreat that is to be held during July at TMS headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The working plan is ambitious:

First, the Board will consider the TMS Vision and Mission Statements, which were originally adopted in 1997. The former is, "The vision of TMS is to be the professional society of choice for the worldwide minerals, metals, and materials community." The latter is, "The mission of TMS is to promote the global science and engineering professions concerned with minerals, metals, and materials." Much has changed technically, socially, and globally over the intervening 25 years, and the silver jubilee of the vision and mission statements seems an apt time for reflection and either reaffirmation or revision of both.

Second, the Board will consider an update to the TMS Aspires Strategic Plan, which is much more youthful at four years of age. A good strategic plan provides a guide star for an organization's navigation, and TMS Aspires has done just that for our Society. Recall that the plan comprises three goals:

1. TMS aspires to be a highly inclusive society where all materials students and professionals feel welcome and diversity is celebrated.
2. TMS aspires to be the place where global materials practitioners come together and participate in vibrant annual meetings, specialty conferences, courses, student activities, and other events.
3. TMS aspires to be the society that envisions, defines, and enables the future by gathering and empowering materials experts to scope the future of materials science, engineering, and technology.

It is an engaging plan, and the Board updates it frequently. The summer retreat provides another chance to continue this refinement.

Third, the Board will consider the question, "How do we prepare TMS for the post-pandemic era when our meetings portfolio will have to include in-person only, virtual only, and combination in-person and virtual event options?" Presently, we are still in the reactive position of pivoting in-person meetings into either all virtual or blended in-person and virtual events. Eventually, we will be able to stop recasting meetings and once again develop and hold meetings according to plans as originally conceived. We now know that there are many advantages to a well-planned and well-executed virtual experience, not the least of which is the ability to engage participants who might not otherwise be able to attend in the conventional fashion. The Board will explore that and related emergent opportunities that are re-inventing the events field.

For an organization having roots that stretch back to 1871, TMS is not too old to take another lesson from Taylor Swift, who sang in the song "Innocent" from the album *Speak Now*, "Today is never too late to be brand new." Every time that TMS undertakes strategic planning, it makes the Society brand new. How very exciting for all of us!

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