

A Strategic Plan for a Non-Profit that Led to a Restructured Board



"We realized we needed new strategies to compete more effectively, but we weren't collecting the right data to get us there. Meridian helped us change our thinking. Based on what we learned about the market, we've developed a new way to approach corporate America. Today we're having a greater impact on safety. We took a fresh look at how we meet our charter and mission, and have refocused this organization."

*Alan C. McMillan, President and CEO
National Safety Council*

The Client

The National Safety Council (NSC) is a federally chartered non-profit member organization incorporated by Act of Congress in 1953. The organization's mission is to influence society to adopt practices that prevent human suffering and economic loss arising from preventable causes.

The Challenge

Accelerating the strategic contribution of a new President/CEO and a new COO through culture change and an enhanced market focus

Situation

In the mid-1990s, this non-profit association that provides training materials and safety products to corporate clients across America, hired new leaders to take the organization into the future. In discussions with their senior team, the new CEO and COO quickly realized that the organization needed a dramatic culture change in order to grow and succeed. It was clear the staff seemed more concerned about "doing good" than operating as a business. In the CEO's mind, those two goals were not mutually exclusive.

Compounding the internal culture issue was the fact that the organization's large and unwieldy Board of Directors lacked agreement, among themselves, on organizational priorities. At this time, the board consisted largely of corporate safety officers, many of whom lacked business management experience.

MERIDIAN ASSOCIATES was initially contacted to provide guidance in writing an annual business plan for the NSC. But discussions with key executives revealed that the organization's issues and needs were actually broader and longer term. So MERIDIAN was engaged to help develop a five-year Strategic Plan that, importantly, would be built upon an interchange of ideas between management and the Board, an interchange that MERIDIAN would help frame with factual data.

Approach

MERIDIAN professionals led the NSC through a series of Discovery and Decision steps over 11 months. Working with executives, senior managers and board members, MERIDIAN assisted the organization in developing 10 strategic objectives (addressing revenue, product development, outreach, etc), specific strategies and timetables for achieving each objective, and detailed financial targets and performance metrics. Specific contributions of MERIDIAN ASSOCIATES included:

To learn more, contact
MERIDIAN ASSOCIATES INC.
at **312-335-8050**

Or visit us on the web at
www.meridianAi.com

(Continued)

- Identifying a market-based framework for evaluating the contribution of current NSC products and services that also served to direct decisions about investments in future offerings
- Identifying core areas, and helping to forge agreement between management and the board, about areas where the NSC would move toward being “The” leader vs. “A” leader in the future
- Defining a more precise, measurable role for the NSC Foundation going forward
- Leading five one-day or partial-day Strategy Sessions, including a defining Session with the Executive Committee of the board that resulted in recommendations for a new role and structure of the full board

Results

Within two years of the initial MERIDIAN ASSOCIATES engagement, clear financial objectives were being set annually and pursued in an organized, deliberate manner. A culture change among NSC staff had resulted in a better market focus by the organization. Being more attuned to the market, the association expanded from its traditional focus on industrial safety to embrace other sectors with even greater potential for preventing human suffering and economic loss.

The composition and structure of the NSC Board of Directors was also completely changed. In place of the 60+ member Board that had existed before, the group was split in two: A new smaller Board of Directors, composed of senior executives with business experience, now works in concert with a separate Board of Delegates. Delegates provide the essential safety and health policy recommendations and technical expertise required for the association to continue to play a vital role in the safety and health field. The result has been a clearer delineation of responsibilities and improved effectiveness on the part of the overall Board in assisting management to set and accomplish organizational goals.

NSC management is now leading the organization to have important impact on a broader array of corporate and community safety and health needs in the U.S. than ever before. And the NSC Board has been strengthened in ways that enable it to better fulfill its most important corporate governance responsibilities.

To learn more, contact
MERIDIAN ASSOCIATES INC.
at **312-335-8050**

Or visit us on the web at
www.meridianAi.com