



PLANNING AND FACILITATING A STRATEGIC SESSION

Why Is a Strategic Planning Session Important?

An actionable, successful strategic plan is the result of much hard work; developing a plan and putting it into practice across an organization takes a great deal of discipline and focus on the part of individuals, as well as significant investments of time and resources by the group as a whole. While a strategic plan is a vital roadmap to an organization's future, it's only as good as the paper it's written on if it isn't embraced and adopted by stakeholders at all levels. This is why preparing for and effectively facilitating a strategic session is essential to a strategic plan's success.

"I cannot say enough about how important this session was, how incredibly valuable and important.... It's hard and it takes time and resources, and it's not easy to pull together or get support for doing...but once you do it, it's extremely worthwhile."—Dominick Mondì, Executive Director, NJNLA

Client: New Jersey Nursery & Landscape Association

First organized in 1915 as the New Jersey Association of Nurserymen, the New Jersey Nursery & Landscape Association (NJNLA) supports and advocates for green industry businesses, nurseries, landscape professionals, and garden centers throughout the Garden State.

In developing NJNLA's strategy meeting facilitation plan, Tony Scott, of-counsel to TVD Associates, worked closely with NJNLA's executive director, Dominick Mondì.

NJNLA's Objectives

NJNLA began its 100th year in 2015, and in concordance with this milestone, Dominick Mondì worked with the organization to prepare a new strategic plan, called "The 2020 Plan." NJNLA's previous strategic plan did not yield the results that the organization desired, so Mondì wanted to take a different approach to how the new plan should be presented to the board and membership. Mondì was also keen on having someone without a connection to the nursery and landscape industry prepare, and lead, the strategy session because, "this way we could not bring any assumptions into the room; we all have our biases, and having an outsider could give us a clearer mirror in which to look at ourselves."

Mondì conducted a search for a firm to provide assistance through this process, and felt strongly that TVD Associates stood head and shoulders among the competition he analyzed. For Mondì, TVD Associates had the best range and breadth of experience and could offer many creative ideas and out-of-the-box approaches to this strategy session and make the adoption of The 2020 Plan a success.



The Meeting Planning Process

TVD Associates developed a customized approach to the strategy session preparation, and the planning process itself was conducted in three parts:

1) Strategy Sessions with Executive Director

Tony Scott communicated and met with Dominick Mondì prior to the strategy session to understand Mondì's expectations, outline his objectives, and determine how to achieve the outcome Mondì desired for the session.

2) Developed Facilitation Approach

Scott and Mondì worked closely together in the weeks before the session and based these discussions Scott helped determine what briefing and information sharing should be done with attendees prior the meeting; conducted proprietary research; and made a list of objectives to be covered during the meeting.

3) Facilitated Strategy Session

The 2015 strategic planning session was a full-day meeting with 12 participants both from board and membership, representing a cross-section of industry segments as well as levels of commitment to the organization.

Mondì felt strongly that this meeting needed to be conducted like an extended board meeting, as opposed to a workshop or a training session, and Scott approached the day in this manner. After the session, Scott worked with Mondì on conclusion and analysis, offering his feedback and insights of the day.

"Having Tony lead the discussion affected the outcome in positive way; the meeting feedback was terrific, everyone enjoyed it personally as well as professionally. By having our people together and engaged, it helped us springboard some initiatives. Most of the people in the room that day had not met each other before, but now there's a new level of buy-in among the group that wasn't there previously."—Dominick Mondì, NJNLA

The Dividends of the Process

Mondì firmly believes that the planning process ensured the outcome of the planning session would be productive and constructive. One of the key parts of the process was the concerted effort to educate participants ahead of the meeting, so they could walk in the door engaged and open to the discussion. By the time the strategy session day arrived, Mondì said, "We had greased skids for conversation to really move; we sent out early homework and got everyone on same page, and Todd's team greatly helped with that."



“The people at NJNLA were great. We had an immediate rapport, and participants were very motivated and focused and engaged. The process we into place ahead of time greatly helped, and as a result we were able to harness and support the energy and thoughts of the board. In doing so, they basically set up the next-steps agenda as the meeting went along; there was no need to sum up the day with a list of action steps.”—Tony Scott

Praise for TVD Associates

“From the beginning, Todd presented himself as not only qualified and knowledgeable but also personable and easy to work with. He was very accommodating of our needs and willing to tailor what he did to meet what we needed, rather than offering some one-size, off-the-shelf approach. I would highly recommend TVD Associates to any association looking to begin the strategic planning process.”—Dominick Mondì, Executive Director, NJNLA

To Learn More

For almost two decades, TVD Associates has provided counsel on strategy and management challenges in the nonprofit and association arenas. Our consulting practice focuses on helping small- to medium-sized organizations leverage their human capital for significant and measurable gains. Contact us today about your association’s needs and learn how developing a strategic plan and facilitated meeting could play an important role in your organizational growth.