Strategy & Tactics in Public Policy Advocacy

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Phases of Collective Trauma Response

Heroic Phase

Disillusionment Phase

Wiser Living Phase

Sudden Impact

You've reached the end of the disillusionment phase when you are able to acknowledge that no amount of heroics can change the fact that this loss occurred, while also goodness still exists in life.

Rebuilding and Restoration Phase

These efforts are different from heroics, because they exist beyond disillusionment, in full awareness of loss, which is why this phase includes times of grief, unexpected remembering, and times of memorial, alongside new initiatives and creations.

Estimated 24m-60m Community Process
Associations and the Pandemic

- The pandemic’s impact on many association was HUGE… *CEO Update*
- *CEO Update* tracked 1,000 national associations during the first year of the pandemic and identified $1.5 Billion in lost revenues
- Many associations have opened lines of credit, dipped into reserves and laid off staff
- But at NWRA, we remain strong!
Financial Performance Highlights

- Reserves: Almost $23 million, untouched in 4-years
- Cash Flow is Strong
- Line-of-Credit: Unused in 4-years
- Consistent Balanced Budget/Surpluses for 4-years
- Over $300,000 in recent new membership
- 2021: We experienced an operating income of $846K and an overall change in net assets over $1 million excluding investment income of nearly $2.2 million
- All this, in a year when a downsized WasteExpo negatively impacted association finances
$ Change in Net Assets, Less Investments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Change in Net Assets, Less Investments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>-1,106,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>-1,152,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>-631,074</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>293,169</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>541,066</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>-20,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021 (unaudited)</td>
<td>1,001,365</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022 (budgeted)</td>
<td>859,463</td>
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Strategy

“A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for” – J.A. Shedd

Associations are safe when they are quite, but that is not what associations are for

• For 60-years, NWRA has been speaking loudly for the waste and recycling industry
• What is our strategy to affect public policy?
• How many of your organizations have a strategic plan?
The worst thing about a battle plan is that you might follow it.
Two Recommendations

• Richard Rumelt’s *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy*
• Michael Porter’s *What is Strategy?*
Four Signs of Bad Strategy - Rumelt

• **Fluff**
  A form of gibberish masquerading as strategic concepts or arguments. It uses “Sunday” words (words that are inflated and unnecessarily abstruse) and apparently esoteric concepts to create the illusion of high-level thinking.

• **Failure to face the challenge**
  Fails to recognize or define the challenge. When you cannot define the challenge, you cannot evaluate a strategy or improve it.

• **Mistaking goals for strategy**
  Many bad strategies are just statements of desire rather than plans for overcoming obstacles.

• **Bad strategic objectives**
  They fail to address critical issues or when they are impracticable.
What is Good Strategy? - Rumelt

“The first natural advantage of good strategy arises because other organizations often don’t have one. And because they don’t expect you to have one, either. A good strategy has coherence, coordinating actions, policies, and resources so as to accomplish an important end. Many organizations, most of the time, don’t have this. Instead, they have multiple goals and initiatives that symbolize progress, but no coherent approach to accomplishing that progress other than “spend more and try harder.”
NWRA’s Strategy

• “Good strategy works by focusing energy and resources on one, or a very few, pivotal objectives whose accomplishment will lead to a cascade of favorable outcomes.” – Rumelt

• “At the core, strategy is about focus, and most complex organizations don’t focus their resources. Instead, they pursue multiple goals at once, not concentrating enough resources to achieve a breakthrough in any of them.” – Rumelt

NWRA is simply the advocate for the private sector of the waste industry. Everything we do must support, or at least not hinder, this purpose.
Porter’s “What is Strategy?”

• **Differentiation:** creation of a unique and valuable position
  • Fast
  • Aggressive
  • Transparent
  • Adaptive
  • Lean
  • Fiscally responsible

• **Trade-offs:** choosing what not to do
  • Elimination of distractions
  • Outsourcing non-core functions

• **Fit:** activities that reinforce one another
  • 85% of staff with government relations background

**Our mindset:** strategic positioning attempts to achieve sustainable competitive advantage by preserving what is distinctive about an organization. It means performing different activities from rivals, or performing similar activities in different ways.
Smart Lobbying

• Our strategy is not just about our association
• The association is not the point
• A healthy association without a strong industry accomplishes nothing
• So, some advice for everyone given the current challenges of EPR, Bottle Bills, and increased public attention
  • Don’t lobby like a lawyer
  • Don’t lobby like a scientist
  • Lobby like a game theorist
Report on EPR

• Does EPR solve all of our recycling problems?
• Looked at 3 long-standing programs in Europe: Italy, Germany, France
• EPR appears to support recycling rates
• EPR does not appear to:
  • Improve recycled content
  • Improve design for recycling
  • Improve end markets
Bottle Bill Report

• Evaluated impact of bottle bill on MRFs
• Diverts significant amount of high value materials from MRFs: PET, aluminum, glass beverage containers
• MRF losses range from $11.89 - $23.59 per ton
New Member Benefit: Credit Union Membership and VISA

- Benefits
  - Credit union membership and access to all business and personal products
  - Independent hauler benefit
  - Virtually no burden on staff except to verify membership and post promotional material
Golf Consultant Partnership: Great Golf Events

Benefits
• More professional and polished events
• Increased chapter revenue
• Less burden on NWRA staff
• Improved registration and check-in
Thank You!

• “A strategy is not permanent. It’s like water, it will keep changing itself as the obstacles come.”
  - Pooja Agnihotri

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