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Shaping the Future of SMPTE

As I have been writing in this column over the past few issues, the last writing stated that SMPTE had recently begun implementing our approved three-year business plan, which includes investing in a few new tools, a new website, a new membership database system, and so much more. As an update, I am pleased to report that we are well on our way with this work.

Today, I want to report on how the SMPTE Board of Governors addressed the business plan at its annual strategic planning session. With a new plan in place, what did the strategic session reveal? These open-minded discussions can often derail a carefully crafted plan, and that is something we tried to avoid. Our goal was to refine our thinking so that it aligns with our strategy, thereby strengthening it even more.

I was very excited about the plan for this year's session, which took place in February during the Board of Governor's Meeting. This meeting is the only one during the year where the Board and its Directors and staff have the opportunity to discuss the important strategic issues. With just eight hours of discussion, this session has a significant impact on our future, usually creating a lot of dialog and ideas, but it is often difficult to incorporate them into SMPTE's business. Now that we have a plan in place, our goal was to focus on enhancing

that plan rather than adding more tasks to the list.

The session included two sets of external data points. The first, "Follow the Money," consisted of an investment banker's view of the macroeconomic trends in the professional media space. With the onset of new media companies and their huge global investments in content creation, what does that mean for SMPTE? We thought that it was important for the Board to follow that money story to see who the players are today and tomorrow. It is certainly a different group than perhaps even five years ago.

Jonathan Hodson-Walker from Silverwood Partners presented a macroeconomic view of the media technology industry, highlighting the current trends and watching where the investment dollars are going. By following these investments, we can better gauge what SMPTE's future will look like in terms of industry players. This then translates into the type of member we will be attracting, that is, fully appreciating the global transition from the traditional to the new media space.

The second external data point came from a group of young people in technology who were not familiar with SMPTE. Keeping in mind that one of our strategic initiatives is to grow our younger demographic, we invited this panel to tell us what they were doing and why they were making their way without SMPTE. Not only did I expect them to answer the questions from the Board but also

I hoped that they would ask the Board questions that would incite them to do things to attract more people like them.

This group of young people included entrepreneurs working in content creation, including music as well as more "traditional" types working in production technology. All of them work in the media space quite successfully without a connection to SMPTE. And that is the challenge and opportunity before us—how do we attract, engage, and delight this group of media specialists to join the SMPTE ranks.

With these inputs, the Board discussed what SMPTE needs to do to provide value to this new, younger demographic of technologists and creatives. All of this effort is to refine our new strategic plan.

I was very pleased with the day's session and its outcome. As a Society moving forward, we must appeal to all of our members—6,800 around the world—to actively recruit young people to join our ranks. Each of our members have a reason why SMPTE is important to them. We need each of them, particularly those who have been elevated to Fellow, Life, or award winners, to share the sense of community they have found within SMPTE. If we can all do our part, I am confident we can reach our goal of increasing membership, especially among the younger demographic.

As my good friend Peter Weitzel would say, Join In, Join Us. Won't you do your part?