Report of the AVMA 20/20 Vision Commission

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AVMA 20/20 Vision Commission:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AVMA Executive Board created the AVMA 20/20 Vision Commission and charged its members to create a progressive vision for AVMA and make recommendations to ensure that the Association achieves this vision and continues to be relevant and responsive to its members and the general public.

Commission members concluded that great leaders and organizations have the capacity to improve what is, and concurrently, create what isn’t. While Commission members acknowledge and applaud AVMA’s efforts that strive for continuous improvement and support its current activities, the Commission focused most of its attention on creating what isn’t—a new vision and associated pathways that will create an organization for 2020 that is profoundly different than the association of today.

The next decade is likely to usher in the most significant changes in AVMA’s history—changes that are being driven by unprecedented globalization, remarkable technological advances and socio-economic changes. AVMA needs to create clarity in times of growing societal ambiguity and uncertainty, increasing global complexity, and increasing changes in expectations of members and stakeholders. The veterinary profession and the AVMA are being challenged to reconcile a fundamental shift of the profession from one that has traditionally prided itself on its strong independence, to now, integrating itself into a new interdependency that calls into question how AVMA works, operates, what it does and who are its future partners and members.

In order to reconcile these challenges, the Commission strongly endorses an organizational transformation leading to a new vision and the adoption of key strategies that will guide it to achieving the vision. The proposed vision for AVMA should be both inspirational and aspirational for AVMA membership, leadership and stakeholders. The Commission proposes the following vision.

The Association is the nation’s leader in advancing veterinary medicine by:

- Establishing and advancing a national agenda focused on the health and welfare of animals and their importance to our society
- Securing a vital and economically viable future for all facets of the veterinary profession
- Ensuring public appreciation and support for veterinary medicine to enable the profession to fulfill its essential role
- Operating in a global context, recognizing the critical contribution that US veterinarians play internationally including global health, trade, food safety and security, and education
- Building dynamic partnerships with key groups and sectors, both internally and externally, to ensure effective collaboration on issues of shared importance
• Contributing to the growth and health of the veterinary profession, including ensuring that membership in the profession reflects the full spectrum of Americans
• Functioning in a manner that promotes high trust, broad participation, and commitment among its diverse membership and other key stakeholders
• Ensuring the organization expands its portfolio of opportunities and activities in animal welfare, research, emergency response, and public health, and drives demand
• Unifying the diverse interests and specialties in the profession toward a common purpose and sense of community
• Operating and governing proactively, strategically, and incorporating technological advances

The Commission recommends 11 organizational dimensions and strategic approaches. These eleven dimensions both define the above vision and provide the essential pathways to transform AVMA over the next decade.

By 2020, AVMA should have:
• Achieved a new level of social responsibility and helped meet societal needs;
• Become more influential - externally focused, spanned boundaries, and sparked a new public awareness of the profession’s many contributions to society;
• Helped drive improved economic performance and long-term financial stability for the entire profession;
• Balanced its relationships with an increasingly complex and more diverse profession and group of stakeholders as the convener/facilitator leader to address critical issues;
• Become global in perspective and actions;
• Retained and gained new members by creating personalized services and portals that provide products and information anytime and anywhere for both AVMA members and the public;
• Reflected the changing demographic, ethnic and generational differences of society and actively engaged more women in leadership roles;
• Leveraged and adopted remarkable advances in technology that improve communications, education, connectivity, and engagement;
• Governed, operated and made decisions and policies in a transparent, inclusive, and more democratized manner;
• Created a special culture that is collaborative, customer-focused, forward-leaning, innovative, nimble, and inclusive;
• Ensured it has the capacity to be knowledge-based, proactive, and responsive on critical issues.

FORMATION OF THE AVMA 20/20 VISION COMMISSION

The AVMA 20/20 Vision Commission was established by the AVMA Executive Board in January 2010. The Commission was envisioned as one piece of a three-part AVMA planning
strategy. The Executive Board focused on a short-term (one-year) strategic plan and, by also using environmental scanning, affirmed and developed its strategic goals with a 2-5 year time horizon. The 20/20 Vision Commission focused on a 6-10 year time frame to create a vision and roadmap to achieve it. Funds were approved for the formation of the Commission, and AVMA solicited interested members through an open process that encouraged a diverse and progressive team, blending career experience, volunteer experience, generations, gender, ethnicity, type of employment, and a passion to serve.

An appointing body composed of the Executive Board Chair, President, President-Elect, Executive Vice President, HAC Chair, SAVMA President, and the 20/20 Vision Commission Chair reviewed applicants and selected the members of the Commission. In addition to the impressive and diverse AVMA members, a third-year veterinary student, state veterinary medical association executive, and an external member were added. Finally, Daniel Stone, President of the Whole Systems Consulting firm, was chosen to be consultant and facilitator for the Commission. Dr. Karl Wise, Dr. Kimberly May, and Julie Cusack served as AVMA staff in support of the Commission.

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE AVMA 20/20 VISION COMMISSION**

Lonnie King, DVM, MS, MPA, Dipl. ACVPM, Chair  
Bonnie Beaver, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVB  
Grace Bransford, DVM  
Anne Hale, DVM  
Steven Kess  
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Christina Tran, DVM  
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**CHARGE TO THE AVMA 20/20 VISION COMMISSION**

The Commission was charged with creating a vision for AVMA that would incorporate the qualities and characteristics needed to position the AVMA as a dynamic association that is increasingly relevant and responsive to the membership and the public 6-10 years in the future (i.e., to the year 2020). Specifically, the Commission will:

1) Examine AVMA’s current structure, programs, and strategies (i.e. governance, membership, services, volunteer-engagement, and financials).

2) Identify critical issues, societal trends and forces that are currently impacting or are likely to impact AVMA in the future.

3) Develop a vision for AVMA 6-10 years in the future as a dynamic association that is increasingly relevant and responsive.

4) Recommend actions that will enable AVMA to achieve the future vision.
In receiving the charge, the Commission also worked with the following self-articulated assumptions.

- It should not be concerned about resources for implementation.
- It should not have boundaries to constrain its work and thinking.
- It would focus on transformational ideas and issues, not tactics, or in essence, focus on the Why and What to change and not the How.
- It would be driven by concern for AVMA’s relevancy, responsiveness, and changing responsibilities.
- It would consider dimensions and issues of the public and external constituencies, not just association members.
- It would encourage boldness and different levels of thinking.
- It would challenge the status quo.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Commission began its work listening and interacting with Eric Garland, a futurist and the author of *Future, Inc.* and examined key articles written by Joseph Coates of the Consulting Futurist, Inc. The Commission reviewed materials describing the activities, structure, and governance of AVMA and discussed the organization with senior staff, including Dr. Ron DeHaven, Executive Vice President and CEO, Dr. Elizabeth Curry-Galvin, Assistant Executive Vice President, and Dr. Karl Wise, Associate Executive Vice President. Members of the Commission conducted in-depth reviews and analyses of each organizational dimension and thoroughly discussed these issues. In addition, the Commission conducted a survey of key AVMA leaders, governance groups, and SAVMA members. The Commission members also conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis that was very helpful and instructive.

The group examined and reviewed results of AVMA environmental scanning, strategic planning, goals and objectives, and comments from focus groups generated from the most recent AVMA leadership conference. A list of references used by the Commission is available on the end of this report. The Commission held three, two-day meetings at the AVMA headquarters along with a series of conference calls. The Commission also made use of an AVMA SharePoint site for communicating, writing, and editing working documents and the final report. Extensive notes for each session were made available to all Commission members.

PREFACE

The AVMA is the principal organization that represents the nation’s veterinary profession. AVMA has achieved a rich and vibrant history of accomplishment and service since its founding in 1863, and currently serves over 81,500 members. It has given real value to the profession and its members over the 148 years of its existence. Hardworking and distinguished volunteer leaders and outstanding staff have served veterinary medicine and AVMA members well and continue to
work diligently on behalf of the membership. Much has been achieved over the years in terms of continuing education, member services, advocacy, benefits such as insurance, leadership development, policy formulation, accreditation, certification, communications, advancing science and the profession, and creating a common purpose. AVMA members have been fortunate to have a strong association of dedicated people working to support them, improve the profession, and safeguard the health of animals and people. Over 600 volunteers are currently serving in a variety of leadership roles and functions for AVMA.

As membership increases and diversifies, as specialization accelerates, and as our world progressively becomes more complex, the interaction of multiple societal and technological forces impacts all of us and our lives, and the world around us. Today, we are faced with uncertain and profound changes - socially, economically, politically, and technologically, in a new global context. AVMA will need to adjust and change to meet new needs and changing demands and expectations of its membership and the public.

The Commission focused on transformational ideas and change. However, some specific strategies have been suggested to help clarify ideas. The Commission members strongly believe that fundamental changes need to be considered to ensure that the AVMA is a relevant, responsive, and responsible organization in the future. Transformations are difficult to design and plan, but even more difficult to implement. AVMA leaders can help AVMA to actively move toward its new potential and vision and be a thriving organization that successfully meets the profound challenges of the future, the needs of its members and the public.

The Commission members identified 11 distinct dimensions that represent critical areas of change and action that will transform AVMA. These dimensions and suggested strategies are also closely aligned with and support the vision statement. The dimensions are overlapping to a certain degree and their suggested strategies should be implemented with oversight to ensure that synergies are leveraged and redundancies are minimized.

In some cases, there are strategies that may mirror current AVMA strategic plans and initiatives. To the extent possible, we tried to recognize where we believe these efforts are already sufficient and not include them in our recommendations. If such strategies show up, it is either because we recommend expanding the extent or priority of these efforts, or we recommend shifts in approaches to accomplish the strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The members of the 20/20 Vision Commission are especially grateful to an outstanding AVMA staff who gave us remarkable support and insights. Dr. Karl Wise, Dr. Kimberly May, and Ms. Julie Cusack were superb, and we wish to recognize their value to our work. They have our gratitude and thanks. We also thank Dr. Ron DeHaven for his encouragement and wisdom. In addition, Commission members also wish to recognize the outstanding efforts of our facilitator, Daniel Stone, and thank him for his many contributions and support.

The Commission thanks the AVMA Executive Board for its foresight and dedication to the
advancement of AVMA, and applauds both the Executive Board for its leadership and commitment toward a new vision, and the House of Delegates and all AVMA volunteers for their leadership in strategic planning efforts and environmental scanning activities.

The Commission believes in AVMA and applauds its many successes. The members sincerely hope that the recommendations in the report will serve as a catalyst for change and a road map to an optimistic future and inspiring action. The Commission consistently has been encouraged to think differently; think the unthinkable; question existing dogmas and challenge the status quo; push AVMA leadership; abandon reverence for precedent; consider external voices and best practices; and, be visionary and bold (i.e., get out of our comfort zone). The members have tried to respond accordingly.

The 11 Commission members have been honored to serve on the Commission and submit this report as advocates of AVMA. We have a renewed commitment to continue to serve the Association, a new sense of its possibilities, and a real optimism and excitement about its future.

On a personal note, as Chair, I wish to thank the AVMA Vision 20/20 Commission team. This was a remarkable team in every sense of the term and the AVMA is fortunate to have them as members and as talented and committed volunteers. I also want to recognize and thank Steven, Peter, and Joanna who are not AVMA members, but who were a key part of the team and helped us immensely. I am grateful to have served with such a superb group of professionals and am especially pleased to now count them as wonderful colleagues and friends. (Lonnie King)

BACKGROUND

The key external and macro-trends that impact the veterinary profession and the Association are socio-demographic, technological, economic, environmental and political. These trends influence the AVMA both directly and indirectly. They are critical and certainly need to be incorporated into AVMA’s future thinking and planning. AVMA needs to be a “change ready” association, gain more engagement in broader groups of stakeholders, and adopt the 21st Century principles of being fast, focused, friendly and flexible. (Rosabeth Moss-Kantor)

A strategic inflection point represents a point in time when organizations are forced to make decisions; to change strategy and pursue a different direction to avoid the risk of decline or irrelevancy; and adapt to change factors of major significance. In essence, a strategic inflection point is defined as an event that changes how we think and act. (Andy Grove, CEO, Intel).

We in veterinary medicine now face a group of strategic inflection points that are certain to change our thinking and actions. The points include: emerging infectious and zoonotic diseases; antimicrobial resistance; food safety and security; global food systems; loss of biodiversity and animal species; animal welfare; information technology; greater consumer information and activism; globalization; specialization of veterinary practice; and the delivery and changing models of veterinary medical education. There has never been another time in history when the profession has faced so many significant inflection points that potentially will alter our thinking and actions.
The ability to effectively respond to and meet these challenges will either lead to new heights and possibilities or could signal a loss of influence or relevancy. Organizations go through life cycles where they grow, evolve, and transform. Successful organizations identify and create galvanizing moments of purpose and a compelling sense of community, and create new futures. Others fail to respond and become archaic and outmoded. An organization that cannot re-imagine its deepest sense of what it is, what it does, and how it operates will be rendered obsolete.

In addition to the macro factors and strategic inflection points, the Commission also found a group of critical forces that are impacting, or will impact, AVMA. Our assessment of a SWOT analysis, survey results, interviews and conversations, background materials about the AVMA, and literature reviews helped us to identify forces more directly influencing the Association.

These other forces include: generational and gender issues; fragmentation of the profession into specialties and special interests; economic and financial realities experienced by the veterinary workforce; time and financial constraints on members and potential members; diversity of members and leaders; technological advances for communicating and linking to members and stakeholders; the need to be well informed and proactive; the dynamics of AVMA’s governance, systems and processes; culture; and a building desire of members for personalized services and products.

Clearly, our complex and interconnected world requires that AVMA must alter its assumptions, lead change initiatives, and reconsider both its value proposition and its methods of operation. In order to transform the profession, AVMA must first transform itself and change in profound ways. This report and its recommendations are designed to be a catalyst to begin this process.

**PROPOSED VISION FOR AVMA IN 2020**

The proposed vision for AVMA should be both inspirational and aspirational for AVMA membership, leadership and stakeholders. The Commission proposes the following vision.

The Association is the nation’s leader in advancing veterinary medicine by:

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- Ensuring public appreciation and support for veterinary medicine to enable the profession to fulfill its essential role
- Operating in a global context, recognizing the critical contribution that US veterinarians play internationally including global health, trade, food safety and security and education
Building dynamic partnerships with key groups and sectors, both internally and externally, to ensure effective collaboration on issues of shared importance

Contributing to the growth and health of the veterinary profession, including ensuring that membership in the profession reflects the full spectrum of Americans

Functioning in a manner that promotes high trust, broad participation, and commitment among its diverse membership and other key stakeholders

Ensuring the organization expands its portfolio of opportunities and activities in animal welfare, research, emergency response, and public health, and drives demand

Unifying the diverse interests and specialties in the profession toward a common purpose and sense of community

Operating and governing proactively, strategically, and incorporating technological advances

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By 2020, AVMA should have:

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- Balanced its relationships with an increasingly complex and more diverse profession and group of stakeholders as the convener/facilitator leader to address critical issues;
- Become global in perspective and actions;
- Retained and gained new members by creating personalized services and portals that provide products and information anytime and anywhere for both AVMA members and the public;
- Reflected the changing demographic, ethnic and generational differences of society and actively engaged more women in leadership roles;
- Leveraged and adopted remarkable advances in technology that improve communications, education, connectivity, and engagement;
- Governed, operated and made decisions and policies in a transparent, inclusive, and more democratized manner;
- Created a special culture that is collaborative, customer-focused, forward-leaning, innovative, nimble, and inclusive;
- Ensured it has the capacity to be knowledge-based, proactive, and responsive on critical issues.
1. **SOCIETAL IMPACT**

How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?

AVMA has established a national agenda in providing essential leadership to:

- Enable veterinarians to make major improvements for the health of more animals (including companion animals, wildlife, food animals) and humans (through promoting public health, food safety, global health, human-animal bond)
- Establish veterinary medicine in the forefront of forces for social responsibility, animal welfare and animal health, including ensuring appropriate scope of practice
- Ensure that the veterinary profession reflects the demographics, race and ethnicity of the American population
- Coordinate a new socially conscious and impactful program(s) that helps address a critical societal need and concurrently expands the economic possibilities for the profession

**Proposed Strategic Approach**

To ensure that veterinary medicine and the AVMA expand their positive societal impact and its reach of service and strengthens its public trust, the Association will:

- Adopt and implement an organizational social responsibility strategy that is based on creating shared values between the profession and the public
Adopt and implement a corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy:
  - Purpose includes creating/funding CSR programs
  - Strategy reflects input from broad representation of society (including veterinary and non-veterinary entities)
  - Develop strategy to ensure veterinary medicine is perceived as a viable career option across different racial/ethnic/gender lines, beginning at K-12 education as well as targeting other populations

Background
The veterinary profession enjoys a special relationship with the public. Consistently, surveys have reinforced the fact that the profession has a high level of trust with the public and veterinarians are greatly admired for their services. Animals enrich lives, improve our health, and companion animals literally become family members. The trust between the profession and the public should never be taken for granted and the profession must constantly earn this special relationship. The care for animals has grown more sophisticated and specialized based on demands for these services. *While less appreciated and understood, the profession’s work in improving public and global health, protecting the food supply and making it safer, comparative medicine and biomedical research, agricultural research, and our growing involvement in disaster response and one health initiatives greatly contributes to the well-being of society.*

For most, the touchstone for veterinary medicine and the measurement for its success is determined by our ability to meet the needs and expectations of a rapidly changing society. Inherent in this responsibility is the stewardship of the animals themselves. The profession’s impact and benefit expand as we expand services and improve the health of more animals—companion, wildlife, food animals, horses, fiber animals, and exotics. In addition, veterinarians serve as protectors of animals and the profession has a growing role in animal welfare, shelter medicine, and wildlife services that underpin this obligation. There also needs to be more attention paid to the scope of practice and ensuring that the care of animals is performed with skill and expertise by those licensed and trained to render these exceptional services and care.

Currently in the U.S., approximately one-third of its population is classified as minority, and this segment is the fastest-growing cohort within the total U.S. population today. It is estimated that by 2030, today’s minorities will shift to over half the U.S. population and thus become its majority. The diversity of the veterinary profession has made too little progress. There is growing concern that the profession is not serving, nor will it get an opportunity to serve, and caring for pets and animals owned by minority clients. Thus, it is obvious that the profession’s impact could be proportionately reduced and its image and public trust tarnished.

Another major trend is now occurring in the corporate world as more and more companies are creating and establishing “corporate social responsibility” portfolios. The intersection between societal needs and corporate performance is being reconceived. The obdurate and difficult problems faced by society, including issues in food, health, and the environment, need solutions coming from the private sector, not just government. In the past, businesses and many associations understood the need to create a distinctive value proposition that met the need of a subset of customers. This was the essence of building a competitive advantage. Now, there is growing recognition that this proposition is too narrow and the societal benefits and well-being
of our communities have been ignored. Societal needs are likely to help define future markets and create both economic and social value. The concept of shared value resets the mission and purpose of organizations and opens new ways to serve new needs, establish new collaborations and partnerships, created differentiation and expand future markets. The veterinary profession could embrace the concept of shared value and consider exciting, innovative ways to better connect its success with societal improvement and focus on the common good, solidifying its position as a highly trusted and empathetic profession. This could involve, for example, partnering with a corporation with similar values and a compatible social responsibility focus to co-brand and leverage opportunities to truly meet societal needs in new areas and in new ways.

2. PUBLIC AWARENESS

How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?

AVMA has established a highly effective and expanded role and capacity for public education, marketing, and promotion. This is driving a new level of public awareness and understanding of the scope of contributions to society by veterinarians and the positive benefits derived from utilizing better routine and specialized services. More specifically, this commitment has resulted in:

- High level of public support and appreciation for veterinary medicine in arenas beyond private practice
- Significant influence in public policy, legislation, and standard setting
- Higher rates of utilizing and demanding veterinary services and products
- New partners joining with AVMA to support and help deliver this capacity
- An association that is built from the outside-in rather than from inside-out

Proposed Strategic Approach

- Implement an extensive public awareness campaign to ensure that veterinarians are viewed widely and maintain high visibility in the public and media as the authority on animal-related issues, emphasizing the broad value and impact that veterinary medicine has on society (including human health, economics, food security, etc.)
- Develop a policy agenda, proactive strategy, and organizational structure ensuring that veterinarians consistently play a leadership role in encouraging public policy at all levels (national, state, local) that supports the AVMA/veterinary medical agendas and its value to the public at large
- Develop and implement a strategy that orients veterinary practitioners toward preventive care and encourages animal owners to utilize veterinary services to achieve a high level of wellness for all animals (including companion, food, laboratory, wildlife, horses)

Background

Veterinary medicine is well known for delivering excellent health care to our nation’s companion animals, equine, and food animals. While this work has given the profession a mostly
popular and positive public persona and identification, the broader scope of work and contributions of veterinary medicine is considerably less known and appreciated. The opportunity horizon for veterinarians is remarkable, as are ways to improve the health and lives of both people and animals.

The profession is hampered by a public not fully appreciating and valuing veterinary care and services and by the profession’s inability to convince animal owners of the benefit of wellness, veterinary visits, and the full spectrum of services needed to optimize the health and care of animals throughout their entire lifetime. These issues are not just economically driven, but rather reflect that lack of public understanding and awareness of the benefits of routine veterinary care and the value of care which may be considered as too expensive. Public awareness is critical to reverse this trend; however, better communication and business skills of individual veterinarians are clearly associated with this issue as well.

The profession makes significant contributions in public health, biomedical and agricultural research, global food systems, biodiversity, bio-surveillance, prevention, detection, and response to exotic and emerging diseases, food safety and security, and animal welfare. Efforts in these fields are underappreciated and undervalued. The veterinary profession is also important to the economic wellbeing of this country by protecting immense U.S. food and agricultural assets, enhancing agricultural trade and export markets, and protecting the many jobs and industries dependent on a safe, reliable, and dependable food supply.

The lack of public awareness and knowledge of veterinary medical contributions beyond private practice limits the profession’s influence on public policy and legislation; utilization of skills and expertise acquired through education and training; recruitment and interest of potential veterinary students; academic growth and further opportunities. A key need will be for AVMA to aggressively bring in the outside world to provide different perspectives on important Association issues. This will also lead to extended networks and an expanding reach of influence, and add further value through broader connectivity, especially to a public that is demanding information anytime and anywhere. Increasing AVMA’s connectivity with all forms of media is also an important consideration.

3. **ECONOMICS**

**How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?**

AVMA plays a proactive and major role in securing economic profitability for the full range of veterinary professionals by helping to:

- Optimize the veterinary medical professionals’ product/service mix to public (addressing scope of practice issues in ways that ensure safety and quality)
- Promote alternative practice models that ensure profitability
- Create a demand for opportunities outside our historic professional work areas (e.g., opening opportunities for global health systems)
- Position the profession as a strategic partner with business
Advance the use of technology to achieve efficiency
Strengthen the financial and business management acumen within the profession

Proposed Strategic Approach

- Develop and implement a national economic strategy for veterinary medicine to drive markets and opportunities within the context of the national and global economy, including:
  - Aligning the structure and delivery of veterinary practice and services toward an economically viable and profitable approach
  - Providing services to under-served communities
  - Addressing student debt
  - Ensuring industry, government, academia and other key stakeholders play their appropriate roles
- Strengthen the delivery of services to build the financial and business management practices of veterinarians, including the appropriate use of technology

Background
The recent recession has created a challenging economic environment across all aspects of the veterinary profession. However, other factors and underlying issues are negatively impacting the economic well-being of the profession with serious short- and long-term implications.

Information from the National Commission for Veterinary Economic Issues (NCVEI) shows significant and suboptimal performance in a number of private practices, resulting in reduced profitability. A recent study (Bayer-Brakke) showed a decline in patient visits, a lack of appreciation for the value of veterinary services (especially routine care), fragmentation of services that confuses clients, and the increasing use of the Internet as a source for veterinary information and decision-making by owners. Challenges are also occurring with defining and enforcing the scope of practice and roles of non-veterinarian service providers.

The level of income for veterinarians compared with other professions is alarmingly low. Also, the increasing debt load for students and recent graduates, and the financial challenges associated with veterinary medical education and tuition increases, have resulted in more challenges. For example, the pool of applicants to attend colleges of veterinary medicine has leveled off over that last 4-5 years; yet, applicants to other professional colleges have continued to increase. This fact, in part, may be driven by advancing debt loads for veterinary students and the subsequent inability to receive adequate compensation to pay off this debt.

Moreover, at a time of great opportunity and need for veterinarians to add their expertise and value to public health, environmental health, global food systems, and biomedical research, the profession needs to be more effective to successfully make the case for our professional involvement.

John Kotter stated that “If we have anything to worry about, it is not the opportunities, but rather the skills necessary to take advantage of those opportunities.” Veterinarians, more and more, will need to combine their excellent scientific and technical skills and competencies with improved interpersonal skills, communication expertise, and business acumen. Adding these non-technical
skills and competencies to a veterinarian’s portfolio of skills would seem to be a necessity rather than an option. Making veterinarians more marketable through developing non-technical skills, providing highly valued services, and developing appropriate business skills should be a desired outcome.

Veterinarians need to understand and implement better business practices. Productivity, efficiencies, increasing pet visits and services are critical to improved earnings. The recent Bayer-Brakke study reinforced the need for the public to appreciate the value of veterinary services and the benefit of pet visits beyond vaccinations.

_The dental profession has made remarkable strides in convincing the public of twice-a-year visits and the need for beautiful smiles. The dental profession has been effectively reinvented and can serve as one example for the veterinary profession._ Large, national outreach and PR campaigns are very expensive albeit very helpful if sustained. Short of such tactics, the most crucial issue would seem to be the ability for veterinarians themselves to personally drive and market the needs and benefits of their services.

4. RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND PROFESSIONS

How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?

AVMA has catalyzed dynamic and mutually satisfying relationships with other veterinary organizations and key stakeholders that result in significant progress or resolution of shared issues, such as:

- Public awareness to improve animal health and animal welfare
- Economics to ensure the growth and viability of the veterinary profession
- Health systems, i.e., to collaborate on methods and delivery systems
- Food systems both nationally and internationally to ensure food security
- Ecosystems and environment to ensure sustainability of agricultural systems and biodiversity

Proposed Strategic Approach

- Develop strategy to re-brand AVMA as the legitimate convener of, and participant in, issue forums and joint strategy development with other organizations within the veterinary profession, and between the veterinary profession and other organizations (including federal government, industry, allied health professions, and others):
  - Forums to be conducted both within the United States and globally
  - Include groups and professions beyond those with whom we have traditionally been associated, such as bio-surveillance, environmental and biodiversity groups
  - Reinvent new roles and relationships with state and federal agencies, university veterinarians, and practitioners to address critical issues in bio-
surveillance, standard setting, animal welfare, food safety, biodiversity, and other critical societal issues

- Ensure that veterinarians possess information, tools, and skills to effectively perform the full range of roles they are called upon to fulfill, and to partner and collaborate in this new way of operating with key groups such as AAVMC and veterinary colleges, state veterinary medical associations, and allied veterinary medical associations

Background
In an era of complex, interconnected and global issues and challenges, organizations need new strategic partners and collaborators that add value to their portfolio of services and products and create opportunities to improve demand and public health. Expanded global partnerships and strengthened international relationships may also create new possibilities to expand AVMA’s influence, stature, and mission.

In the future, AVMA will need to have the capacity and the leadership to take on the critical role of facilitator/convener of diverse groups to have dialog, resolve conflicts, and address issues.

A particularly attractive area for building stronger relationships is with the other health sciences. The link between veterinary medicine and public health is especially promising and compelling when considering the number of emerging and re-emerging zoonoses and growing food safety and other biological threats. Veterinary medicine should partner with the health professions to leverage its legislative agenda with regard to workforce, loan repayments, etc.

One Health is enhanced by a growing relationship with environmental and ecosystem groups and includes a new emphasis in conservation medicine and in helping to address the serious loss of biodiversity and numerous animal species. The human-animal bond opens up collaborations with the social sciences and social work and there is an immediate need to partner with businesses, business colleges, and other experts to help the professions improve its profitability and economic success.

While AVMA should enhance and build new relationships outside the profession, it also needs to strengthen relationships internally. Difficult and potentially divisive issues are more and more likely to occur among special interest groups under the AVMA umbrella of members. The specialization of veterinary practice has led to very sophisticated services and real advancements in health care. At the same time, AVMA is challenged with bringing all these special groups together for the common good of the profession and to build national strategies and policies. Thus, AVMA will need to have the capacity to bring groups together and resolve conflicts.

Similarly, AVMA and AAVMC should develop stronger ties and a mutually supportive team to help transform veterinary medical education and address other challenges faced by academic institutions. Improved relationships are needed with State VMAs as some struggle economically to provide services to their local stakeholders.

Finally, AVMA can improve alignment and relationships with industries, the business world and government agencies by developing new partnerships focusing on social responsibility, public
service, global health, and protecting U.S. agricultural assets.

5. **GLOBAL IMPACT**

**How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?**

- The AVMA is global in its perspective and action, and engaged in new strategic international activities: The AVMA is a leader in providing expertise and promoting collaboration at a global level for improving animal and public health.
- The Association has an expanded and more influential brand identity; more global partnerships, and strategic relationships; and, an international leadership role in establishing policies and standards; and an enlarged portfolio of new global services and products.
- AVMA is in position and has the capacity to help create and drive global economic opportunities for itself and its membership.

**Proposed Strategic Approach**

AVMA will develop a global plan that will result in:

- Expanded and strengthened relationships with international animal and public health agencies, other countries, and other global organizations and corporations.
- Enlarge its scope of influence from which to advance the profession, create and drive market opportunities, and collaborate to help set international policies, standards, and regulations.
- Develop a brand that will be globally recognized and ensure organizational capacity to match growing opportunities, services, and products and create new sources of income.

**Background**

The global dimension is self-evident when considering that we share the planet with over 7 billion people, 25-30 billion food animals, and countless numbers of exotics, wildlife, and rapidly growing companion animal populations. Our interconnected world is creating an acceleration and intensification of the interactions between people and animals. This reality has placed a new premium on global food safety and security, emerging zoonotic disease, expanding imports and exports, and sharing of international standards. These are necessary to optimize efforts to protect animal health, public health, improve and standardize education and develop more effective bio-surveillance systems to detect and respond to natural or international introductions of disease pathogens.

Globalization is also expanding opportunities for veterinary medicine. The global food systems and the new investment in global health offer growing opportunities for the profession. Other opportunities are growing with non-governmental organizations, agribusinesses, foundations and international agencies such as the FAO, WHO, and OIE. The training and education of veterinary students and specialists is becoming a global enterprise as are efforts in accreditation,
global health support, international animal health, food systems, and other associated businesses and corporations.

Obviously, there are exciting new global roles for both the AVMA and individual members. AVMA can exert global leadership through the new function of convening and facilitation which will be an important leadership skill for the 21st Century. The concept of One Health, based on the convergence of animal, human, and environmental health, also offers substantial promise as a new mind-set and collaborative opportunity to optimize health in all three of these domains and counter growing global threats. Because of the reputation of U.S. veterinarians and our veterinary medical and veterinary science educational institutions, AVMA has a competitive advantage to exert new global clout and assume a stronger international presence and leadership.

6. **MEMBERSHIP**

**How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?**

AVMA membership is fully representative of the veterinary profession including roles, interests, responsibilities and this representation is reflected in service offerings, committee participation, and governance. AVMA has reestablished a more meaningful value proposition ensuring that it delivers distinct products and services supporting each member and offers value that members cannot create for themselves.

**Proposed Strategic Approach**

- AVMA should significantly expand the structure of its membership and ensure it retains current members by implementing new recruitment and value-added efforts in order to:
  - Fully represent/proportionately reflect the diverse roles/careers within the veterinary profession
  - Grow and represent an expanded, new AVMA brand image
  - Allow for varying levels of membership for veterinarians and technicians to accommodate different levels of interest and participation
  - Add category of non-member affiliation for the lay public to provide specialized services and address varied areas of interest (i.e. Friends of the AVMA)

**Background**

The AVMA has enjoyed a strong and loyal membership base. This year, its membership grew to over 81,500 members, and over 80 percent of veterinarians eligible for membership to AVMA are members. Additionally, the student membership (Student Chapters of AVMA) has also been well over 90 percent. The AVMA services, products, journals, leadership, continuing education, insurance program, advocacy, legislative and government relations, work, policy, guideline development, and role as the representative for the entire profession have collectively resulted in an association that is both unique and valued.
Associations are shifting from solely a focus on existing members to that of a wider community of stakeholders to broaden their base and help them accomplish their mission. As the AVMA needs to consider its national representation and brand, greater attention should be paid to expanding membership to associated groups such as veterinary technicians and the public. If AVMA is the voice for the profession, it will need to consider possible new classifications, affiliates or “Friends of Veterinary Medicine,” for example, to join as special members for improved public education, advocacy and potential sources of income. This will serve to both have the public engage in and become educated about the association’s mission.

However, associations today, such as the AVMA, have increased vulnerabilities, competition, expectations, and fragmentation, especially driven by self-interests and specialization. The ability to continue to be a cohesive force to hold the profession together in the face of conflicting views, perspectives and specialties is a growing challenge. Moreover, the current economic downturn, lack of diversity, greater scrutiny and questions of value (especially from younger members), controversial issues and positions, dominance of membership by private practitioners, potential dividers such as large versus companion animals, growth of CE outside AVMA venues, corporate chain practices, and the potential for spin-off groups to offer greater value have created a very different environment of more uncertainty and ambiguity. AVMA leadership must critically review its value proposition for membership and ensure it continuously maintains relevance to a dynamic membership.

The Commission surveys suggest that some members felt disconnected from AVMA and others have concerns about the Association being slow and bureaucratic, reactive, and not focused on the most critical issues. Thus, even though AVMA has a remarkable and extremely successful record of membership growth for nearly 150 years, there are concerns that the current value proposition of AVMA may be called into question by members.

Clearly, AVMA is growing in complexity. Glenn Tecker et al, who wrote The Will to Govern Well, characterized organizational membership as three integrated threads that are intimately connected: members as owners, members as customers, and members as workforce. Balancing this membership triad is critical to achieve effective governance. AVMA needs to consider special needs and expectations that are created by each thread to maintain membership and attract new members. AVMA’s value proposition, which represents the way it proposes to use its resources to deliver unique value to members, really needs to focus on multiple subgroups that are divided both, by the three roles for each member, and also the different generations they represent. These subgroups all have different ideas about how the Association should serve their needs and what benefits they deem most useful and pertinent. Certainly, the Association will be stretched to respond to this growing fragmentation of members and will need to assess its capacity to serve these groups.

7. GENERATIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC SYNERGY

How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?

The AVMA has successfully made a major shift from an association of mass
communications to mass customization. The different views, value, attitudes, technological competencies, styles, and preferences have been taken into account, and the creation of personalized services and products are an AVMA strength.

Furthermore, AVMA affirms and ensures there is synergy across generations and demographics of members including:

- Ensuring representation of women in leadership and membership roles
- Developing an array of products and services to attract and retain members of each generation
- Utilizing modes of communication and interaction that are appropriate across generational and demographic differences

Proposed Strategic Approach

- Proactively anticipate the impacts of demographic changes within the veterinary profession and address implications with concrete action plans and measures of performance
- When filling roles within AVMA (e.g., Executive Board, House of Delegates, task forces, councils, and paid positions, etc.) actively consider how to incorporate or engage members who represent the changing demographics and generations of the profession
- Develop strategy to help ensure that there is appropriate generational and demographic representation within the larger veterinary profession as a whole
- Continually re-design personalized services/products/programming and communication methods in a way that is customized to the wide and changing variety of generational and demographic (race, ethnicity, age), differences and preferences within AVMA.

Background

AVMA is composed of members from four distinct generations -- the Silent Generation (born from 1925-1945); Baby Boomers (born from 1946-1964); Generation X (born from 1965-1979); and the Millennials (born from 1980-1999). These groups have their own subcultures, differences, personalities, attitudes, behaviors, and identities. Generations are shaped by events and social trends and, at the same time, shape history themselves.

As we anticipate the next decade of the AVMA, the generations themselves are entering into new stages of life: The Silent Generation is being reduced; the Boomers will enter elderhood; GenXers will enter midlife, and Millennials will come of age. These transitions will impact AVMA’s leadership, operations, and membership. Members of these generations have different expectations and needs from AVMA and from each other. The Millennials, in particular, will progressively develop and soon will profoundly dominate and impact the profession.

Figure 1 is a table depicting and characterizing AVMA membership as distinct cohorts divided by generations and distinct association roles—owners, customers, and volunteers. Each 2 x 2 cell in the table represents segmentation within the AVMA membership and these groups have
different needs and expectations from AVMA with regard to AVMA’s responsiveness, personalized attention, and ability to communicate differently and the cohorts have different views on many issues, their volunteerism, and future service.

In addition to generational issues, the other major shift is the number of women entering the profession and assuming leadership roles. The needs of professional women, their interests, incentives, priorities, style, and reasons to join and participate in the AVMA are critical considerations in the success and future of the organization. AVMA must carefully assess its organizational culture, structure, past assumptions and flexibility to ensure that the organization attracts and retains women as members and supports them to serve in multiple roles, especially in key leadership positions. This was a strong and recurring theme from our data collection and discussions.

AVMA has multiple cohorts of members that cross four generations, gender, ethnicity, and other affiliations. Fostering inter-generational and inter-demographic synergy represents a significant strategic advantage for the associations that do this well. The ability to develop and deliver an array of personalized products, services, and new portals will be necessary to attract and retain members. Some organizations are creating member service teams and product development experts to ensure needs and expectations are met specific to different cohorts.

AVMA and the profession continue to struggle to become more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. The profession does not resemble or represent the diverse clients and customers we are trying to serve. This factor is becoming a major detriment to veterinary medicine in terms of our service, recruitment, and public identity. The growing debt loads of students and new graduates are accentuating this problem. The face of the profession must change for it to continue to be credible and relevant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generations</th>
<th>Owners</th>
<th>Customers</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silent Generation</td>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Highly professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B. 1925-1945)</td>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>High levels of volunteerism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conformists</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Strong service-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>Strong work ethic</td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>Major contributors to AVMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B. 1946-1964)</td>
<td>Perfectionists</td>
<td>Declining trust</td>
<td>Potential volunteers after retirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Want meaning and value</td>
<td>Value leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation “X”</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Tolerant risk</td>
<td>Strong sense of volunteerism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B. 1965-1979)</td>
<td>Resilient</td>
<td>Respond to incentives</td>
<td>Important group for volunteerism and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Non-affiliative</td>
<td>over next decade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>Believe in common good</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Millenials”</td>
<td>“Civic”</td>
<td>Communicate differently</td>
<td>Work within systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>Always “On”</td>
<td>Work-life balance important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like standardization</td>
<td>Technical-literate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shift careers and jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>frequently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Generational Differences and Changing Roles of Members
8. TECHNOLOGY

How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?

AVMA adopts and continuously monitors technological advances to optimize and facilitate communications with members, animal owners, and the public, including:

- Using technology to constantly assess member needs and concerns and to scan the environment for key changes or challenges that need immediate attention
- Taking advantage of new technologies for all publications, including journals, and become globally connected
- Optimizing use of technology for conducting governance activities at all levels of the organization
- Monitoring and enabling the use of technology by animal owners and the public to most readily access information and communicate with AVMA

Proposed Strategic Approach

- AVMA creates and implements a 10-year Technology Plan that considers potential input and changes to the Association’s governance, communications, education, operation, services and products, and the potential cost-benefit of implementation and the budget implications and trade-offs of adopting such a plan.
- Establish a leadership role for AVMA in identifying and promoting use of technology for the veterinary profession in all major realms and environments, including education, public information, electronic medical records, evidence-based medicine, exchange of information globally, and in other key areas
- Establish a strategy for technology scanning, applications development, member education and training, and widespread utilization of cutting-edge technology for communication, member services, governance that helps ensure that AVMA achieves its mission and vision

Background

Technology continues to change our lives, work, organizations, governments, and global events. Access to information is becoming increasingly open and available, and the breadth and depth of knowledge is growing exponentially. Information technology is radically changing how and when we communicate and is enabling new connectivity with organizations, members, and the public. It is estimated that the rate of change in the world of technology today is a thousand times greater than was experienced in the 20th Century. Thus, no future trend will impact society, organizations, and individuals as profoundly as technological growth and change. Although technology is a tool and a means, it has truly become indispensable as a major driver of innovation and change.

For AVMA, the ability to utilize information technology and communication technology to improve its mission and operations is critical. While the ability to get information and product to members has been greatly enhanced, another crucial benefit is that AVMA can ensure that communications to members are two-way. The Association can quickly assess members’
perspectives, needs, and attitudes in real time. This electronic dialogue can improve decision-making by AVMA leadership. Technological advances go beyond just communication; they also impact governance, services, and essentially all areas of the Association. In addition, technology can be a core differentiator for an organization and as such, help them attract new members and partners.

Therefore, AVMA governance and its operations can be greatly enhanced because technology will enable the Association to be more open, transparent, accessible, and knowledgeable. Technology is key in helping AVMA become a learning and knowledge-based organization to be better prepared and more productive. The phenomena of social networks and formation of special interest groups on issues can have immediate impact and influence on organizations. Education continues to be transformed by online and electronic offerings that have compressed space and time for users.

Information technology (IT) can also enable AVMA to become the national focus and “go to” organization for all animal issues and the preferred site for the public to be informed and gain knowledge about the profession and how to best use its services. On the other hand, the growth of IT and availability of information are also creating new vulnerabilities and threats to organizations. The ability to protect sensitive and personal information is an ongoing issue. Similarly, “bio-violence” is a growing issue where biological technologies that were once at the frontiers of science are becoming available to anyone with minimal scientific training. Biological warfare and the creation of potential special lethal or resistant organisms is a new reality that threatens animal and human health.

Our surveys proved to be very informative regarding technology. Approximately half of the survey responders believe that IT will help AVMA improve communications. Others indicated the AVMA could become more proactive, increase its membership with younger and more tech-savvy veterinarians, use electronic forms of continuing education, improve public awareness, gain greater feedback from members. The Commission was especially pleased that AVMA is making substantial changes to its website and believes this is an important step for the Association. Further, AVMA has been making considerable enhancements to its communications programs in recent years involving e-newsletters and other forms of member communications.

On the negative side, survey responders expressed their concerns that included: the potential distribution of too much and/or incorrect information; inability for AVMA to keep up with rapid technological advances; competition from other tech-savvy organizations; loss of some segments of the members who don’t use new technologies, and the added expense to keep up.

Clearly, members envision the future of IT in the AVMA as a mixed blessing. The tremendous advantages and gains in communications are tempered with concerns of costs, keeping up with advances, and overloading members with too much information. The concept of allowing members and end-users to decide on their level of communication with AVMA through the use of “opt-in and opt-out” options resonated with many.

The adoption and use of technology is no longer an option for organizations, but rather a
necessity. However, the adoption and use of technologies deserves thoughtful planning and analysis. Technology adoption needs infrastructure and life-cycle planning. Without question, adoption and use of technology may have the greatest single impact, good or bad, on the Association and its membership. Therefore, this dimension can, and likely will, change the face of the organization over the next decade and greatly determine its responsiveness, connectivity and relevancy.

9. GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?

AVMA has adopted a governance style and structure that ensures:
- Appropriate representation of membership by gender, age, race, work field, geography
- High levels of participation in decision-making
- Transparency
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Emphasis on substance over politics
- Opportunities for participation at multiple levels of interest and capability

Proposed Strategic Approach

- Reinvent the organizational structure and governance process, based on an external review of entire AVMA governance and member participation (including its structure, councils, committees, election of officers, governance entities, and processes for member engagement and participation) to ensure:
  - Alignment with the new vision
  - High degree of democratization
  - Promotion of trust (i.e., visibility and transparency)
  - High degree of member engagement and participation
  - Flexibility and adaptability
  - Minimize potential barriers to serving in leadership roles that do not add to the quality of leader sought
  - Appropriate relationship between member and staff roles
  - High quality outcomes
  - Accountability to membership
- De-politicize the process for electing president and other key leadership positions by reducing certain barriers, e.g., election by entire membership

Background
The AVMA is fortunate to have had a dependable organization based on active volunteers and a dedicated staff. AVMA currently has 23 committees, 6 councils, 2 trusts, several task forces, a House of Delegates, and an Executive Board composed principally of volunteers from across the profession. Its mission is carried out through this governing infrastructure. Volunteers donate
considerable time and energy to AVMA and are to be commended on their efforts, dedication, and loyalty.

*There is a distinct and likely possibility that the governance system will not be compatible or conducive to the next generation of members or potential members and the growing numbers of women entering the profession.* What’s more, technological tools now make participation, voting, deciding, and meeting possible solely through technology and also represent a real cost savings.

Similar to most governance structures today, AVMA will need to balance how members serve, participate, and lead. Should participation be based on competency or constituency? Competency-based governance is necessary for credibility and favors participants that are most knowledgeable and fair. On the other hand, constituency-based governance is a need for legitimacy and is helpful to ensure broad perspectives, and multiple special interests are part of policy development and decision making.

For AVMA, there is not an either-or alternative, but rather it must create the right balance for these two preferences. Survey results and interviews suggest that some women and younger members feel disenfranchised based on their concern that the Association has a strong bias toward constituency-based participation. Some feel that decision-making processes within the current governance system appear to favor special interests and decisions are being mandated by positions without the proper expertise or focus on the common good. In many organizations, broad membership is being included in dialogues, forums, and electronic meetings as a precursor to decision-making. As members’ lives grow more complex and time constraints increase, new tools and methods for governing are being considered. Costs of travel and time saving from businesses and families are also factors to consider.

As the profession continues to specialize, so does the number of special interests. As such, it is increasingly difficult to represent these various, and perhaps even opposing, interests as part of the governance. In addition, the substantial time it takes to serve on councils, and especially the Executive Board, may be biased in favor of those who can financially make this commitment and/or who are in the later stage of their careers. Practice type, specialty type, and geographic consideration are also factors that may be conducive to organizational politics, and as trade-offs in decision-making.

Appointing committees based on balancing special interests may lead to the protection of those interests and not to the common good of AVMA and discourage participation and potentially reduce the quality of participants and resultant decisions. There is concern that the governance process is leading to a significant disconnection between those who serve and those choosing not to get involved in the current organizational hierarchy. The governance also underpins the association’s culture, which also needs to be reconsidered if the governance is adjusted and is connected to the next dimension.

*Thus, the governance needs to be more participatory, transparent, shared, democratized, and designed with new technologies that allow members to participate virtually, for short bursts of activities and commitments, and much more interactively.* It will be important for AVMA to reconcile its traditional organizational hierarchy that is vertically built and shift to emerging
networks of groups built along horizontal lines of action. The digital revolution enables new access, transparency, and opportunities to receive input and create a forum for networked governance.

10. CULTURE

How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?

AVMA has helped to create a strong and diverse sense of community within the veterinary profession as reflected by:

- How we see ourselves (pride and self-esteem, professional)
- How we approach change and uncertainty: proactive, bold and innovative/willingness to take a stand/entrepreneurial/willing to reinvent and change (organizationally and individually)
- How we see our role in society: socially responsible/service orientation
- How we relate to one another: with mutual appreciation and respect for contributions of colleagues across all roles and geographies/unity of voice/collaboration
- How we govern: nimble/flexible/adaptable/accepting ownership and responsibility/accountable/inclusive

Proposed Strategic Approach

- Design and implement a strategy for AVMA leadership at all levels (volunteer and staff) to lead a widespread culture change within AVMA and the profession to ensure transformation including:
  - Training and equipping them for fulfilling their role in the culture change effort
  - Providing support mechanisms and tools to enable them to implement culture change strategies within their own realms of leadership
  - Creating AVMA-wide communication to maintain a focus on the culture change process
  - Establishing metrics and monitoring the impact of the change at an AVMA level and adopting other strategies to enable and support the culture change effort

Background
Organizations like AVMA evolve over time, and through this evolution, two basic challenges emerge. First, it is trying to integrate individuals and subgroups into an effective whole; and secondly, it is trying to adapt to the external environment. As organizations successfully meet these challenges, they engage in collective learning that results in a shared set of assumptions and beliefs that is termed culture. Over time, an organization’s culture can become deeply rooted and define its core identify. Thus, culture is a combination of attitudes, experiences, beliefs, values, and norms. It represents the unique character of AVMA and provides the context for
much of the Association’s thinking and actions in it and by it.

Culture can be very difficult to change, but an understanding and analysis of culture is absolutely necessary before any transformational changes can be undertaken. Cultures are learned, re-learned, and passed on to the future workforce and membership. Well established and older organizations like the AVMA have also built cultures based on myths, stories, language, and past experiences. Often, an organization’s reaction or response to an issue is predictable because of its culture. Knowledge of culture is useful for alignment, motivation, and implementing change.

As the profession and AVMA become progressively feminized and the millennial generation becomes more prominent, there are signs that there may be growing conflict and disagreement with regard to the existing culture. Decision-making, serving on councils and committees, serving in other leadership roles, transparency, and determining which priorities are the most important, are being questioned. Challenges to the AVMA culture are under way. Leadership will be tested and challenged as resistance to changes are both predictable and often intractable.

The AVMA will likely face more competition as other providers of products, services and resources to members and the profession will emerge. Thus, it will be imperative that AVMA distinguish its value proposition from those of other providers and organizations. The value proposition must be meaningful, unique and relevant and clearly differentiate AVMA from other organizations. The balance of member roles among owners, customers and workforce will, no doubt, be part of a new proposition and could further help to differentiate the Association. AVMA’s processes, behaviors and especially culture will need to change to be consistent with a new vision and value proposition and to ensure it will have a comparative advantage.

*Internally the optimal AVMA culture would be an organization that is appreciative, bold, responsible, responsive, highly professional, and excels in communication. Externally, its optimal culture should be collaborative, confident, customer-focused, innovative, entrepreneurial and socially responsible.* The strengths, weaknesses and changes to the AVMA’s culture will be pivotal in determining the Association’s relevance, acceptance to membership and its successful operations in the future.

11. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION

**How Will AVMA Be Different in 2020?**

AVMA is known and admired as an association that:
- Is proactive, knowledge-based and has existing capability to gather, mine and analyze important data and gain new insights and knowledge to improve the organization’s decision-making
- Can effectively scan its environment, detect and analyze important trends, and create situation awareness
- Commits to cycles of continuous learning and improvement through assessing and applying lessons learned both internally and externally
Supplies leaders and members with high quality information, current trends, analysis of strategic drivers and forces that deserve their attention and focus, and ensures that truly important issues are not driven out by the urgent and less strategic issues

Proposed Strategic Approach

- Ensure that AVMA has the capacity to conduct continuous scanning, trend analyses, and situation-awareness understanding, and can detect emergent and critical issues early
- Restructure its governance and organizational design to be proactive and focus its time and resources on the most strategic and highly impacting issues that will help inform and determine its future actions
- Create a distinct function, capacity, and plan within AVMA to improve the way in which the Association learns, adapts, collects and analyzes information, and improves its decision-making

Background
In an interconnected world that is in a state of constant flux and rapid change, it has become increasingly difficult to keep up with these changes and their impact on veterinary medicine and to decide on appropriate responses and actions. Without the capability and commitment to continuously scan the environment, monitor other organizations, and develop real-time situation awareness, organizations are relegated to being reactive, untimely, and lack critical knowledge upon which to make important decisions. The profession and Association will surely be engaged in more and more difficult and potentially controversial issues such as animal welfare and antimicrobial resistance.

At the same time, the AVMA must be devoted to continuous learning and improvement and be in position to find and create new opportunities and ensure that their leadership has quality information and insights to make the best decisions. A proactive, knowledge-based organization that can get in front of critical and changing issues affecting members and be able to anticipate and then prepare for issues that may become flash points of public opinion is greatly desired and needed.

Being a knowledge-based association may also enable AVMA to develop new niches of service and products and give it a competitive advantage. Being anticipatory and armed with appropriate and accurate information and knowledge also has the potential to also permit AVMA governance and its associated committee structure to focus on more strategic and impactful issues and better serve its members and the public. Other benefits of being a knowledge-based association include: promoting strategic thinking; understanding and managing risks better; and, ensuring that decisions are evidence-based using high quality information and analysis prior to decision-making, rather than the perception that decisions might be politically advantageous or based on personalities.

Organizations such as the AVMA truly need to anticipate major changes and issues. They need to listen, identify and analyze trends, identify best practices outside of the profession that may be
applicable and continuously collect and analyze information globally on health, economic, social and political issues. They need to conduct market research and commit to making ongoing assessments about its external environment and be able to adjust its capacity to respond. Additionally, organizations should have the capability to: identify trends from scanning, incorporate membership input, analyze and extrapolate trends, develop scenarios, utilize Delphi polls (survey of experts), use modeling and incorporate decision analysis tools and decision-support software.

CALL TO ACTION

Associations over the next decade need to adopt new models for successful transformation that include constant innovation, evolution, and strategic change. The pace of an organization’s change and the evolution of its products and services will need to be at least equivalent to the pace of changes of its members. Members want their complex and challenging lives to be simplified, through personalized services and products, rapid access to relevant and usable information and an organization that is transparent, accountable, receptive and offering unique value. AVMA needs to connect to its members and the public in new and profound ways. In today’s world, the difference between just presiding over an organization and truly leading it has become more apparent. Associations are now parts of diverse, dynamic and professional communities demanding new relationships and services, and continuous quality improvement.

This Report has established an AVMA vision and recommended actions to achieve it. Inherent in this Report is the need to lead and implement organizational change. For leaders, this will require radical thinking about the purpose, priorities, and the very structure and functions of AVMA. The Commission organized its recommendations around eleven dimensions for consideration and, in addition, suggests that a vision-driven organization needs to step back and focus on the essence of AVMA with regard to fundamental change. Thus, the organization’s mission, identity, culture, key relationships, and the way it works and governs are all called into question in this report. The mission is likely to change as the organization expands globally and becomes more externally and publically focused. The identity of the AVMA and its brand recognition need to be reconsidered and both are also likely to change as the AVMA expands in scope, scale, and its impact. The culture must also be reinvented based on changing values and assumptions about the future and the changing needs and demands of members and potential members.

The gap is growing incrementally between what AVMA is asked and expected to do and what it can deliver with a relatively small staff and its reliance on volunteers as its principal workforce. This reality supports the need to change how it works and governs, and to establish new strategic partners and form new guiding coalitions. Technological advances, the need to become knowledge-driven, the need to enhance its current organizational capacity, the fragmentation of the profession, and growing societal issues provide clear evidence calling for substantive change in the AVMA’s work and governance.

The future will belong only to those who have the tools and vision to embrace it, and those who recognize and act upon what needs to be done to lead membership and maintain relevance.
Adoption of the vision and strategies in this Report inevitably will spawn a subsequent level of efforts including: developing further strategies (such as social responsibility, branding, economics, etc.); developing new partners (such as with business, academia, and government, within the profession and within other countries); and, developing new capacities (such as environmental scanning technologies, leadership, networking, etc.). Thus, this Report should be viewed as an optimistic framework for a considerable amount of further work that will need to be done to successfully position AVMA for the future and achieve its vision.

For the AVMA leadership, creation of a new vision will be a significant test for the Association itself. AVMA should embrace its vision but, moreover, it also must become visionary. Today, it is not just what leadership does, but, just as importantly, is how it does it in the midst of increased scrutiny, transparency, and a membership whose needs and expectations are also changing.

The journey will take some time and certainly will be a major effort. The assumptions underlying this Report are that the veterinary profession needs strong leadership to meet unprecedented needs of society and that AVMA can, and should, provide the leadership, catalyze change, and take bold action. Every profession has its defining moments where talented individuals and leaders will influence the course of events for generations to come. The adoption and implementation of this vision and recommendations represents such a moment.
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