

DECISION LINE

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



A Future-Focused Organization

by Ram Narasimhan, President, DSI

Dear Colleagues, in this column, I would like to engage you in a discussion of the strategic issues that the Institute faces. Repositioning the Institute for future growth, competitive strength, and increased relevance to academics requires that we engage in a constructive debate and discussion. Traditionally, we have served the academic community through annual conferences, the journals of the Institute and placement services. The competitive challenges that confront the Institute, decreased resources available to faculty for travel to conferences, and changing needs of faculty demand that we act proactively exploit opportunities that present themselves and continue to improve the "delivered value" to our membership.

The pressure to improve is unrelenting. Responding to the challenges that we face requires a reexamination of our strategic priorities and actions. It has been two years since we engaged in a strategic planning exercise. It is time for us to reconsider our current strategies and reposition the Institute for future strength and success. To paraphrase the Development Committee's interim report, it is important for the DSI Board to work to create an "envisioned future." The Board will be meeting in Chicago (in conjunction with the Academy of Management meeting) in August to engage in a strategic planning discussion. The Development Committee was given the charge to perform a SWOT analysis to aid in our discussion. The Development Committee in its interim report has identified several issues for the Board to consider.

The most important agenda item at the August Board meeting will be to consider ways in which we can strengthen the strategic position of the Institute in light of current and anticipated future trends. Although we lack precise information on many competitive and environmental factors, it is clear that universities are increasingly resource constrained, increasingly selective in endorsing the professional academies to which their faculties can belong and the research outlets (networks)

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Beginning with this issue of *Decision Line* and until further notice, this publication will be available in electronic (pdf) format only.

that they recognize and promote among their faculty. The membership chart in the report from the Member Services Committee shows a slight decline in membership in recent years. Competition for membership will continue to increase from academies that have a specific focus (e.g., POMS, IPSE, ISM, AOM). DSI is facing tougher competition to retain core membership areas of MIS and POM. These strategic threats identified by the Development Committee need to be considered as we discuss the future of DSI. If "multi-disciplinarity" is our strength, then we must discover new ways to exploit it for competitive strength. This requires the Board of Directors, after careful consideration, make strategic moves that can be effective in creating a positive image for the Institute that bespeaks high quality, a diversified portfolio of offerings, responsiveness to changing demands from members and universities, and a proactive stance in ex-

ploiting new opportunities. We may have to embrace a collaborative mindset while simultaneously recognizing the reality of competition from other societies.

With these factors in mind, based on the Development Committee interim report, I have identified a set of strategic issues for discussion during the Board meeting in Chicago. My interest in sharing this with you is for the sake of transparency and to benefit from your efforts on behalf of the Institute. Ultimately, the strength and future of the Institute lie in DSI membership and your support for the initiatives that the Board adopts on your behalf.

I have identified the following strategic issues for discussion since they affect the **quality and image** of DSI, **competitive strength, delivered value** to DSI members, the ability of DSI to be **responsive** to members and changes in competitive environment, and DSI's ability to **innovate**.

1. Regions: Leveraging regions to increase DSI's profile among academics;

2. Placement Services: This can be a strategic strength. Historically, we have done this well. Other societies also offer placement services. How can we raise the bar? Should we actively promote DSI placement services to candidates, deans, and chairs? How can we improve web-based services relating to placement?

3. Annual Meeting: This is clearly one of the important means to delivering value to our members. The Development Committee identifies the annual meeting as "the single most influential element in attracting new members and sustaining current members." We have begun to address the objective of improving the quality of annual meetings in that the Board has approved a series of initiatives that program chairs will be implementing to significantly improve the quality of DSI annual meetings. We are also including practitioner-oriented sessions beginning



Attendees of the 2009 APDSI Annual Meeting (held July 4-8, 2009) gather at the China Europe International Business School in Shanghai, The People's Republic of China.

with this year's conference. DSI has successfully offered high visibility, high profile, and plenary sessions involving academic and professional thought leaders. These kinds of sessions contribute markedly to the perceived excellence of DSI meetings--this is a practice that can be expanded. What additional actions can we take?

4. Multidisciplinary academy: DSI's multidisciplinary nature can be leveraged into a competitive strength. The Development Committee identifies this as both a strength and a weakness: "Diverse nature of DSI pulls together people from different areas and creates productive collaboration across disciplines; DSI's interdisciplinary nature is among the strongest of alternative academic/professional organizations." Could we use the multidisciplinary nature of DSI to expand into "adjacent market spaces" emphasizing decision making? For example, strategic management, healthcare delivery systems and policy design and, service and governmental operations might offer opportunities. Increase involvement of practitioners?

5. Journals: Managing external perceptions of the journals and rankings warrant dedicated effort requiring the combined efforts of the editorial office,

DSI Board, the publisher of the journals and the home office. Publishers play a key role in the current environment in marketing and promoting the journals through conventional and electronic means. Stronger web-based initiatives are necessary.

6. Partnerships: Partnering with other professional societies might be highly beneficial to DSI. How can we partner with other professional societies? What would be some target professional societies? IPSE in Europe through EDSI? Joint conference with POMS? How can we strengthen our programs and services through expanded partnership with other professional, academic and government organizations.

7. Engaging top-tier schools and scholars: This can be a key competitive advantage. How do we engage them? Through Board membership? How do we control the expanding size of the Board? Through special sessions, invited sessions, workshops, and miniconferences?

8. Internationalization: How can we continue to internationalize the Institute and exploit our strengths in APDSI and soon to be formed European DSI (EDSI) for competitive strength?

9. Organizational structure: How should the Board be reorganized for maximum effectiveness so that the needs of the Institute are addressed expeditiously? The structure should promote a positive image of the Institute and facilitate the pursuit of excellence.

I urge you to contribute to this discussion by contacting me, members of the Board or members of the Development Committee and offering creative and constructive suggestions.

The Board is alive to the stated goals and objectives and is diligently pursuing all of them. The launch of the new journal, *Supply Chain Management Research*, is on track. Negotiations are underway with Wiley for the publishing contract. Recently, I held an organizing meeting with European colleagues regarding the formation of a European Region of DSI (EDSI). The meeting was a success in that a number of colleagues from reputable schools have expressed their strong support to the formation of EDSI and have expressed their desire to be charter members. It is anticipated that a formal proposal to create EDSI will be considered by the Board at the August meeting. ■

DSJIE Workshop for Interested Authors

The *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education (DSJIE)* will offer a half day workshop at the 2009 Decision Science Annual Meeting in New Orleans (November 14–17, 2009) to help authors develop articles appropriate for submission to the journal. The specific date and time of the workshop have not yet been scheduled.

During the workshop, authors of pre-selected papers and abstracts will have the opportunity to work in small groups with the associate editors and experienced reviewers to develop and enhance their ideas and presentation. A maximum of 6-8 papers and 12 extended abstracts will be accepted.

Authors interested in participating in the workshop must submit an electronic paper or extended abstract no later than September 15, 2009, to Vern Francis (vfrancis@gsm.udallas.edu). The *DSJIE* editorial team will notify authors of acceptance to the workshop prior to the DSI 2009 early registration deadline (October 19, 2009).

Submitting a Paper

We seek papers appropriate for publication in *DSJIE*. Therefore, the paper should fit the guidelines found on the *DSJIE* website (www.dsjie.org) and be an empirical research paper, a case study research paper, a conceptual/theoretical

article, or a teaching brief. Recall that "the mission of the journal is to publish significant research relevant to teaching and learning issues in the decision sciences." Papers that have been submitted to or accepted for presentation at DSI 2009 or other conferences are appropriate if they fit the guidelines for *DSJIE* submissions. Abstracts of submissions to the instructional innovation award competition are also welcome. The workshop is an ideal venue to work on developing a conference paper for possible publication in *DSJIE*.

For more information on the Workshop, see the DSI Website at

<http://www.decisionsciences.org/annualmeeting/meetinginfo/dsjie.asp>