

DECISION LINE

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Becoming More International

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I start my term as president of the Decision Sciences Institute with a sense of honor and responsibility. The members have elected, and have entrusted this position to, the first non-American, non-resident of the U.S. I hope to be worthy of this trust and that this constitutes the beginning of many such elected positions as the DSI progresses towards a truly international organization. Much has been mentioned in recent years about the internationalization of the DSI.

Just before submitting my first president's letter to the *Decision Line* editor, a tragic incident occurred in the country I now reside in and call "home." The earthquake in Sichuan Province, China, had a great impact in its suddenness, the many lives it claimed, and the devastation and sorrow it created. What was remarkable though was the massive, quick decision making and response by the government, army, and civilians in the rescue efforts. This relief effort was a splendid illustration of effective logistics, operations planning, and quick execution of disaster recovery. Effective mobilization of the rescue mission involved the use of water channels when road and rail were damaged and under repair, the use of mobile telephony through satellite when telephone lines were down, the sourcing and delivery of food and tents, organization of national and international funding (aid), not forgetting the presence of leadership as when both the president and premier were at the helm of control at the disaster sites, nor the recognition that professional counseling and care of survivors were crucial for recovery.

Very important, in addition to the marshalling of resources, was the evidence of prioritization of decisions. For example, once the rescue efforts turned to recovery, a top priority became the draining of lakes created by the collapse of mountains to prevent the bursting of their banks and destroying of life and property downstream.

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Apart from the emotional effect this quake had on me, this was living proof that it is essential to have people who can manage and direct efforts such as this, and that these strengths would be beneficial, not only in situations of natural disasters but also for companies in competitive positions and concerned about their sustainability. As in the China earthquake incident, it is important to coordinate global supply chains effectively, ensure effective distribution and communication channels, obtain appropriate and sufficient funding and allocate these resources effectively, create a good leadership environment and presence, and care for all stakeholders involved or affected by company decisions.

Within our DSI community, our research, publication, teaching, and consulting needs to be supportive of the issues that are important and relevant to the business community, our governments, and global communities. Concentration on the global economy will be inevitable.

Over the last few years, the DSI Board has seen developments in the strategic planning process, right up to the Toronto strategic planning retreat in August 24-25, 2007, when the Board reformed the Institute's vision and mission statements, examined its strengths and weaknesses, resulting in a list of strategic goals and accompanying charges. Although the Board is made up, primarily, of academic members on a collegial and volunteer basis, much energy was spent in producing a number of well-intentioned reports which formed the basis of action plans and implementations to improve our institutional standing, as well as our core values of quality, responsiveness, and professional development.

There seems to be two areas that should have been given more emphasis in the next 12 months so they do not form roadblocks in important decision making. These are (1) the recognition of a very important set of constituents in the Institute—the regions, and (2) clarity in governance—different interpretations and applications of the Institute's constitution and by-laws, policies, and procedures. I have established ad hoc committees to address each of these.

If I return to the DSI objectives from 2005-06 and 2006-07, one of them in particular is enhancing the value of membership of the DSI. It is only in enhancing the value of DSI membership that we attract and maintain our members and allow DSI to become the institution of first choice to schools, deans, and decision-making professionals. This would have the flow-on effect to our journals and annual meetings. So in the context of the above, I offer the 2008-09 overall objectives and its related goals and sub-goals.

Overall Objective:

Enhance the value of membership in the Decision Sciences Institute.

To achieve this, the following goals and sub-goals are put forward:

1. Increase member satisfaction and participation
 - Improve quality of Annual Meeting;
 - Improve responsiveness, and perception of research excellence of the DSI journals, *Decision Sciences* and *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*;
 - Develop special interest groups based on inter/cross/trans-disciplinary platforms;
 - Enhance services offered by the Placement System, especially web-based;
 - Recognize different academic systems internationally and responsiveness of the DSI to these systems.
2. Leveraging off our constituent bodies and networks
 - Recognition of the roles that regions play in the DSI and vice versa, and nurturing a symbiotic relationship between the regions and DSI;
 - Collaboration with international academic and professional bodies.
3. Effective use of IT
 - Effective communication—enhance content, capability, and visibility of the DSI website;
 - Extension of website use from mere information source and transactional, to transformational and communication resource;

- Enhance services offered by an improved Placement system.
4. Increase the global visibility and acceptance of *Decision Sciences*, *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, and *Decision Line*.
 5. Timely and easier decision making through clear governance structures and mechanisms.
 - Clarity and consistency in, and interpretation of, DSI constitution and by-laws vis-à-vis policies and procedures;
 - Recognition of different international governance systems in overseas regions;
 - Responsive and clearer financial reporting, and investment options, to enable continued funding of projects and responsible Institute operations and expenditure.

Many of these sub-goals are inter-related. There will be a heavy reliance on the workings of the committees, especially the ad hoc committees, development committee, and committees for regional activities, member services, IT, publications, programs and meetings, and many others. The Institute's committees, and elected and appointed officials play important roles in the efficient functioning, growth, and development of the Institute. The charges to these committees and officials, and their recommendations regarding these charges, provide guidance to the Board of Directors in identifying and developing the future directions of the Decision Sciences Institute.

We have had a number of recommendations in the past through the production of fine reports that came from committee members, tasked with difficult charges. This year is probably not the time to spend too much effort collecting data, but the time to consolidate and clarify, and to re-build bridges between our important constituents, as well as to move forward and implement those worthy recommendations that were, and will be, offered. ■

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