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Headquarters Report: MDA Strategic Plan: In the Rear View Mirror and Around the Curve

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MDA Strategic Plan: In the Rear View Mirror and Around the Curve

By Karen Burgess, MBA, CAE
MDA CEO/Executive Director

2022 is rapidly coming to a close, and what a year it has been! Looking back, I can see many accomplishments in every area of our 2021-25 MDA Strategic Plan,

but also some challenges. As we round the curve into 2023, there will be new opportunities to move forward.

Member value

Looking back: Our touch-base member survey this fall confirms that we continue to offer great value to our members, with an overall Net Promoter Score of 43 based on members' response to the question "How likely are you to recommend MDA membership?" FYI, the scale goes from a negative 100 to a positive 100. If 100% of our members gave us the strongest rating and 0 were neutral or negative, the score would be +100. Similarly, 100% with low ratings, and 0 were neutral or positive, it would be -100. So 43 is a good score, consistent with what we saw in 2021. Surveys have also shown very positive ratings for member benefits, including those offered by our for-profit subsidiary, TDSC.com, for example, has saved MDA members \$706,000 through Sept. 30!

Around the curve: It's pretty apparent that the last few years of pandemic challenges have left our younger practitioners reeling. They are less likely to give high marks and are less engaged overall — even much less likely to complete a survey for the MDA! Plus, Generation Z differs from previous generations in terms of expectations. That's why we've engaged Bixa Research — whose principal wrote the book *Insta-Brain: Marketing to Generation Z* — to conduct interviews and focus groups with dental students and early career dentists. This greater insight into young professionals will be a big help in creating value and communicating effectively with the next generation of MDA members.

Member engagement

Looking back: 2022 brought the return of an in-person Annual Session, and we had a great turnout in Novi! Programming was highly rated, especially Frank Spear's seminar. In-person seminars are popular, but we continue to see a high level of engagement with online CE, including webinars and on-demand. Members are also engaging with the MDA more frequently via the website, the MDA app, and social media. A transition to a new communications platform has allowed the MDA to be more insightful, with more targeted communications and fewer "everybody emails."

Around the curve: Plans are underway for the 2023 Annual Session in Grand Rapids, and we are programming to encourage a return to pre-pandemic attendance levels, particularly for the dental team. Our recent survey showed that members want at least 50% of their staff CE to be live and in-person, so we are very optimistic. Plus, we'll be continuing our transition to more personalized member communications.

Organizational sustainability

Looking back: The MDA came through the pandemic in a strong position, thanks to careful budgeting, PPP loan forgiveness, and an up market. This year we continue to do well, with both dues and non-dues revenue on track for our break-even budget by the end of the year. More challenging is the current market (although recovery is expected) as well as a very tight labor market.

Around the curve: Demographics are not on our side! Many loyal baby boomers are retiring from practice, and there are not as many new grads replacing them. Keeping membership participation high will be a focus in 2023. In addition, we would like to see greater utilization of our member benefits, especially by our younger members. We'll be looking to make sure our offerings are aligned with their needs and interests.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Looking back: The MDA received an honorable mention in the ICD Journalism Awards for the MDA *Journal* article, “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Perspectives from an LGBTQ Dentist” by former MDA President Dr. Bill Chase. It’s been great to see a wide variety of diverse perspectives represented in our stellar publication. The topic of inclusion was addressed by a panel moderated by Dr. Joanne Dawley at this year’s MDA Leadership Forum, and it was the top-rated session. It was very helpful in providing concrete examples of what inclusion looks like, and what stands in the way.

Also big: This year heralded the launch of the Michigan Diverse Dental Alliance website! It was completed through collaboration with the American Association of Women Dentists, the Hispanic Dental Association, the Society of American Indian Dentists, the Student National Dental Association, and the Wolverine Dental Society, along with other stakeholders including both dental schools. The goal of the website is to provide resources and information to educate students of diverse backgrounds about dental professions, with the ultimate goal of increasing the diversity of the profession in the state.

Around the curve: Creating an inclusive environment for all at all three levels of the tripartite will continue throughout the year. Next steps for the collaboration through the Michigan Diverse Dental Alliance will be outreach to promote dental careers to students, through dental career program panels online and in schools, as well as a shadowing program in dental offices. And planning for the 2023 MDA Leadership Forum has already begun, with the question of “how can we build on this success?”

Advocacy

Looking back: If you feel like you’re getting more MDA info about advocacy, you’re right! This year we’ve dramatically increased the “behind the scenes” news we publish, as well as social media posts on the topic — all because members really need to know what’s going on. Some initiatives may take years to pay off! A good example — the MDA has been a persistent and insistent

advocate for Medicaid reform. In 2022, our hard work paid off with the highest investment in dental Medicaid in any state budget, coupled with a clear mandate to raise fees for the first time in 30 years. The proposed restructuring ticks off almost every item on the MDA wish list.

Other accomplishments were notable for what the MDA staved off. This year, we killed a bill that would have required dental assistants to be licensed in order to do radiographs and also would have taken away dentists’ ability to use hand-held X-rays. We also stopped a rule that would have prohibited a dentist from bringing in a trained anesthesiologist/CRNA to perform anesthesia in the office unless the dentist got anesthesia training.

Around the curve: The political players are always changing in Michigan, thanks in large part to term limits. The recent approval of Proposition 1 means that there may be more stability in the House and in the Senate. In addition, the 2022 election has brought the House, Senate, and Governor’s Office under the control of state Democrats. How this will impact the success of our legislative priorities is yet to be seen, but I am optimistic that it may work in our favor. The recent approval of the Massachusetts ballot initiative to set the percent of premium dollars paid out for dental care at 83% has energized dentists across the country, our state included, and we will be evaluating this and other member priorities carefully.

The roadmap and the journey

Like any good strategic plan, the MDA’s is always evolving as we meet objectives, learn more, and make adjustments. It’s a roadmap to help us get to where we want to be . . . an association that delivers member value to each member; that engages every member the way they want to engage; that offers a stable base for future growth; that is inclusive of every dentist, of every background and practice modality; and is a successful advocate for the profession and for the public’s oral health. I’m thankful we have the resources we need to navigate the journey. As we look ahead to 2023, thank you for taking that journey together with the Michigan Dental Association. ●