

TA Strategy Retreat
Giesselman Home
June 19-20, 2018, 2:00 PM
Call-in: (641) 715-3580; 835905#



Directors in Attendance: Kurt Giesselman, Tyler Newman, Scott Clarkson, Gary Pierson, Jennifer Barvitski

Staff: John Norton, Laurel Runcie, Daniel Kreykes, Jeff Moffett, Andrew Sandstrom,

On Phone: None

Public: None

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

2pm-2:15pm: Review of purpose of retreat.

Discuss and capture what results we want to produce from this meeting. **Kurt Giesselman w/ flipcharts**

Why?

The process of developing a strategic plan is the important part. If you have gone through a good process, you can adapt to change.

What?

The second part is timeline. We can try our best to change what happens next year, but in reality, that is already written. The further into the future, the more likely you are to cause change. Planning horizon needs to be 3-5 years out. We have to know what is happening now, but we need to have the long-range look.

How?

Getting a group of engaged and involved people together. Our group has a greater level of intellectual and emotional engagement in the TA's process. We will be sharing our thought process with the outside entities that have an interest in our work; Lodging Community, Cities, County, Creative District, Vail, etc.

The goal is not to produce a gigantic document to follow for the year. It is really for us to work through the process so that we can develop a way of thinking. There are many changing variables that we will not be able to have the answer for now. As we get more clarity on the unknowns, like the new ownership of the resort, we will have a thought process developed for how we should react.

2:15-2:25: Review of TA three-year results.

John w/ flipcharts, New TA results

- Occupancy and revenue gains in all 12 months.
- Share gains 11 of 12 months
- Share gain in summer
- Share gain in winter
- Gains up and down valley
- Summer 18 is seeing lodging price increases. Good!
- Strong relations with:
 - County
 - Federal Agencies
 - Colorado Tourism Office
 - Trails organizations
 - ICELab
 - MCB and Gunnison
 - STOR
 - Western
- Strong Board; strong staff
- Statewide recognitions
- Relations could be better with:
 - Arts—little funding when compared with trails
 - Gunny Lodging—would like more communication/influence
 - CB—is growth in tourism a good thing?
 - Rodeo—events fall in peak season of July/August when we don't fund
 - CBMR—no agreement on the winter brand

2:25-3:10: Review of Good Strategy/Bad Strategy.

Capture board and staff comments about what good and bad strategy is. **John w/ flipcharts**

Good Strategy:

- Acknowledges Challenges
- Delivers Coherent Actions
- Says “No” to wide variety of actions and interests
- Makes choices among competing values
- “If you don’t have a competitive advantage, don’t compete” Welch
- “Kernel”
 - Diagnose the situation
 - Choose a guiding policy
 - Design coherent action

Bad Strategy:

- Doesn’t confront problems
- Accommodates conflicting demands & interests
- Spreads vs concentrates resources
- Fluff language
- Mistakes goals for strategy

3:10-4:00: The good and bad of the current TA strategies.

Good Strategies

- Concentrating limited resources (Mtb, trails)

Bad Strategies

- Previous approach was to keep everyone happy
- We have been reactive to criticism

4:00-5:00: Capture the good and the bad, whole group discussion.

Kurt

How do we become more proactive? For instance, the negativity surrounding the grant cycle. We have changed it to make it better in the future. We will communicate our goals more clearly. With the criticism from the horse community, how can we work the horse community into our current strategy? Trails? Is the infrastructure there? With the mtb community, we had the existing infrastructure in place. We didn’t need to invest into development of the product. We then were able to align all of the players to amplify the message ie trails orgs, feds, maps

etc. Could we do this for the horse community? Do we focus our strategy to trails and access? What about other user groups? Can we compete with dirtbike, hike, horse and all trail users? We won't be popular if we stay completely focused on mtb, but we can win. Will we be spread too thin if we overly diversify? We need to find something else that we can be in the top 5 in. Is it horse? Is it e-bike? Is it bikepacking and gravel grinding? Dirtbike? Staff to do follow up research on the various activities outlined above.

Another piece to consider is that with Vail coming in, how much will we have to push alpine ski in winter? Will we have more money for summer and shoulder seasons? We will do all we can to be proactive with outreach to Vail.

We plan to have better communication with the community and players throughout the year. Staff will look into the most effective ways of doing so.

Close Meeting: 5:00 PM

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

9:00-9:15: Review of Day 1.

Kurt w/ flipcharts

We did a good job about talking about what kind of changes could be happening. What do we want to talk about regarding the potential land mines that are here now? How will Vail change the dynamics? Gunnison Getaway; will it go away? Do we need to keep pushing winter? We hear complaints about summer being full. June is a below average month. 6 weeks of July and August we have backed off. August is soft this year, which is an industry trend. That being said, end of August, September, and October are an opportunity. Is the issue with summer from the businesses? Or to others who want town to themselves? For winter, maybe it is that we back off alpine and let Vail have it. We can continue to push Nordic and Fat Bike. Winter is also missing the arts piece, maybe we push on the arts community to try more for winter.

We have learned how to say no, which is a positive thing. The downside to this is that we haven't kept everyone happy. We will never get to a place that everyone loves us. That being said, we need to make sure that we keep an eye on the fact that we can't let the negativity get in the way of what we do.

9:15-10:45: The Big What If's

John and Kurt w/flicharts

-What if Vail doesn't support winter?

We will just continue to do what we are doing for winter.

-What if Epic Pass doesn't bring skiers?

Same as above, we continue to split our spending about 50/50 summer winter.

-What if Epic Pass brings tons of skiers?

Not all skiers are created equal. Are they destination? Or more front range? Are we worried about the bad impacts from a HUGE increase in skiers?

-How does the new Cottonwood Pass change our world?

The two changes with Cottonwood will be that it is paved and straighter. This will shorten the trip dramatically. Will Gunnison be bypassed by this? We will need to continue to work to build the product in Gunnison. Will the county have enough money to plow the pass?

-What if BoCC continues to diversify our mission without any additional funding?

We have seen STOR, ED, and Western added to our plate with no additional funding. The drop in the amount of marketing this year because of it will not be easy to track. We embraced these requests this year. New challenges have allowed our staff to grow. We have also been able to think outside the box to accomplish both driving tourism and our additional tasks. That being said, we need to keep our eye on the needle for growth. If we start sputtering because of our added responsibilities, we need to have a conversation with the commissioners. We need to keep the balance of added responsibilities with no more money. That is not an endless path.

-What if BoCC changes our mission?

It is written into the statute that LMD can be used for ED. ED can probably continue to expand under the current language.

-What if summer continues to grow at current pace?

Summer can grow only outside July and the first half of August.

-What are the opportunities for south valley improvements?

Monarch Crest style trails on west side of Monarch. What about Blue Mesa? Bruce with the NPS has offered to work with GT. How can the TA support Gunnison Trails? A strategic session with the board? Help review grants before they are submitted?

-E-bike

How do you cater to e-bikes? How could we get to the forefront of that? E-bike gravel grinding. Become a pilot program for FS, BLM.

10:45-11:00: Board Votes

Vote to accept results of the audit. Gary Pierson moves to approve the audit. Jennifer Barvitski seconds. Audit approved unanimously by 4 remaining board members.

Scott Clarkson moves to approve the May minutes, Gary Pierson seconds. Minutes approved unanimously by 4 remaining board members.

11:00-11:30: Staff Reflections on meeting

Daniel

Liked the open conversation about Vail. Wish that we had spent a little more time on the good strategy/bad strategy.

Jennifer

Good to have a chunk of time set aside to talk openly without daily housekeeping. I think it could be good to talk good strategy/bad strategy and how we are going to apply it moving forward. Maybe we do another meet up like this moving forward.

Laurel

The agenda seemed very open ended at first. This did however allow us to delve into things that may not have otherwise been addressed. Our old monthly meetings were much more focused on the day to day. This is good to look at it from further out. One of the hard parts is,

how are we going to put what we talked about into action? Looks like we have some homework starting Monday.

Scott

It was good that we spoke about real issues without just doing a theoretical exercise. We were able to focus on some of the amenities that we already have that don't need a lot of new infrastructure. I think we need to go back and put some strategy to these pieces. It was also good to talk about Vail, it is good to hear everyone's ideas.

Andrew

It was good to have an overarching look at what our direction needs to be. We didn't come to finalization on what exactly we are going to do. I have some homework assignments for Monday, but what is our move for 3-5 years out? This exercise did allow us to develop a way of thinking and acting in the future.

Jeff

Really enjoyed the book "Good Strategy Bad Strategy". Learned about some of the pieces that are going on that I didn't know before. Thought we were going to apply the book to Gunnison County now. I was excited to come up with the strategy, it seems like we don't have a final. John Norton commented that, "Currently we have a good strategy, we need to keep our eye on the horizon. We may not have the next thing in the next month or even the next year. It was great to be able to kick up the dust and talk out of the box and work through it with our strategy."

Gary

This has been a good way to spend more time together instead of just a little bit every month. Reading Good Strategy/Bad Strategy ahead of the meeting was great to get everyone in the same mindset for the meeting. I think some of the ideas we have come up with will be great to look into, ie the ebikes. I learned a lot about Vail and want to work with them and collaboration with Western moving forward. We could do better getting what we do out into the community. We really need to continue to get that information out there. Laurel recommended, Start with Why" for another follow up reading.

Kurt

The biggest plus was how open the atmosphere was. Everyone was very receptive to any one-off idea. No negativity and everyone was thoughtful and respectful of all ideas. The negative was that we didn't go through the Good/Bad strategy enough. I would tell everyone that what we accomplished met my expectations. I didn't expect a brain bursting strategy to

explode from this. I wanted a brainstorming session that allowed us be open and prepared for what is coming. We now have a common way of tackling problems in the future.

John

Happy with the outcome of the strategy retreat. Looking forward to meeting Monday with staff and moving forward with our next steps.

11:45-12:00: Wrap and next steps.

Kurt

Do we revisit strategy during the new business section of July meeting? Or do we suggest that we do this again in the fall? Can we accomplish a partial reexamination of strategy in the fall with the finance meeting? We want to do the finance meeting so that we don't have to have the minutia finance update every meeting. We can't shortchange finance because we are bringing up strategy again. Maybe a half day strategy session ahead of the finance meeting. This could allow staff some time to delve into the details of the ideas to move forward with direction. John thinks that it would be better to revisit in January as we will have an idea of winter and Vail etc. We will have an indication of collaboration vs taking on winter themselves. At that point we can make better decisions on winter etc moving forward.

Meeting close 12:00