

THE LAKE CHAPALA SOCIETY

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Or

**WHAT'S RIGHT AND WRONG
WITH THIS LCS PICTURE?**

August 3, 2009

TABLE OF CONTENT

	Pages
INTRODUCTION: PRIORITY ISSUES	3
1. DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE	4
Governance Structure	4
Strategic Plan	4
1.3 Constitution & Bylaws	4
1.4 Operational Structure	4
1.5 Communications and Consultations	5
2. MARKETING, PROMOTION & COMMUNICATIONS	5
2.1 Members	5
2.2 LCS Image	5
2.3 Relationships with the Mexican Community	6
2.4 Role of LCS in the Community (Positioning)	6
2.5 Political and Legal Environments	6
2.6 Competition	7
3. HUMAN RESOURCES	7
3.1 Service Volunteers	7
3.2 Communication, Consultation & Teamwork	7
4. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES	8
4.1 Library Services	8
4.2 Biblioteca	8
4.3 Businesses on LCS grounds	9
4.4 Financial Assistance to Mexican Students	9
4.5 Medical Services	9
5. FINANCES	9
6. PLANNING	10
7. MATERIAL RESOURCES	10
8. TECHNOLOGICAL SYSTEMS	10

INTRODUCTION: PRIORITY ISSUES

Based on the 17 interviews, the following are the top 8 PRIORITY issues of The Lake Chapala Society. LCS needs to make the following improvements:

1. To improve the decision-making structure.
2. To improve the image of LCS and the management of marketing and promotion, including communications with the membership.
3. To improve Human Resource Management.
4. To improve the management of programs and services.
5. To improve the management of financial resources.
6. To establish an efficient planning process.
7. To improve LCS buildings and land use.
8. To improve technological systems.

The following sections outline in more details the perceptions of interviewed persons with respect to the current situation in order of priorities.

1. DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

1.1 Governance Structure

For many, the Board is too involved in the day-to-day management of LCS operations. It should become a governing Board instead of an operational Board. The Board would have a full time job adopting strategies, plans and policies while the Executive Director would manage operations.

LCS has to fully answer the question: “Who decides what?” There is a major need to clarify the decision-making powers within the Governance Structure:

- Annual General Meeting
- Board of Directors
- Board Committees
- Executive Director

1.2 Strategic Plan

Before dealing with the Governance Structure, LCS has to answer the question: “Where are we going as an organization?” LCS members will answer that question by adopting the LCS Strategic Plan at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Governance Structure will assist LCS members, the Board of Directors and the Executive Director in implementing the Strategic Plan. The Structure is at the service of the Strategy.

1.3 Constitution & Bylaws

There is a major need to revise the Constitution & Bylaws that would incorporate the philosophy and the key components of the Governance Structure, such as the decision-making powers of the Annual General Meeting and the Board of Directors.

1.4 Operational Structure

There is a major need to clarify decision-making powers within the Operational Structure including the following components:

- Executive Director
- Management Team
- Department Heads
- Staff
- Service Volunteers.

1.5 Communications and Consultations

There is a major need to improve communications and consultations between the Board, members, staff and service volunteers. More systematic and transparent communications and consultations are required.

2. MARKETING, PROMOTION & COMMUNICATIONS

2.1 Members

Too many members are frustrated and angered by recent Board decisions. They are concerned about the way LCS is governed and managed. There is a high degree of mistrust between LCS members and the Board of Directors. They want LCS to put their internal act together. They want their needs to be identified and dealt with in a competent manner. They are looking for straightforward and meaningful answers. We need to get the information out there. Silence feeds the rumor mill and results in a loss of members and volunteers.

Some members say that they pay their dues and in return LCS services should only be given to members. Other members say that LCS has a tradition and a mission to participate in the development of the community at large.

2.2 LCS Image

There are various perceptions of LCS in the community.

Most Mexican residents feel that LCS belongs to “ex-pats”, “gringos” or Non-Mexicans. The Mexican Community identifies itself more with the Wilkes Education Centre (WEC). They perceive that LCS activities are available only in English.

Non-Mexicans, as a community, are ambivalent about Mexicans being present on LCS grounds. Should they be welcome or not? Should we make an effort to integrate them into LCS programming? Should they remain apart from LCS grounds and stay at the WEC?

For some members, the image of LCS is tarnished at best and a vocal minority wears down volunteers.

Some interviewees suggested that once the Strategic Plan, the Governance Structure, the position of Executive Director and the operational structure are in place, LCS will have its internal act together and be in a position to undertake a meaningful marketing, promotion and communication program.

2.3 Relationships with the Mexican Community

LCS is perceived as a club for the privileged and strangers only. Some Mexicans have been heard saying that they are not allowed to enter LCS grounds. The Mexican community does not know what is going on at LCS. Mexicans are very ill at ease at LCS. Do we want to maintain this kind of relationship with the Mexican Community?

It was suggested that LCS work in partnership with community organizations to assist Mexicans instead of LCS doing something for Mexicans.

LCS should partner with the Board of Education / Director, the Secretariat for Culture and any other community agency.

Should LCS foster the integration of Non-Mexicans in the community by enhancing the awareness of Mexican culture and language?

It was suggested that LCS host a community award activity that would recognize volunteer Non-Mexican and Mexican organizations in the region. LCS would come out smelling like a rose with all the good press that it would receive.

2.4 Role of LCS in the Community (Positioning)

What is the role of LCS in the Lakeside Region? Is it to serve members only? Is it to foster good interchange between Mexicans and Non-Mexicans? Is it to explore the mutual appreciation of heritages, cultures and languages? Is it to mutually exchange knowledge, expertise, talents, etc.?

2.5 Political and Legal Environments

Part of facilitating the integration of Non-Mexicans in the community is to increase their awareness of Mexican laws with respect to:

- Partisan political activities
- Accounting
- Fundraising
- Managing a non-profit organization and its Constitution & Bylaws
- Visa compliance,
- Staff and volunteer rights.

2.6 Competition

LCS is a unique organization in the Lakeside Region. It is the only organization with a mandate to facilitate the integration of Non-Mexicans into the Mexican community. In this sense, LCS has no competition.

However, there is a lot of competition between community organizations having access to LCS grounds. There are 57 charities in the area and 20 use LCS facilities. There is animosity between groups because there are different rules for different groups. Preference is given to Red Cross. There is too much stepping on each others toes. This leads to a loss of volunteers.

There are 2 music organizations and art galleries in the community that provide cultural services. We should not compete with them.

The Lakeside Region business sector is developing. Some businesses, once only located in Guadalajara, are now establishing themselves in the Region. Some businesses now have access to LCS are competing with other community businesses. LCS should have a policy governing competition on LCS grounds.

3. HUMAN RESOURCES

3.1 Service Volunteers

In order to provide quality services to members and potential members, volunteers need to have a comprehensive understanding of LCS. New service volunteers need orientation sessions and existing service volunteers require consistent training. This training would be based on a Manual of Policies and Procedures.

Volunteers need to feel that they are valued. No volunteers, no organization! Volunteers are the essence of the Organization. We need to reinforce and reward well done activities and good behavior by staff and volunteers. LCS should establish a Volunteer Appreciation Program.

3.2 Communication, Consultation & Teamwork

Service volunteers are good at what they do. They know their job. Lack of consultation with service volunteers in their own area of expertise brings about changes that demotivate the volunteers.

LCS needs to define the needs of its volunteers. When this is not done, the squeaky wheels get the grease. When this happens, it creates the feeling that one has to complain to get things done. Everyone is constantly in a reactive mode. There is a lot of back-talk which festers LCS morale and image.

This work environment is not conducive to caring volunteer services. Volunteers need more cooperation, trust, communication and reliable information.

Morale is down in the Library. The Board of Directors' decision about the Library was also done without any consultation. This lack of communications had a snowball effect. Good communications and consultations make happy volunteers who in turn make happy members.

Decisions should be made as a team for the common good. There are turf struggles within organization. The budgeting process should involve management and staff. We need to be more transparent with finances.

Changes in locations were not done in consultation with members and volunteers. This resulted in lower morale with the service volunteers. We need improved communications and consultations between the Board, staff, service volunteers and the community at large. The Executive Director should consult staff more systematically.

We need to formalize the consultation process from members, staff and service volunteers in the new operational structure.

4. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

4.1 Library Services

The Library Ad Hoc Committee has identified the following needs for improvement:

- Need more reading material
- Need more furniture and equipment
- Need for new technology
- Need more space
- Consideration should be given to restructuring Library services.

The following question was asked: "Should talking books be available for members and non-members?"

4.2 Biblioteca

- Biblioteca's books are obsolete and needs more books.
- A real good library should support its educational programs.

4.3 Businesses on LCS grounds

- Businesses come into LCS grounds and make money off people.
- Some current services that were available only in Guadalajara are now available in Lakeside Region. They should be eliminated from LCS grounds.
 - The optometrist is in competition with other local professionals.
 - There are 2 or 3 immigration people on location at LCS in competition with businesses in the community.
 - 3 insurance agents on LCS grounds are in competition with other insurance businesses in the community.
- We should ensure that LCS complement (not compete with) services provided by the Lakeside community.

4.4 Financial Assistance to Mexican Students

- For university students receiving scholarships, we are in the process of establishing written criteria.
- Scholarship funds are not enough to meet the demands. LCS members are not aware of this program. We do not understand that results take a long time to see the day.

4.5 Medical Services

- We should adapt to changing needs. Mexican medical system has a resource person on LCS site with Spanish documents. This is very much needed and appreciated.
- When blood pressure testing and diabetic testing services were offered, the expats came. We were not able to attract Mexicans.

5. FINANCES

- We need a fundraising plan. We need an organized approach to acquire funds from bequests and large donations. It should be a priority. Does LCS have an authorization number for charitable donations? We need a program for bequests, donations and other revenue generation. (4)
- Money has to be set aside for building repairs. (2)
- We need money for the education of Mexican students.
- With respect to charitable contributions, Americans can receive tax deductible receipts but this is not available to Canadians. This should be studied further. Canadians want to give to charitable causes but cannot receive such receipts.
- With respect to building repair, one person took the lead to redesign the land free of charge. And then he died. Where is the money?
- LCS needs a good accounting program and financial control. The Mexican system is different and more complicated than the American one.

Decisions are made depending on the person in charge. People are not stealing. The control systems are not in place.

6. PLANNING

- There is a lot of mistrust of anything done by the Board. Many members are wondering: "Why is Board doing this strategic planning exercise?"
- We need planning for more space.
- We need a long-term strategic plan.
- The last strategic plan was done in 2002 and has been ignored since then.
- Before money is spent, we need to plan and design facilities / land use.
- We need to better use facilities (time wise). LCS should be open more hours.

7. MATERIAL RESOURCES

- There is a need for consolidation of space. We need to better use the space available. We have a challenge with respect to space and design of buildings.
- The Wilkes Education Center (Biblioteca, classrooms) is located on a small city lot. The sale of that Center could have been seed money to redo the Library located on LCS location.
- LCS has very limited parking space which discourages people from coming to LCS.
- The WEC is antiquated (old). It needs to be revamped.
- More funding is required to expand lecture hall capacity, to build more classrooms, etc.

8. TECHNOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

- The membership data base does not speak to the library membership data base. There are only manual linkages between LCS and Library membership. The membership data base should be basis of everything at LCS, including the Library. This consolidation of LCS membership data base would help LCS in controlling services offered to non-members. The dots on cards are antiquated. There is a lack of control. We need information system architecture for LCS.
- We need more qualified members becoming volunteers especially in the digital world.
- We need more computers at the WEC. It costs 15 pesos / hour for internet use.