

**A Strategic Planning Concept
Proposal**

Submitted to
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**ENHANCING GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY OF USTSA:
RETAINING AND ATTRACTING MEMBERS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF TELEMARK SKIERS**



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I. Objective

To obtain both qualitative and quantitative data from USTSA stakeholders and external stakeholders that will be systematically analyzed to develop a strategic plan to increase membership.

II. Strategic Questions to Explore

- How does the USTSA increase membership?
- What is the “pulse” or “health” of the existing membership regarding the direction of USTSA, and what is their long-term commitment to the association?
- What are the “strengths” of the association?
- What are the “weaknesses” of the association?
- Is the USTSA website informative enough or “user-friendly” to “peak” a non-member’s interest in joining?
- Is the challenge of retention and attraction of members a symptom of larger challenges facing the ski industry in general?
- How do stakeholders outside the association perceive its strengths and weaknesses?
- Is the mission of the association appealing to members and perhaps non-members or potential members?
- Does the association need to “re-brand itself” to capture the “hearts and minds” of telemark skiers?
- What would motivate a telemark skier to join USTSA? More specifically, if racing was not the main interest of telemark skiers, what would motivate them to join?

III. Assumptions to Consider When Developing Questions to Explore Membership Retention/Expansion

- Potential members will have an affinity to the sport via proficiency in technique and/or are “maturing tele-skiers” with a long-term commitment to learning the technique and improving that could include both competitive and non-competitive events.
- Potential members are former alpine skiers who converted to the “advanced level” and are looking for a new and different experience, and, as such, they will stay with the sport.
- Potential members want a value-added experience that includes “continuing education” on technique, tactics, fitness, practice, and equipment via different media specific to telemark skiing.
- Potential members want a feeling of inclusiveness; that their competitive and skill development needs are being met while supporting the national race team.
- Potential members want different venues, and timely information on venues, for racing in different parts of the USA to accommodate travel and cost.
- Potential members want different venues, and timely information on venues, for racing to expose their children to the sport’s format and, in turn, increase their child’s probability of participation.

- Potential members are “late bloomers” to the sport who want a value-added experience that attends to their competitive and skill development needs.

IV. Methodology to Proceed with Data Gathering and Analysis

1. **Begin with a “Carousel Brainstorm Group.”** The intent of this group is to “round robin” via “brainstorming” on strategic questions to ask stakeholders. The group, which will be facilitated, would include a diverse, yet small, assembly of stakeholders that can use the aforementioned questions and hypotheses as a starting point to generate relevant questions for a subsequent survey instrument to be administered to internal and external stakeholders. Carousel Brainstorm Group members would consist of (1) a sponsor specific to the sport of telemark skiing, (2) a media representative specific to the sport, (3) two members of the U.S. National Telemark Ski Team, (4) a USTSA board member, (5) a representative from the international community, and (6) a sponsor that deals with telemark skiing but other snow sports as well to offer an outside perspective.
2. **Establish a “Working” Survey Instrument for Data Collection.** Feedback from the Carousel Brainstorm Group would be used to develop a questionnaire to be potentially administered to members and outside stakeholders. If the members of the Carousel Brainstorm Group feel it appropriate, the “working” survey instrument would be reviewed by the group in a follow-up conference call to fine tune survey items.
3. **Conduct a Pre-Test of the Survey Instrument.** Upon completing the “fine tuning” of the instrument via the Carousel Brainstorm Group, the survey would be administered to a small group of stakeholders to address any potential ambiguity with questions and format. The intent here will be to ensure clarity and conciseness in the question context.
4. **Administration of the Survey.** The survey will be administered electronically to a mailing list compiled by USTSA that includes both members and outside stakeholders. Recipients of the survey will be asked to complete and return the survey electronically within a three (3) week time period. Through coordination and approval of the USTSA Board, a contact person, perhaps the facilitator of this research will be assigned to handle questions from recipients regarding the survey during its administration.
5. **Compilation of Survey Data.** As survey questionnaires are returned electronically, responses to questions will be compiled in a spreadsheet. Closed-ended questions will be assigned numbers in the spreadsheet, and feedback from open-ended questions will be stored in a WORD file and subsequently organized by common themes to identify issues that can be explored later with the USTSA Board on issues and strategies to develop and address relating to membership.
6. **Analysis of Survey Data.** Upon collecting the survey data, the closed-ended questions will be quantitatively analyzed to be obtained the frequency of responses to specific questions. The goal here is to obtain trends or patterns in preferences among stakeholders as it relates to USTSA membership and other relevant attributes of the association that materializes out of the Carousel Brainstorm Group discussions.
7. **Uses of the Survey Data for a SWOT.** The survey data, both the qualitative and quantitative data, will be used to establish an assessment of USTSA strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWAT). The idea here is to provide a systematic assessment of issues to address and assets to build on in retaining and increasing membership.
8. **Linking SWOT with Goals and Strategies for Action.** At some point in time, a facilitation session with both USTSA board members and USTSA members will need to take place where SWOT results will need to be linked to goals and strategies for action. Prior to this meeting, the

facilitator will provide these stakeholders with the survey results for their review. The facilitator will then review the results with stakeholders, stimulate a discussion on the results, and then break the stakeholders into subgroups to develop goals and strategies. When the subgroups are completed with their work, all stakeholders will be asked to share their results. The exchange of results will be used to establish consensus on goals and strategies.