



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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SOA RESTRUCTURING

I recently had the opportunity to participate in a workshop sponsored by the Society of Actuaries. Representatives of all sections and practice areas came together to begin the assessment of life in the new structure of the SOA. Given that I attended in place of the Nontraditional Marketing council chairperson, I feel it appropriate to usurp his regular space in *NewsDirect* to share my observations on this direction and the implications for our section.

In 2003, the SOA Board of Governors commissioned a governance audit to deal with concerns that the SOA was not responding as effectively as needed to issues of concern to the membership. In response to this audit there were a number of recommendations approved by the Board. A new organizational structure has been proposed for the SOA that will see the creation of strategic action teams to focus on issues facing the profession. These teams will deal with issues that cross areas of practice, issues specific to single areas of practice and responsibilities currently handled by practice areas which are not addressed by sections. This last item is of particular interest to sections in how we will work within the new SOA framework.

The new structure will see the elimination of the practice areas with the core functions becoming the responsibility of a strategically focused organization. The areas of practice will still play an important role. This new structure will create an opportunity and provide additional resources for sections to expand their roles. For smaller sections like Nontraditional Marketing, better access to resources will increase enthusiasm and require a more expansive mindset for the council. We could continue on the current path, but this would not leverage the increased opportunities that will be available. Increased resources mean not only money but people and expertise. Working with other sections, the strategic action teams and staff actuaries will be very beneficial.

The intention in this new structure is for the sections to play a key role in helping the strategic action teams focus on issues facing the profession. This brings us to

the goal of the workshop: to review the activities that both practice areas and sections undertake and to ensure that, in the new structure, nothing gets left behind. The sections will be able to play a stronger role in the strategic initiatives of the SOA. This will certainly require some new thinking and I would expect some more expansive discussions at council meetings.

The purpose of the workshop was to better understand and document the activities and processes focused on by sections and practice areas. This included the development of content for continuing education, identifying and overseeing research initiatives and experience studies, providing input to strategic direction and ensuring that the activities of the SOA promote the interests of the members of the sections both within the SOA and externally.

We made good progress in the documentation and outlining of all of the key activities. This is just the beginning. Sections will have a greater responsibility to influence the strategic direction of the SOA, while at the same time maintaining continued value to their section members. Broader responsibility will necessitate broader involvement by members with section councils. There is a great opportunity for the Non-Traditional Marketing Section to better link with other sections in achieving common objectives and greater individual involvement.

As the restructuring takes place, and we all begin to understand the changes, section councils are looking toward exciting times. Perhaps we will even see the expansion of the product channel directory that we have sponsored to include more sections and areas of practice. Rest assured there is much more to come. ■

