National Candle Association
2012-2014
Strategic Plan Summary

Prepared by: Ralph Vasami, Esq.
Kellen Company

August 24-25, 2011
Participants

Bob Nelson, Yankee Candle Co., NCA Chair
Eileen Hedrick, Belmay, Inc.
Bob Rumfield, Candle Artisans, Inc.
Rex Mason, Root Candles
Nancy Sedlar, SC Johnson
Anton Katrus, Candle-Lite, Inc.
Kathy LaVanier, Renegade Candles
Louis Steigerwald, Cathedral Candle Co.
Steve Bell, The International Group
Curt Waisath, Gold Canyon Candle
Steve Horenziak, Proctor & Gamble Co.

Carol Freysinger, NCA Executive Vice President
Ralph Vasami, Kellen Company, Facilitator
Tara McLaughlin, Kellen Company, Recorder
Executive Summary

Members of the National Candle Association’s (NCA) Board of Directors convened in Chicago, IL on August 24-25, 2011 for a strategic planning session. Those attending are herein referred to as participants since the entire Board was not present.

Participants agreed the primary purpose of this strategic planning session was to outline a new NCA three-year action plan. The NCA conducted a strategic planning session in October of 2008 that proved to be very successful in setting a direction that the association has followed with great success. Participants acknowledged that it is necessary to devote time and effort to strategic planning and to be focused on the importance of continually moving the organization forward. The Facilitator urged the participants to continue to review the goals, objectives and action items from the NCA’s Strategic Plan at each future Board meeting to ensure that the organization remains focused and accountable for all tasks. This simple discipline will keep the Board and staff on track to accomplish NCA’s goals and objectives.

The evaluation began with a review of the NCA mission statement. The mission statement had undergone extensive discussion and revision during the last planning session in 2008. After review and discussion, the participants agreed that the key elements of member benefit and representation, safe products, and a healthy environment for the industry needed to remain explicit in the mission statement. The mission statement re-affirmed by the participants is:

*The mission of the National Candle Association is to serve and represent its candle manufacturing members of the United States of America and their suppliers, and to promote safe products and a healthy environment for the industry.*
After reviewing the results of the recent membership survey (see Appendix) and phone interviews, the Facilitator led the group through a discussion of the organization’s Critical Issues and a review of NCA’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Following the SWOT review, the facilitator led the participants through a review of the Critical Issues, Strategic Objectives, and a discussion of actions and tactics that support the objectives. The participants made refinements on the Strategic Objectives and situation analysis to reflect the current state of the association and the industry.

Critical Issues

- Rising costs of raw materials
- The economy
- Sustaining and growing NCA membership
- Deliver value to members
- Communicate the NCA value proposition
- Trade issues
- NCA budget constraints
- Regulatory issues
- Deliver the right information to the right people in companies and committees
- Negative media and misinformation (paraffin, fragrances)
- Trends of competitive products
- Indoor air quality
- NCA logo/seal
- Logo/Mark-what does it mean?
- Retailers developing their own safety standards
- Labs dictate tests to perform vs. using ASTM standards
- Fire safety standard, how to evolve this?
- Ingredient exposure-need to monitor and stay involved
Committee make-up
- Should non-members be allowed to serve?
- Should the Chair be allowed to decide if non-members may serve?

- Increase consumer education on how to safely use candles
- Increase communication efforts for industry and consumers
- Trade show, how to continue to grow
- Annual meeting attendance needs to improve
- Need to attract the next generation to the NCA and the Show
- Increase member involvement-broaden the base-build on the improvements made.

**Strategic Objectives**

1. Continue the development and implementation of the member retention and recruitment plan focused on adding tangible value to the members that will result in \(X\) new members and \(Y\%\) retention rate.

2. Continue to develop and maintain an import fair trade policy for candles that promotes a safe and healthy environment for the industry.

3. Continue to enhance and promote candle safety for the betterment of all stakeholders.

4. Proactively address emerging issues that threaten the growth and acceptance of candles and, working with the Communications Committee, communicate their potential impact to the NCA members and stakeholders.
5. Implement a structured communications program that regularly informs members and stakeholders about NCA initiatives, positions, issues, accomplishments, and guides public relations programs on behalf of NCA.

6. Ensure the NCA governance and operating structures maintain Board effectiveness, Board transparency, and member involvement.

Once the Strategic Objectives were agreed upon and prioritized, the participants developed a set of action items to achieve each objective and affirmed the assignments of responsibility for the objective. The group focused on action items that were specific and measurable. Each responsible party tasked with achieving an objective will need to develop a timeline to keep the initiatives on track. The participants acknowledged that the tracking chart developed after the approval of the 2008 Plan has been an effective tool for the Board to keep projects moving to completion. Two key elements needed to achieve any plan are the accountability among the Board members and the allocation of resources needed to achieve success.

Conclusion

Developing and implementing a strategic plan are not easy tasks. The Board has shown the necessary commitment, effort, and constant follow-up needed to be successful. Accountability is critical to the process, as is momentum to keep moving towards NCA’s goals and objectives. It was imperative for NCA’s leadership to stay focused and know that collective success results in benefit for everyone associated with NCA. The Board has done an excellent job at providing that leadership. The results of the phone interviews clearly showed that much of the old mistrust and lack of transparency cited in 2008 has been replaced with a sense of inclusion and openness. The participants
exhibited a renewed commitment to the Plan as evidenced by the participation and energy exhibited during the two-day session in August 2011. By continuing this leadership and direction, the NCA Board is ensuring a successful future for the organization. The Facilitator again commends the participants for their enthusiasm and willingness to participate. They have accomplished much since the last Plan, and it is obvious that they have theirs sights set on even higher levels of achievement. A truly impressive accomplishment!