



From the President

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SWOT: What's Hot and What's Not

The ATA Board conducted

its annual Planning Day in Miami on January 16, 2009, in conjunction with its regular Board meeting, which took place over the following two days. The Board once again reviewed the Association's objectives as enumerated in the ATA Bylaws to make sure the objectives are being achieved and they continue to be relevant in this day and age. The Board also discussed the role and needs of ATA chapters, the Association's public relations efforts and how they fit into the larger scheme of a marketing strategy, the Certification Program and the possibility of seeking an accreditation of the program by a third-party organization, and the Association's strategies for contingent expenses. Since the divisions form the backbone of the Association, a significant amount of time was devoted to ATA divisions and the Board's commitment to work with division administrators to accommodate the needs of members.

The Board also conducted its biannual brainstorming session to identify the Association's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This exercise, also known as the SWOT analysis after the initial letter of each of its components, serves to determine what actions are needed for building on strengths and maximizing opportunities while reducing or eliminating weaknesses and overcoming threats. It is important to understand that strengths and weaknesses are internal attributes of the organization, whereas opportunities and threats are external attributes of the environment.

The strengths identified during the brainstorming session included collegiality among ATA members, ATA's Certification Program, the ability to promote our profession, financial sta-

bility, *The ATA Chronicle*, and name recognition. The three strengths that came up on top were the Annual Conference, the size of the

international expansion (not surprisingly, this also appeared on the list of threats).

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Association, and ATA Headquarters.

Among the weaknesses listed on the flip chart pages were apathy (resulting in a very small number of nominations for awards and lack of participation of voting members in the elections), the ATA Certification Program (indeed, some of our strengths are also our weaknesses), the cost of the Annual Conference, legislative isolation, and the way divisions are handled. The greatest weaknesses identified by the Board members were inertia (due to its size, the Association cannot react quickly in all situations), the low number of revenue resources, and the lack of certification for interpreters.

The Board noted a great number of opportunities for our Association. Among those, the general consensus on the top four items was creating greater awareness of translation and interpreting programs, growing the membership base, maturing existing programs such as certification, and

sion, the threats identified during the brainstorming session included increased competition for revenue streams, machine translation, and licensure. The Board singled out "crowdsourcing" (using the general public to perform translation work, often without pay), global outsourcing, the economic downturn, and certification by other entities as the greatest threats the Association is currently facing.

Together with the objectives stated in ATA's Bylaws, the SWOT analysis provides guidance for all ATA volunteers as to what actions need to be taken to keep the Association and its members successful. Of course, what you have just read in this column is simply a laundry list of items. We will look at each component of the SWOT analysis and its implications in greater detail in upcoming columns.

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