



Presidents Column

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A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

In the last IBN, I have informed IBA membership that the management consulting company Oliver Wyman (OW) has carried out a review to explore how IBA can become a more effective and global player in promoting science-based management and conservation of bears. OW did an enormous amount of work and reached a remarkable degree of understanding of our organization in a short time. In the end, the OW team has left IBA with two main things:

1. A report that reflects back to us what they heard from us about how we in IBA see ourselves and our potential future.
2. A blueprint for how we potentially might move that vision forward, including draft strategy, prioritization scheme, and pitch to donors.

Some of the key findings by OW are:

- A need to decrease the workload of volunteers, especially the president, secretary and treasurer, possibly by hiring regular staff. This should increase IBA's ability to fundraise and to grow its programs judiciously and strategically in the future.
- The philanthropic capacity exists in the world to increase IBA's funding by an order of magnitude; other wildlife and conservation-focused organizations have successfully done it.
- To do so, however, will require a fundamental change in IBA's structure and functioning.

The OW team laid out a proposal for an ambitious blueprint for developing IBA into an organization with 4-5 permanent employees and an annual budget of about 5 million USD over the next 5 years. The core of this proposal is that IBA should develop two already existing sides in parallel:

- a) the professional scientific organization that works for the benefit of its members professional development, opportunity, networking, and conferences;
- b) the funding side of IBA that financially supports the conservation of bears, as well as the generation of new knowledge and methods for achieving sustainable conservation.



OW suggests that IBA should continue to be headed by an elected Council, responsible for setting the overall tone for the organization and having final say on policy, and priorities. The transition from an all-volunteer to a professional organization is a very large task, and a Director of Transition would need to be a first hire to perform and manage the tasks required to transform IBA's structure. This position should be filled with someone already familiar with the inner workings of IBA, and could later morph into a full-time Director of Capacity Building, who would maintain, and further develop member-focused programs, e.g. conferences and grant programs. The responsibilities of treasurer and secretary should be shifted to paid staff, while some of the presidential duties should eventually be shifted to a paid Executive Director. This person would also be the public face of IBA and be responsible for executing programs and seeking partnerships.

Another key suggestion by the OW team is that IBA should strive to increase the annual income and annual budget of the IBA by 1 - 2 orders of magnitude. Initially, fundraising would need to focus on finding foundational donors in the first few years to invest in the areas needed for growing the organization, e.g. salaries for staff, etc. OW suggests that IBA develops a clearly articulated vision statement, work strategy and justification, a system for prioritizing project/grant selection, and examples of successes and projects in need of funding. OW further suggests an Executive Management Board including Council officers and several appointed outsiders who could bring in skills and expertise otherwise lacking (e.g., expert on tax rules for non-profit organizations, financial expertise). These experts could fill knowledge gaps would also bring the benefit of their contacts and own professional networks to the IBA.

OW has provided us with a highly ambitious vision for the future, but has also committed to us that they will provide assistance in taking key steps forward. It is now up to IBA to decide on how to continue, develop and adjust this vision.

AN APOLOGY...

In the President's Column of the last IBN, I welcomed new Council members and thanked departing Council members for their contribution. Likely induced by a lack of sleep and an overabundance of coffee, I forgot to express my gratitude to IBA's departing Vice-President of Eurasia, Alex Kopatz. Alex, thank you so much for your enthusiastic and thoughtful contributions to IBA!