

AN OPTIMISTIC FUTURE

A Look At Where We've Been And Where We're Going
By Rob Dingman

The start of a new year is a good time to reflect on where we have been, assess where we are and contemplate where we are going. I'm currently in my 17th year of membership in the AMA, and throughout those years, my support and enthusiasm for the organization have never wavered.

What had eroded, though, was my belief in where the AMA was headed. I know many other members felt the same. Rather than complain about the situation as some do, I chose to do something about it four years ago and became AMA president because I wanted to help fix the organization.

I believed then that the AMA had become the land of missed opportunities. But what I found was an organization that didn't have the infrastructure to sustain—let alone foster—the kind of growth seen in motorcycling during the previous 15 years.

So we set out to build an infrastructure that would sustain and grow the AMA. The AMA has undergone a complete top-to-bottom restructuring. As I reflect on the elements of that restructuring, I am struck by the magnitude, and the number, of the changes we have brought about together. The following list encompasses the major elements involved, in several broad categories:

Fiscal Oversight:

- A thorough forensic audit was launched. It revealed a troubling lack of fiscal control throughout the organization, and as a result, appropriate fiscal controls were implemented, along with a modern financial accounting system.
- A former Board of Directors chairman was indicted, convicted and imprisoned for embezzling funds.
- An investment policy was created where none had previously existed, to manage the organization's ample reserves.
- Three \$1 million endowments were created to support government relations activities, amateur racing programs and the Motorcycle Hall of Fame.

Government Relations

- Government relations staff in Washington, D.C., was doubled, allowing the AMA to more closely track, monitor, report—and act on—the threats to the motorcycle sport and lifestyle.

AMA Racing Elements:

- The assets of the unprofitable, for-profit subsidiary of the AMA, Paradama, which managed AMA's professional racing activities, were sold.
- AMA amateur racing programs, which had taken a back seat to the Association's professional racing endeavors, received a renewed focus.

Brand Image, Value and Benefits to Members:

- A new AMA logo was introduced to recapture the equity the organization had in our previous logo.
- This magazine, the journal of the AMA, was completely redesigned to focus the spotlight on our members and the people who make motorcycling what it is today.
- The AMA's various websites were totally redesigned and integrated, and there is a new focus on social networking.
- The quality and number of member benefits have been enhanced, including an industry-leading roadside assistance program.



Process Improvements:

- Voting for AMA Congress delegates is now done electronically.
- Numerous improvements to the way the AMA Board of Directors does business have been implemented, including changes to the length of directors' terms and term limits, improvements to board election procedures, and a change in the make-up of the board to provide more individual member seats than corporate member seats.

Infrastructure:

- A Strategic Plan has been developed.
- A staff reduction realigned the AMA to more efficiently meet its mission without compromising member services.
- A modern association management software system has been adopted to replace the AMA's arcane 1980s-era system.
- An all-new call center has been launched, with outbound calls to AMA members and prospective members.

American Motorcycle Heritage Foundation (AMHF)

- The AMHF enjoys a renewed focus on the Motorcycle Hall of Fame within the museum, including the relocation of the Hall of Fame to the main exhibit hall from the basement, where Hall of Famers' motorcycles were crammed together in a manner that prevented them from being properly viewed.
- The annual Motorcycle Hall of Fame induction ceremony has been elevated to appropriately honor new inductees.

As is true with every organization, change does not come easily. As I assess where we are, I am proud to say we have come a long way, and I believe we are at the proverbial corner about to make the turn. All of the changes made were necessary, have prepared us to grow to the next level and will enable us to better promote our lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling.

In contemplating the future of the organization, I remain extremely optimistic. Although the threats to motorcycling have never been greater, the AMA is in the best position to combat them. It is difficult to grow any organization in the face of the worst economy since the 1930s, but we must grow. The AMA must grow into the formidable institution we all need the AMA to be, because the future of motorcycling in America is directly tied to a strong and robust AMA.

Now we must all work together to grow the AMA. The stakes are high, and our future depends on it.

Rob Dingman is the AMA's President and CEO.