

in the final analysis

"I love it when a plan comes together!"

—Hannibal Smith, *The A-Team*

One of the joys of our digital modernity is the opportunity to binge watch every television show ever made via a growing number of video streaming services. Rising from obscurity, series that have been mothballed for decades are finding appreciative new audiences. Take, for example, the high-detonation/low-sophistication action nugget from the 1980s called *The A-Team*. The eponymous A-Team comprises a group of good-natured mercenaries who help the helpless by use of guile, disguise, muscle, brains, swagger, and an ordnance-laden GMC van. While the team also relies on tactical unpredictability, there is a rigid predictability to each episode. Invariably, our heroes find themselves in a desperately inescapable situation. At the darkest moment, they craft a brilliant if credibility-straining solution that saves the day, albeit not always in the way that the team planned. Triumph secured, the team leader, portrayed by George Peppard, unfailingly utters his signature "I love it when" line with an infusion of irony, self-satisfaction, or both. In the process, a go-to adage for the fan-base was born.

I, too, love it when a plan comes together, and one of my favorite forms of planning is strategic planning. Within TMS, I've been involved with 20+ years of strategic planning exercises with our Board of Directors. It is always an energizing process because our TMS volunteers are a genuine A-team—brilliant, innovative, and oftentimes visionary thinkers who have great passion for the Society. Granted, I'm biased, but I believe that every TMS strategic plan has been a good one, both in terms of conceptualization and implementation. While each plan tends to be envisioned as having a three-year life span, the plans are never static. The Board of Directors monitors progress against the goals several times per year and makes incremental adjustments throughout the plan life based on accomplishments, revised perspectives, and evolving circumstances. Our strategic planning rigor has made the Society growth- and opportunity-oriented while remaining mindful of the core that defines TMS.

Without exception, our past plans have been ambitious and very specific in those ambitions. That exactitude can make a plan difficult to bandy about in casual conversation. The Board's focus in 2018 was development of a plan both inspirational and succinct. The result is called "TMS Aspires," and I find it easy to embrace and easy to communicate. While next month's *JOM* will feature a proper article on the new strategic plan, I like that I can effortlessly summarize it here and still have room to blather about *The A-Team*.

TMS Aspires comprises three goals:

1. TMS aspires to be a *highly inclusive Society* where all materials students and professionals feel welcome and diversity is celebrated.
2. TMS aspires to be the place where *global materials practitioners come together and participate* in vibrant annual meetings, specialty conferences, courses, student activities, and other events.
3. TMS aspires to be the Society that *envisions, defines, and enables the future by gathering and empowering materials experts* to scope the future of materials science, engineering and technology.

If you find yourself on the proverbial elevator and someone asks, "What's happening at TMS?" You've got an easy-to-recall answer: "We're focusing on inclusivity and diversity, on holding vibrant events that convene the global materials community, and on helping materials experts scope the future of the field." One sentence that is easy to get excited about . . . nice!

If that elevator partner says that he or she would like to learn more, somewhere in the distance you might hear a Board member exclaim, "I love it when a plan comes together!"

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