

25<sup>th</sup> March 2016

## **PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE IOD WORLD ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Strategic planning can be characterized as “defining a strategy or direction and making the decisions in allocating resources to pursue that direction or directions”. It is clear that it is time for the World Class Association and its various IOD fleets to look at where we have been and where we are going and to pursue a strategy to reach our goals. In order to achieve a picture and perception of our Class, a questionnaire was sent out to fleet members this past Fall to get feedback about the current health of our fleets, strengths and weakness of our of the class and get ideas to improving our brand.

From this exercise I identified four areas to look at:

- i. Reconnection and communications between the WCA and our fleets.
- ii. Fleet health and development.
- iii. Marketing our brand.
- iv. Building for the future.

### **a. Communication WCA and IOD Fleets**

Communication between the WCA and the fleets appears to be an area of weakness that needs significant improvement. The majority of our fleet and WCA websites are out of date. Developing a social media program for the fleets has been slow and haphazard and not connected with the WCA. Not to be unkind but the World Association website does not invite interest. There is also the challenge of how to integrate our websites with social media such as “Face book”. Communications is a two way street but there is little traffic either way between the fleets and the WCA. Despite the appointment of a Communications Coordinator nothing of interest has been sent to fleets or vise-versa. Information that would be of interest such as the new boat building program and an upcoming article in a major sailing magazine have not been either posted on the WCA website or sent to the fleets!

### **Recommendation:**

Communications is one of our biggest challenges. It is time we thought about hiring a professional to do this for the World Class Association. Monthly newsletters, articles to and from the fleets needs to be encouraged. An annual handbook with

contact details of our worldwide members would be an asset to all of us. It would allow more contact and communication with fellow IOD sailors.

### **b. Fleet health and development**

Many of our fleets have been static or have had declining participation for their racing seasons and participation in our world events such as the annual IOD Worlds, North American Invitational, Bermuda Race Week and Nantucket Invitational. However, there are equally a number of bright spots where fleets are growing and interest increasing. Sweden, Norway, Bermuda and Chester are examples of these. Our challenge is to assist those fleets that are struggling and to develop a plan to energize those fleets again. There is a common thread to the successful development and sustainability of our above mentioned fleets: positive leadership, teamwork, social interaction and inclusiveness. The WCA has a role to play in this by working with those struggling fleets and ensuring they do not become isolated.

### **Recommendation:**

Each IOD fleet is unique in many ways owing to the geographical location they are in, the demographics of the area, competing fleets for owners and crew and financial considerations. These issues have to be taken into account when developing a strategy for development. However, if the WCA enhances the communications between the fleets and itself, as well as develops a marketing and branding program that has universal appeal, the task of rejuvenating fleets should be less onerous. One of the keys to successful fleet development is a vibrant social program. This can be anything from meeting after races to discuss highlights and tactics over drinks or a more formal event such as a regatta. Our fleets should be throwing out the welcoming mat and outreach to potential sailors. This could include making it a point to take novices out on mid-week fun nights and to include other interested sailors on weekends and less serious sailing regattas. Classic boats and traditional boats may not be for everyone but there is a large following; all it takes is word-of-mouth and visibility.

### **c. Marketing our Brand**

Many Classes come and go but the IOD brand has been around for 80 years! This should be evidence enough that the boat and its members have the staying power necessary to continue being a vibrant class. Our challenge is to bring new people into the "Club". This requires getting the message out to potential members and boat owners. That means marketing our brand! The class also has some readymade tools to do this. For example our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary book is an ideal way to introduce people to our Class. Consideration should be given to sending copies of this wonderfully visual history of our Class to various yacht clubs in North America and Europe for their club libraries so members can read about the IOD Class and its members. Of course, there are many other marketing tools available which the WCA

and our fleets can use such as articles in local media, club newsletters, magazines and yachting on-line websites.

**Recommendation:**

Marketing is a complex and time consuming task but must be made a priority. If the WCA is to do a timely and aggressive program of marketing our brand then professional expertise is necessary. We cannot rely on volunteer help to undertake such an important role. We have a tremendous number of pluses going for the brand as pointed out in the responses from our membership to our recent questionnaire. We just need to build on them.

**d. The Future**

With 12 fleets worldwide we have a foundation for sustainability and growth. Although a number of our fleets have struggled recently they can be re-energized with help from the WCA as outlined in the above text. A key development recently is a new building agreement of the IOD brand. The moulds will be moved to South Shore Marine in Nova Scotia where a fiberglass building program will be initiated. This will start this coming summer. By having a building plan in place interested sailor will have a choice of purchasing a new boat or an existing one in the fleets.