

AN ATTEMPT TO INDICATE A POSSIBLE NEW STRATEGY FOR CHANGE IN THE YMI

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A. OUR WEAKNESSES

1. Our identity is weak and passive and old fashioned. How do we present ourselves to the world?
2. They do not get it! The world does not understand us, since we have no recruitment. The YMCA does not understand us, since they do not want to collaborate with us.
3. YMI in Sweden has almost disappeared. In Norway 10-15 years will bring us to a Swedish situation. Denmark still has potential to survive, but there is a decreasing tendency. The rest of Europe is extremely weak. This is a crisis of survival and should be taken very seriously. With an aging membership and almost zero recruitment, YMI seems to be going only one way in this part of the world.

B. OUR STRENGTHS

1. A long and successful history of more than 100 years. A widespread network of clubs very deeply rooted in the local environment.
2. A good reputation – we are well respected where we are present.
3. Strong links to local churches.

4. A well-functioning international network. (This is one of our great potentials for growth.) The ICMs are like the YMI Olympics – very successful and attractive events.
5. A strong international leadership, handling the present internal crisis very well.
6. The Y-folk development in Norway.

C. **THE BIG CHALLENGE FOR YMI**

1. Do we have a readiness/awareness for change? Do we have the necessary courage to analyze our present situation honestly and look for changes going deeply enough to restart our engines and turn a negative development into a positive one?
2. How do we bring our clubs and members to share our analysis and to join us in the search for change?
3. How do we bring ourselves from worrying and talking and dreaming to concrete action in a timely manner?

A SKETCH OF THE NEAR FUTURE FOR YMI

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This is meant as talking points for our next discussion. Nothing of this is cut in stones, and all is open for debate.

1. Related to point C1 I do not think there is enough of readiness for change. Most members and leaders live with the present situation and the ideas I have come across to solve the crisis seem not to be very realistic. So we need to inform and convince the members that we do have a real crisis, and to do so, we need to put forward analysis and perspectives to demonstrate beyond much doubt that this is the case. How to do that? By whom and when and where?

2. Related to C2 I think that the main weakness in our crisis management is that we continue to ask our members what they think, and after some vague feedback, we close the issue and go on with our daily business. We never reach a level of concreteness that can lead to action. I see a deficit on the level of the leadership on all levels. We need to take responsibility to not only ask for help, but to present concrete proposals for change, for action. This is leadership, to raise our hands and point out a direction and then to start walking in that right direction. I do not see that happening today.
3. Related to C3 I think the answer is a combination of all three elements under C. We need to inform our members to increase the awareness for change, we need to present concrete proposals for a new strategy and then we need to bring that process to democratic decision making and then start implementing what has been decided.
4. Related to B1-6 we need to package all our strengths into a new selling strategy where all these elements play important roles. As I mentioned already, the international dimension has a real great potential and needs to be developed fast. We have a very good product already, but it needs to become more widespread. If it stays more or less on a representative level, it is too weak, we need to bring the international level down to the local clubs and members and then use it to sell ourselves to new members. I know that we are trying, but we must find better ways to do that so that we can succeed.
5. Related to A1. As I have already indicated, I suggest a new international slogan: YMI EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE.

The word EMPOWERMENT can be used inwardly to release the potential already existing in the YMI. A less authoritarian and/or bourgeoisie culture in the clubs might open up for energy and creativity inside the members and release a spirit of courage and change. The word EMPOWERMENT can be used outwardly to present our new vision and identity. We are no longer internally focused, but we are seeing ourselves as champions of the future, as supporters of the young generations, as the defenders of the grandchildren's rights. We are the grown-ups, the adults, who understand the needs of the young generations and fight for their

rights. We fight for their right to influence the world they are living in, for their right to have a clean environment, for their right to have education, work, and income. We do that first in close collaboration with the YMCA, where the two organisations have clearly defined roles to play to support one another. We can also do that through our own concrete projects if that is the best way both for YMI and YMCA.

6. Related to A2 we need to enter into long and serious talks with leaders of the YMCA on all levels, but we have to start with key leaders on national and international levels, to win a solid mutual understanding and respect. Having built our own understanding of vision, identity and self-presentation, we are ready to ask for conversations with the YMCA. We need to be well prepared, have the right people to do that and have a convincing and attractive message to put on the table. No vague dreams and fluffy perspectives, but concrete action points and a clearly defined set of roles. The YMCA must become convinced that they will benefit from the collaboration, and it needs to lead to the YMCA starting to form YMI clubs or/and start recruiting their own people to join the YMI and/or getting into negotiations how YMI could be seen as the adult programme for YMCA leaders to join.

After that we can use the new self-awareness, the packaged strengths and the new slogan to present ourselves to the world, locally and nationally, to recruit new members to a more attractive and modern programme with concrete projects for action.

7. Related to A3 that is simply the dark and gloomy backdrop for all what we are discussing here, and which demonstrates the necessity of this discussion and process towards a new strategy for change.