USJF Strategic/Operational Planning Meeting

Las Vegas, Nevada, November 12, 2026

Pre-Meeting Reads

Importance and Utility of a Non-Profit's Mission & Vision Statements

A non-profit mission statement defines the organization's fundamental purpose, what it does, whom it serves, and why its work matters.

Key Importance of a Non-Profit Mission Statement

- **Guides Strategic Decision-Making:** It serves as a "North Star" for the board and leadership, helping them evaluate new programs, allocate resources, and pass the "mission test" when choosing whether to pursue opportunities.
- **Prevents "Mission Drift":** Regularly measuring activities against the mission statement keeps the organization from wandering into unrelated projects, protecting its credibility, tax-exempt status, and core impact.
- **Attracts Donors and Supporters:** Unlike for-profit companies that sell products for financial returns, non-profits sell hope, belief, and social change. A clear mission helps potential donors, grantmakers, and community members understand the value of their support.
- **Unifies and Motivates Staff and Volunteers:** Working in a non-profit is often demanding. A strong statement rallies the team, builds shared culture, and reminds everyone why they got involved.
- **Provides a Benchmark for Success:** It establishes the core criteria used to measure whether programs are actually making a difference and achieving desired outcomes.

Non-Profit Federation Business Structure

A nonprofit federation business structure is a network of independent or semi-independent local chapters, affiliates, or member organizations operating under a shared national brand, mission, and central office

(Potential) Advantages

- **Local Autonomy & Flexibility:** Local chapters maintain their own separate boards of directors, enabling them to tailor programs and respond directly to the unique needs of their specific communities.
- **Scalability & Reach:** The organization can expand geographically and grow its footprint far faster than a single centralized office could manage on its own.
- **Economies of Scale & Resource Sharing:** Chapters pool resources for shared technology platforms, marketing, administrative backing, and bulk purchasing.
- **Unified Advocacy & Brand Credibility:** A shared national identity provides a strong, single voice for public policy advocacy and builds instant trust with donors and grantmakers.
- **Risk/Liability Insulation** When structured as separate corporations or subsidiaries, local and national entities can isolate legal and financial liability from one another.

Disadvantages

- **Leadership & Governance Friction:** Tensions frequently arise between national headquarters and regional leaders over authority, priorities, and strategic direction.
- **Inconsistent Quality & Culture:** Because local chapters operate independently, service delivery, branding execution, and management standards can vary wildly from one branch to another.
- **Complex Compliance & Dues Structures:** Managing multiple corporate entities, separate tax filings, and internal fee-sharing (where chapters pay a percentage of income to the national office) requires heavy administrative overhead.
- **Communication Silos:** Information may struggle to flow freely between the central board and front-line community workers, leading to duplicated efforts or uncoordinated messaging.

Questions to consider:

Federation success means advancing common purposes and collective outcomes. How do we transform a collection of independent clubs with loyalties to their own Yudanshakai into a national federation capable of strategic outcomes no individual club or Yudanshakai could accomplish?

Are we leading a collection of independent Yudanshakais or building an integrated judo enterprise?

How do/can Yudanshakais encourage the creation and support of local clubs?

How can Yudanshakais actively assist one another?

Could Yudanshakais have a common communication link?

Value Proposition

A **value proposition** is a concise written promise that explains what a business or product offers, who it helps, and why it is better than the competition.

Core Elements

A strong value proposition covers these main points:

- **Target Audience:** Who the product or service is built for.
- **Customer Problem:** The specific pain point, challenge, or need being solved.
- **Unique Benefit:** The clear, measurable value or result the customer receives.
- **Differentiation:** Why your solution stands out compared to alternative options.

Types of Value Propositions

Businesses typically build their value around a few main pillars:

- **Low Cost:** Delivering the same or good quality at a lower price.
- **Superior Product:** Offering better innovation, design, or performance.
- **Ease of Use:** Reducing time, effort, or friction for the user.
- **Expert Service:** Providing high-touch support, custom experiences, or deep trust.

Question to consider:

What would make a sensei say, "I would be crazy NOT to have my dojo affiliated with USJF?

How would we make the USJF the most valuable organization for the American judo dojo?

Motivating Volunteer Administrators

Motivating volunteer administrators in a non-profit sport governing body requires a blend of clear structure, active empowerment, and deep alignment with their personal and sporting values.

1. Clarify Roles and Streamline Operations

- **Define detailed role descriptions:** Eliminate ambiguity and increase engagement by outlining exact committee responsibilities, time commitments, reporting, and decision-making limits so administrators know what success looks like.
- **Use modern technology:** Implement centralized tools to automate scheduling, reduce administrative friction, and handle repetitive paperwork, while preserving institutional knowledge.
- **Establish a clear chain of command:** Assign a dedicated staff liaison or board supervisor to provide direct support and remove operational roadblocks.

2. Connect Them to Purpose and Community

- **Focus on the mission:** Remind administrators how their behind-the-scenes work directly shapes athlete development, fair play, and local sport access.
- **Share impact metrics:** Regularly communicate tangible results—such as tournament numbers, youth participation rates, or safety milestones—via newsletters and briefings.
- **Foster team culture:** Build shared trust, active collaboration, and a welcoming peer community through regular touchpoints and social check-ins.

3. Provide Training and Growth Opportunities

- **Offer quality onboarding:** Replace trial-by-fire shifts with structured inductions covering policies, software platforms, and contact directories.
- **Support skill development:** Provide access to workshops, governance training, or certification modules that help them grow personally and professionally.
- **Leadership succession and organizational continuity:** Design mentored tiered leadership tracks (e.g., committee member to coordinator to board liaison) for volunteers seeking greater responsibility.

4. Involve Them in Decision-Making

- **Give them a voice:** Include volunteer administrators in planning discussions, policy reviews, and strategic feedback sessions.
- **Close the feedback loop:** Act on survey input or suggestions, and explicitly communicate changes using a *"You Asked, We Changed"* approach.
- **Respect their autonomy:** Allow experienced administrators the freedom to manage their portfolios without micro-management.

5. Recognize and Appreciate Contributions

- **Personalize appreciation:** Go beyond generic "thank-yous" by acknowledging specific milestones, hours contributed, or problem-solving wins.
- **Celebrate achievements publicly:** Spotlight key contributors in annual reports, social media shout-outs, or end-of-season volunteer events.
- **Offer non-monetary perks:** Provide official governing body apparel, complimentary event access, or formal letters of recommendation.

Major themes of marketing span foundational strategies, digital transformation, and customer-centric practices.

Core Marketing Frameworks (The 4 Ps)

- **Product:** Designing goods, services, or experiences that solve specific consumer problems and meet market demands.
- **Price:** Setting value-based pricing strategies that balance customer affordability with business profitability.
- **Place:** Managing distribution channels and logistics to ensure products are available where and when customers want them.
- **Promotion:** Communicating brand value using advertising, public relations, and sales outreach.

Digital Transformation and Technology

- **Content and Social Media Marketing:** Building organic and paid reach through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.
- **AI and Automation:** Utilizing machine learning, predictive analytics, and personalized recommendations to optimize campaigns.
- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Paid Search (SEM):** Capturing high-intent customer demand through search engines.

Audience and Brand Strategy

- **Data and Market Research:** Analyzing competitor landscapes, consumer behavior, and market gaps before launching campaigns.
- **Brand Positioning and Value-Driven Messaging:** Creating clear differentiation and aligning with customer values.
- **Customer Experience (CX) and Retention:** Focusing on long-term relationship building and loyalty rather than single-transaction sales.
- **Societal and Sustainable Marketing:** Incorporating ethical labor, eco-friendly packaging, and social responsibility into business models.

Market Gap

A **market gap** is an unmet customer need, an overlooked problem, or an underserved audience that current competitors have failed to address adequately. [1, 2]

Common Types of Market Gaps

- **Product or Feature Gaps:** Existing products lack key functionalities or fail to solve a specific problem well (e.g., Slack simplifying workplace communication).
- **Price Gaps:** Current offerings are too expensive for a large group of people, leaving room for budget-friendly or mid-tier alternatives (e.g., low-cost airlines).
- **Service or Delivery Gaps:** The core product is fine, but buying it, receiving it, or getting support is slow, clunky, or frustrating (e.g., fast short-term medical equipment rentals).
- **Experience or Usability Gaps:** Solutions exist, but the user interface, accessibility, or design makes them difficult to use.
- **Geographic Gaps:** A product or service that works well in one region or country has not yet expanded to another.
- **Positioning Gaps:** Competitors all market their products the same way, leaving an opening for a brand to stand out with a sharper, different message.

Why Market Gaps Matter

- **Less Competition:** Filling a gap lets a business enter a space with little or no direct rivalry.
- **Higher Pricing Power:** Serving an unaddressed demand gives companies more control over pricing and profit margins.
- **Faster Customer Loyalty:** Solving a real, ignored frustration builds strong brand trust and word-of-mouth growth.