

**GBC**  
STRATEGIC  
PLANNING



## **GBC Strategic Planning: How You Can Help**

### **Invitation**

You're receiving this letter because you or someone you know has the knowledge and skills needed to help the GBC in its strategic planning work, particularly as a member of a production team that will help the devotees in ISKCON get access to all the good ideas being discussed. If you're interested in seeing ISKCON grow in a healthy, sustainable way, if you see us as a global community with high standards of excellence in our outreach and in how we care for one another, and if you are a goal-oriented team player who knows how to take an idea and get it into the world of action, we'd like to speak to you.

### **GBC Strategic Planning: Some Background**

Srila Prabhupada wanted the GBC to lead ISKCON through good governance and to establish global policies. He also wanted ISKCON to expand, thrive, be well-rooted, and to serve the needs of its devotees and the public alike.

But like many organizations, ISKCON has spent a fair amount of time over the years reacting to rather than anticipating the demands of its own growth. This has created a cycle of mild to severe crisis management, which has left us, as a global movement, in survival mode, with little energy to do much more than cope with our day-to-day needs and problems. In many areas of the world we have lost the dynamic energy the movement had during the 1970s and much of the '80s. It's easy to give reasons for the decline – and they'd likely all be true from one angle or another. But there's something else that's true, too: All the ups and downs ISKCON has experienced since Srila Prabhupada's departure have been pretty much inevitable – normal, even – for organizations, spiritual or otherwise, that are growing up.

For the past eight years, the GBC Strategic Planning Team (SPT) has been helping the GBC explore the ways in which ISKCON needs to grow up into the vibrant movement Srila Prabhupada wanted it to be, and then developing strategies to support that growth. Our theme? "More devotees, happier devotees."

“More devotees, happier devotees” – sounds simple. But unpacked it’s far-reaching. It tackles outreach and devotee care, succession planning and the protection of Srila Prabhupada’s legacy, education and temple development, and especially good, intelligent, organizational practices and the systems necessary to help devotees learn them.\*

About four years ago the SPT invited a number of devotees, experienced in a variety of fields, to help expand on the key areas of the GBC’s strategic plan. These devotees formed working committees, more devotees stepped forward, and we now have what we call the Strategic Planning Network.

### **The Strategic Planning Network (SPN)**

The SPN is a confederation of devotees from around the world who are dedicated to creating positive and progressive change in ISKCON. They offer this help by working within the areas described in the GBC’s strategic plan – researching, exploring, and creating methodologies by which ISKCON can grow into a Society that supports its members, speaks to the public in relevant and relatable ways, and has the institutional structures and systems to promote healthy growth.

The SPN has too many members to list here, but it’s an international group. Most of its members have years of experience in ISKCON, and a number of them have professional experience as well. Some of its members are younger – they’ve either grown up in the movement or are young leaders who bring fresh perspectives.

The SPN as a whole meets in India twice a year, once in the spring in Mayapur during the GBC’s Annual General Meeting, and again in the fall during the GBC’s midterm meeting. Individual SPN committees also meet numerous times throughout the year through conference calls and email exchanges.

The SPN serves with the GBC’s Strategic Planning Team, which currently has nine members. (For a brief introduction to the SPT members, please see the appendix.)

### **Our Vision**

Some say ISKCON’s strategic journey started when Srila Prabhupada stepped aboard the Jaladuta to serve his guru’s wish that Krsna consciousness be delivered to the West. In 1973, Srila Prabhupada expressed his vision in one, succinct statement: “Everyone should become a devotee of Krsna. That is the plan. That is the whole plan.” (Conversation, Jarkarta, February 27, 1973)

The SPN’s vision is also succinct: We want to help ISKCON serve Srila Prabhupada’s vision. We want to do everything we can to ensure that Srila Prabhupada’s movement is preserved, strengthened, and, especially, that it flourishes long into the future.

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\* These broad areas are defined in more detail in “The GBC Strategic Plan: A Comprehensive Summary,” which is attached.

How? The SPN is a group of people who have been asked by the GBC to stand outside ISKCON for a moment to look at it from all sorts of angles and see how it can be improved. The SPN is dedicated to Srila Prabhupada's vision, and it uses loyal, informed, creative, strategic thinking to help that vision be realized.

## **The Need**

The SPN has done an amazing job examining ISKCON's current state and what it needs to develop to its full potential, and then strategizing how that potential can be reached. Unfortunately, and despite this success, the SPN has struggled to bring its ideas to life – and into the hands of the devotees who can use them. One reason for this is that the SPN has lacked resources and devotees with particular types of skills. The SPN members could better accomplish their goals if only they had some help.

That's where you might come in.

Therefore, the SPT is creating a team of devotees who have the skills to help SPN members execute on their ideas. We're looking for:

- executives who understand project management and streams of implementation
- project managers
- graphics people
- researchers
- devotees skilled in database creation and maintenance
- web designers
- writers and editors
- devotees skilled in metrics
- marketers or communications people – devotees skilled in getting things into the hands of devotees

This group will form the SPN's Production Team. Production can take whatever form best suits each idea, whether it be the creation of an ebook or a webinar, a website or a podcast – or a combination of any of these – or any other tool or resource. Here's what we hope the Production Team will achieve:

- The effective production of SPN deliverables, made available to devotees across the globe.
- These deliverables made easily accessible, aimed globally as far as possible, and when not possible, easily adaptable by devotees in any region of the world, as principle-centered as they are practical, and produced at a professional standard.
- The tracking of the results of the dissemination of the material, so we can judge the effect (or lack of it) that we're having.
- And most importantly, to please Srila Prabhupada and offer something valuable to ISKCON.

## **Our Teams and the Workflow**

**SPN** – SPN members will continue to examine issues and ways to enhance ISKCON’s performance or development according to their committee’s mandate. They will continue to develop strategic plans for their area of the GBC’s strategic plan and be alert to changes in ISKCON and the preaching field, updating their plans as required. We count on the SPN to think globally and create outlines for what needs to be done in ISKCON.

For a list of current SPN Committees, please see the attached document, “The GBC Strategic Plan: A Comprehensive Summary.”

**SPT** – SPT members will continue to work with the SPN by reviewing the plans and ideas that come out of SPN committees. Then, in collaboration with the SPN, the SPT will choose the most urgent and executable ideas – the ideas that most serve the will of the GBC. These will be given to the Production Team.

### **Production Team**

The Team executive, along with pertinent team members, will meet with each SPN committee to understand its needs and concerns and, with project assignment in hand, work up a creative brief for implementation. These briefs will need to reflect the mood and desires of the GBC for each project.

Creative briefs will be approved by the SPN committee chair, the SPT, and the Production Team’s executive. When the brief is complete, the project will be handed to a project manager.

Project managers will choose team members based on the skills a project requires. Someone who understands project metrics and can assess the impact the work is having on ISKCON in real time will track each project. This will help project teams stay flexible and relevant – something particularly important for projects that take a lot of time to produce.

Project team members will execute the project, managed by their project manager and overseen by the production team’s executive.

While the project is being developed, the marketers on the Production Team will plan how to deliver the finished product into the hands of those who can use it.

### **Core Competencies of the Implementation Team**

We expect Production Team members to already have the technical skills necessary to execute on the SPN’s work. That said, all three teams – the SPT, the SPN, and the Production Team – need to work together to ensure that finished projects represent the ideas originally formulated by the SPN and approved by the GBC. These projects must resonate with the mood of and be consistent with the GBC’s strategic plan so they serve ISKCON in the best possible way.

To be a member of the Production Team you will need:

- Good communication skills.
- Flexibility.
- Strong performance.
- An ability to cooperate – to be a team player.
- Ingenuity.
- Creativity.
- A strong desire to be effective.
- The ability to stay on task.
- The ability to be proactive – dedication to moving your projects forward.
- An ability to flow from one project to another with fresh eyes and fresh enthusiasm.

## **Conclusion**

The GBC's strategic planning work has unfolded slowly. Plenty of thought has gone into the process, with the help of the SPT and the SPN. It's now time to execute the ideas that will help ISKCON grow into a world-class organization by adding a Production Team to the SPN.

So if you're interested in finding out more about this exciting service opportunity, and you have the skills listed above, we want to hear from you. If this isn't for you but you know someone who should be a part of our Production Team, let us know by writing to Kaisori Dasi at [kaisori@gmail.com](mailto:kaisori@gmail.com).

your servant,  
Kaisori Dasi  
(on behalf of the SPT)

P.S. If you're unable to be involved in this opportunity right now but would like to hear occasional news of what's happening in the world of GBC strategic planning, please send us a note at the email address above.

## Appendix

### About the GBC Strategic Planning Team

The SPT is led by Gopal Bhatta Dasa, a disciple of Srila Prabhupada since 1972, former *sankirtana* leader and temple president, and a successful entrepreneur. He has no formal leadership or managerial position in ISKCON, but has served as the chair of the SPT since its inception in 2006. He is co-chair of the SPN's Organizational Development Committee.

Laxmimoni Devi Dasi was initiated by Srila Prabhupada in 1969 and has been a member of the SPT and a GBC deputy since 2006. She's been involved in ISKCON educational projects since 1974 and at present serves at the Bhakti Bhavan Ashram, a training center in Alachua, Florida.

Vraja Vihari Dasa joined ISKCON in 1977 and has been part of the SPT since its inception in 2006. In 2002 he founded ISKCONResolve and still serves as its co-director. He has a master's degree in conflict resolution, and is one of the founding members of the strategic planning work in ISKCON.

Kaunteya Dasa, co-minister of Congregational Development with Jaya Pataka Swami, is also co-chair with Gopal Bhatta Dasa of the GBC's Organizational Development Committee. A solid strategic thinker, he also has a PhD in Indovedic Psychology.

Rasa-krida-parayana Dasa joined ISKCON in 1986 and has done extensive preaching in the Persian Gulf area through the *nama-hatta* program. He joined the SPT in 2009. He is also a member of the GBC Organizational Development Committee and Chair of the GBC's Succession Committee.

Lalita Manjari Devi Dasi has been the SPT's amazing executive secretary since 2011. She was born and raised in ISKCON, and educated in the *gurukula* system. She is a qualified chartered accountant, a field she's been working in professionally for over ten years.

Subhananda Dasa joined ISKCON in 1993. He has served the GBC as its Divisional Director of Strategic Planning since 2013. In the secular world he has experience across a spectrum of industries assisting companies to stabilize, improve, and grow their businesses to meet their visions. He is a postgraduate in the field of Engineering, Construction, and Strategy Management.

Varsana Devi Dasi joined ISKCON in 1983 and is a disciple of H.H. Sivarama Swami. She started her service to ISKCON UK at Bhaktivedanta Manor within the BMF, the Indian Congregational Preaching Department, and then moved on to the UK's GBC office as national communications director and GBC assistant. She joined the SPT in 2014.

Kaisori Devi Dasi joined ISKCON in 1975 and has served as an educator and editor since the early 1980s. She joined the SPT in 2010. She is currently serving with the North European BBT.