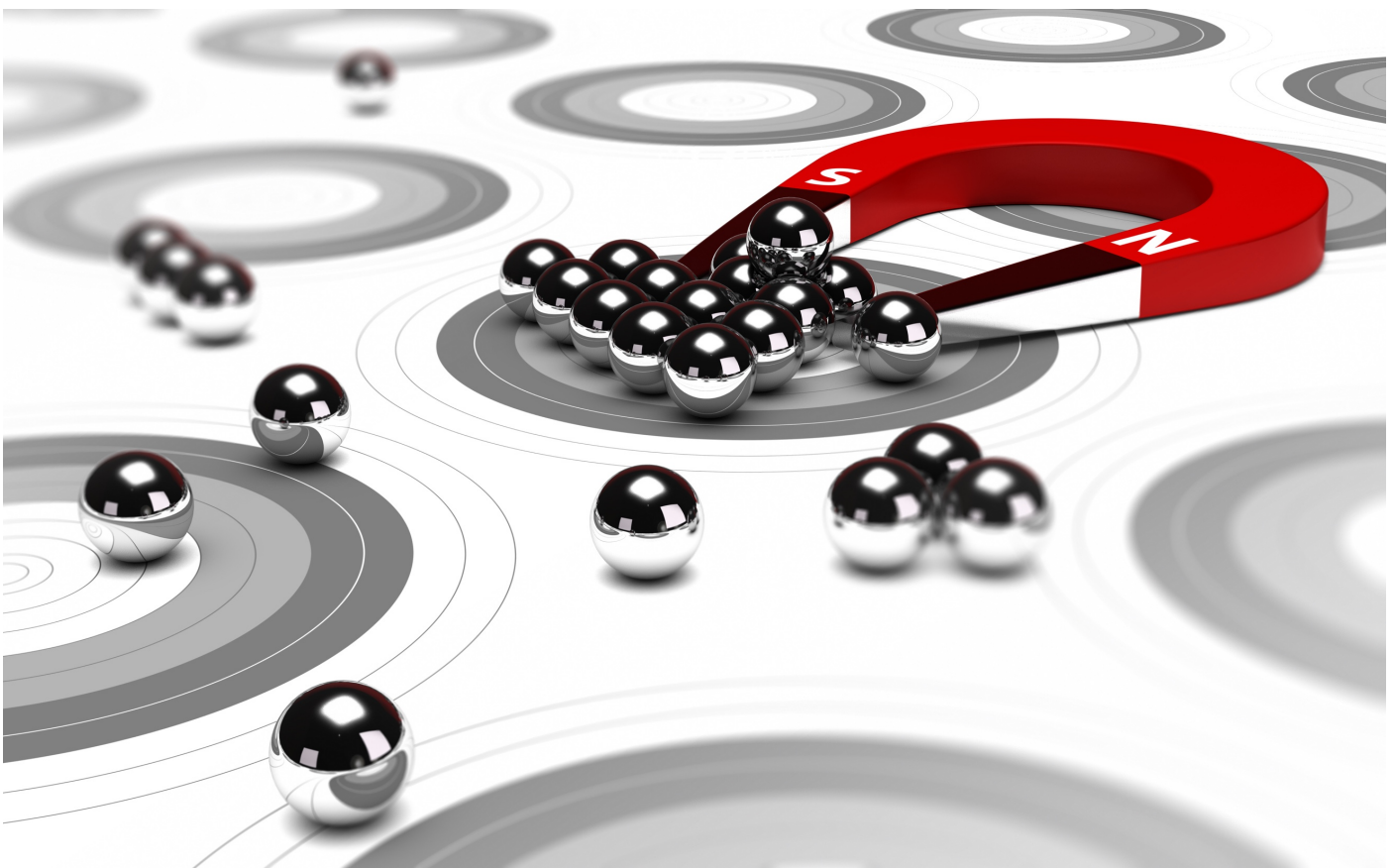


ATTA Board Members, Jeff Sprafkin and Steve Hardacre, recently sat down with James Greener, the association's newly-elected chairman, to discuss James' plans for the Asia Transformation and Turnaround Association. Jeff opened their conversation by exploring James' vision for the association as it expands further across Asia.



Jeff: As you move into your role as ATTA's new chairman, how do you view ATTA's purpose today and how do you plan to realize that vision and mission?

James: Asia needs a cross-territory, thriving community of transformation and turn-around professionals which can support each other's clients across our many smaller markets as well as the larger countries. As specialists bring knowledge from one market to another, as generalists they spot common trends and develop common solutions. And we see a lot of cross-border projects needing cross-border teams to pull expertise, experience and execution together. This is the background to ATTA, our founding vision, and this remains unchanged. If anything, Asia's future transformation and turn-around market will require even more cross-border expertise and we are the community to support that.

Jeff: What inspired you to pursue the chairmanship of the association?

James: The main reason why I first joined the board and then stepped up to the chair role was because over the previous few years the majority of my work had been coming through ATTA connections. I thought that it was only fair that I invest a share of my time back into the organization which had looked after me so well. And I hope to share and replicate this experience for all members.

Jeff: What's the one thing you really feel you must accomplish in your tenure here?

James: The one big thing I would like to achieve for the organization, an ambition our whole board shares, is for us to move away from being expat-focused, retrospective and preoccupied with multinational corporate problems; instead we are becoming more localized both in our clientele and our membership. We need to become more future-oriented in terms of looking at developing understanding, strategies and tools for the challenges which face organizations tomorrow not just yesterday.

Jeff: I also see that ATTA's membership spans quite a few industries. Given what you've said, it looks like it could span and should span even more. Given that breadth, how do you define turnaround and transformation today, in that context?

James: Maybe I have an unusual perspective on these things having worked deeply at both ends of the turnaround-transformation spectrum in China over the last twenty years. But I see turnaround as a reactive form of transformation that is required when organizations have consistently failed to transform proactively. They get further and further behind until it starts to affect their balance sheet. When this happens, we call it a restructuring (because it usually involves refinancing) but really what is needed is a transformation that sets new priorities otherwise we are merely postponing the inevitable. Quite often, businesses need new ways of thinking and a completely new strategy. Often, the original business model or the market itself may still be still valid – it is just that the old method of addressing that market is no longer valid.

Jeff: And, how can ATTA play an active role in affecting these transformations?

James: ATTA was set up to bring both turnaround and transformation skill sets together. As our future evolves, we are finding that the requisite skillset is still one in common and what is needed across so many industries becomes more and more alike as industries converge not just in their service offerings but also in their means of doing business. Furthermore, for the transformation professional, this means that corporate leadership's preference for change initiatives is increasingly similar no matter which industry you are in. And, leading these change programs always going to be a rare skill. so we're doing the right thing by looking out into other industries for fresh ideas and for fresh members to join ATTA's growing trans-regional and industry-agnostic talent pool. Just as an example, the type of industrial transformation which I as a sector specialist was delivering cookie-cutter style ten years ago in the automotive sector, this is now in strong demand from all areas of manufacturing, large and small.

Jeff: So, do you see ATTA creating real opportunities for experts and specialists in particular industries or niches? And, how does it enable specialists to partner together for projects and

opportunities? Can you give a few examples of some success cases that we've had that would be illustrative for potential members?

James: In my experience with the organization, ATTA has been very successful in providing this type of cross-pollination between members and different forms of transformation as well as different industries. A good example would be when Steve Hardacre and I were sitting next to each other about three years ago at a conference, and he said, "James you're an expert in production processes. I have a client who is has a production process problem. Would you mind having a look?" This led to over one year's cooperation together for this client delivering a dramatic transformation of their production and supply chain operations. In another example, a member put out a note through the newsletter, looking for a project manager. I met with him and said that it sounds like you don't need an external project manager. Instead, you need an internal project manager, and you need somebody to coach and supervise your overall project management capability. This proposal accepted and I worked together not only with his division of a large multinational but also with other divisions over the following two years, all in the area of establishing project management, new product launch and planning complex relocations. I am not alone: there are many other of our members who have had similar experiences

Jeff: Is there anything that you've done to be able to realize those experiences and capture those clients more effectively? The other way to think about that is what can a member do to get the most out of his or her membership?

James: The one thing I would say is share your clients because the more synergy we achieve amongst ourselves the more work there is with each of our clients and the less likely we are to be wandering into areas outside of our expertise with a client and then making a mess and ruining the relationship. The second hot tip is to always focus on what the client actually needs. If you are not the one to be delivering that, there definitely is somebody in our community who is. We can hunt in packs to win business and deliver in teams to ensure that our clients' real business needs are being fully addressed. In short, the more I have given, the more I have been able to receive. Our desire has always been for ATTA to be a marketplace: to be successful we need an equal number of buyers as sellers.

Jeff: Now, if I am a corporate professional, for instance head of HR, a finance director, regional head of M&A, what do I get out of ATTA?

James: ATTA is a community not just for consultants looking for work but also of professionals who provide in-house expertise for their organizations. We are a professional association providing relevant content for our members. Currently we organize this content through our conferences, our website and newsletters in order to generate thought-leadership for the practice of transformation and turnaround. We want to broaden the variety of channels to include more roundtables and webinars. We also are moving beyond the peer-to-peer model in conjunction with our Australian sister organization to develop a post-MBA program which will focus on the overall skillset needed for organizational transformation whether that occurs in a consultancy, a large PE group or within a multinational or large corporation. This trans-regional program is to provide a unique talent development opportunity to support your organization, or your investees or subsidiaries, to attain the higher levels of maturity better performance needed by tomorrow's business world.

Jeff:. What are the three most important things for ATTA to achieve this year, in 2017?

James: In 2017, we are rapidly growing our membership and our overall reach. We are measuring this using several KPIs. We are looking at the number of members, at our diversity of chapter meetings, and the number of new corporate members. So, growing our membership footprint and our level of interaction is a key part of our strategy for this year. The second part is that we are building partnerships with other associations and industry bodies. We are looking to work more closely with the Institute for Turnaround in Europe, AusTTA, venture capital associations, and similar organizations. The third part our game plan is that we are increasing our overall offerings for members and this includes the amount of content we are providing, web-based content and peer updates. As usual we will be leading and organizing events and our Annual Conference on 9 to 11 November so put those dates in your diary.

The focus of this year's Annual Conference will be on the future of transformation as well as an overview of what has happened over the last year. We will look in detail at digital disruption and the impact of artificial intelligence. To an extent some leading organizations already have a vision of what AI can do for them and how they are might integrate it over a 5 and 10 year period – but not many. We'll be looking at how organizations need to configure their control structures to align to customer-facing value chain processes rather than functional silos as most still continue to do. We'll be seeing how organizations can develop a maturation plan whereby their overall business processes can gradually be raised to a higher standard over a period of time. And of course, we'll address the human strategy. What is the future of employment? Who will be working for any kind of organization in the future and who will be a freelancer doing projects here and there or delivering outsourced tasks work? These are big questions for the near future and organizations need to start planning now how they are going to address them.

So those are some of our plans for the conference to underscore our three key drivers for this year: membership, partnership, and offerings.

Jeff: That sounds like an exciting and challenging line-up. One more important question for you. Could you tell us more about individual and corporate memberships?

James: As an individual member of ATTA, you belong to a community with community events and a lot of peer-to-peer communication. It is an opportunity to link with people who are like minded with similar skills and development path. If you are in the consulting world, fellow members have similar and often complementary client bases. If you are in the corporate world, these could be people who may be able to be part time team members in your own corporate restructuring or transformation. You can participate in ATTA's thought-leadership initiatives and our forthcoming training opportunities together with partner organizations globally. If you qualify as a practitioner member, you have validation from ATTA that your transformation and turnaround skills conform with a global standard which is common across Institute for Turnaround and all other partner organizations in our network.

ATTA Corporate Membership is for three individuals or more within an organization. Corporate membership first and foremost is a public statement: we are serious about corporate transformation – either in-house or for our clients. Corporate members as individuals get all of the above. For the organization, membership is an opportunity for your core team members, especially those in a period rapid skill development in their mid to late thirties, to access an experienced peer network and the skills development opportunities ATTA will be offering. Membership also gives your organization access to our thought-leadership development forum so you can shape the future of change.

ATTA is a hub and we are an activist organization, run by and for our members. We need our individual and corporate members to drive our evolution as a profession and as an association.