

Six Considerations for Association Management

By Andrew Mastroianni

Trade association executives work in a unique and challenging cycle. In other industries, Board members usually hold their positions for years. In contrast, Boards of associations normally change every year or two. That creates a lot of change management needs.

To onlookers, that may sound simple but imagine Google, Apple, Exxon Mobil, Amazon, and others changing their leadership every year. It would be chaos. Association executives must keep their organizations transitioning smoothly while also being effective to their members.

Considering these challenges, consider the following points below that might help...

- 1) First and foremost, build a written strategic plan for the association with emphasis on written. The plan should be dynamic and create an agreed bond with all Board members as they change every year or two. The plan becomes a binding force for leadership.
- 2) Create a ***member relationship management*** (MRM) position. This is someone that blends normal member services and marketing. Member services is about the here and now. Marketing is about anticipating future success. An MRM combines both in one.
- 3) Find ways to maximize activities between affiliate members/sponsors and the members. Too often, the affiliates are not effectively brought into the association circles. They become viewed as good sponsorship sources alone. They should be expanded beyond that.
- 4) Make sure the educational courses focus equally on business skills as much as they do the skills of the trade of the association. Research has shown that business development knowledge is underrepresented in most education agendas. This helps the members think past the present and into their futures.
- 5) Avoid an overdose of the political culture historically associated with trade associations. Build a company-type culture based upon performance and creativity.
- 6) Integrate an effective hiring system. Association management requires unique personalities and attitudes. The system must be designed to identify and foster those characteristics.

We hope these points help you in your association's management role.

My best.

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