

LEADERSHIP  
**401**

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUCCESS



---

**Ontario Real Estate  
Association**

*Promoting Professionalism*

Ontario Real Estate Association  
99 Duncan Mill Road  
Don Mills, Ontario M3B 1Z2  
Telephone: 416-445-9910  
Fax: 416-445-2644  
Toll Free: 1-800-265-OREA (6732)  
[www.orea.com](http://www.orea.com)

REALTOR® is a registered trademark of REALTOR Canada Inc., a company owned equally by the Canadian Real Estate Association and the National Association of REALTORS® and refers to registered real estate practitioners who are members of The Canadian Real Estate Association.

Printed in Canada

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Leadership 401: Laying the Groundwork for Success .....	1
Topics.....	1
My Role as President-Elect .....	3
Sample President-Elect Responsibilities .....	3
Defining My Role as President-Elect.....	4
The Roles of President-Elect, President and Immediate Past President.....	5
Achieving Long-Term Goals .....	7
Activity – Presidents Speak Out .....	8
Addressing Unexpected Staff Interruptions.....	10
Tips for Achieving Long-term Goals .....	14
Board assessment .....	15
Truth or Fiction Activity .....	15
Board Assessment Outcomes .....	16
Resources for Conducting Board Assessments.....	17
Managing Relationships During Conflict .....	18
Principles for Leading Through Conflict .....	19
Relationship Principles in Action .....	21
Be Sensitive to People and Hard-Headed on Issues .....	24
Rapid Role Play Activity.....	25
Relationship Principles – Sample Situations .....	26
Appendix .....	28

Participant Guide

V8 VIRTUAL SESSION December 15, 2020

# ***LEADERSHIP 401: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUCCESS***

A president-elect's term is a critical time for laying the groundwork for success in the pending role as president. This annual course helps presidents-elect, or those aspiring to become president, become leadership role models. Participants learn how to achieve long-term goals, build relationships while addressing conflict and plan for board assessment. This highly interactive session will help presidents-elect take on their new position with confidence.

## ***TOPICS***

- My Role as President-elect
- Achieving Long-Term Goals
- Board assessment
- Building Relationships During Conflict

## ***LEARNING OUTCOMES***

By the end of this program, you will be able to:

1. Define your role as President-elect
2. Remove barriers to achieving long-term goals
3. Oversee effective board assessment and improvements
4. Manage issues in the context of relationships
5. Network with other presidents-elect throughout your term of office

## LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The courses offered by the OREA Centre for Leadership Development are designed to start with the recruiting of qualified and motivated volunteer leaders. The cycle then takes that new leader from their first introduction to volunteering, through five phases from committee member at a local association all the way to president.

Volunteer Position	Course
Committee Member	On the Path to Volunteering Leadership 100
Committee Chair	Becoming a Leader Leadership 200
Director	Enhancing Leadership Skills Leadership 300
	Member-focused Leadership Leadership 301
	Nimble Decision Making Board Tutorial
President-elect	The Hot Seat Leadership 400
	Laying the Groundwork for Success Leadership 401
President	Taking the Reins Leadership 402

### PRESIDENT LEARNING PATH

OCLD has created learning paths for leaders at the highest levels. These learning paths outline the courses we offer volunteer leaders and executive officers to assist them in their leadership development.

The goal at each phase in the learning path is to provide the necessary background, skills and support to help you be as effective as possible in your role.

OCLD continues to improve and enhance its courses and we look forward to providing additional online and onsite support services in the coming years.

### OREA Centre for Leadership Development

*Helping volunteers become leaders who make a difference*

## MY ROLE AS PRESIDENT-ELECT

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take a moment to introduce yourself in your group
2. Refer to Sample President-elect Responsibilities below
3. Refer to Defining My Role as President-Elect on the next page
4. Discuss:
  - Have you discussed your role with your president and/or EO?
  - What responsibilities will you be taking on in your term?
5. Discuss for 10 minutes in your breakout room

### SAMPLE PRESIDENT-ELECT RESPONSIBILITIES

Fulfil roles and responsibilities outlined in the by-laws, such as:

- Chair or member of the nominating committee
- Assume the duties of the President if the President is unavailable
- Serve as member of the Executive Committee

Act as chief recruiter of future leaders

- Chair or member of the nominating committee
- Recruit new members to the association, to committees and to the board of directors
- Undertake committee work or special assignments on behalf of the association

Participate in a high-profile committee – i.e. finance or government relations

- Attend meetings with local and provincial governments

Attend all board of directors and executive committee meetings

- Contribute to the discussion at the meetings

Represent the association at key community meetings or with local associations

Participate in EO performance evaluation

Liaise with all committees upon request of the President

### PREPARE TO MOVE UP TO PRESIDENT

- Chair a board of directors meeting halfway through the term
- Chair a General Membership Meeting halfway through the term
- Act as spokesperson for the association in a media interview
- Enhance knowledge and skills
- Participate in leadership training
- Stay on top of trends that affect the association
- Get familiar with governing documents and the strategic plan
- Be the liaison to neighbouring real estate boards

## **DEFINING MY ROLE AS PRESIDENT-ELECT**

*Use these questions to guide a conversation between the president, executive officer and president-elect to define the responsibilities of the president-elect for their term.*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

What roles must the President-elect take on according to the by-laws?

What roles does the President-elect wish to take on during his/her term?

What is in our strategic plan that we want to advance this year that the President-elect could play a part in? What would his/her role be?

What can the President do to help prepare the President-elect for his/her term?

What training can the President-elect take to prepare himself/herself?

## THE ROLES OF PRESIDENT-ELECT, PRESIDENT AND IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Three board seats – president, president-elect and immediate past-president<sup>1</sup> – form a strong team for advancing an association's mission and goals. While each position has distinct duties, they work best in a cooperative manner for the benefit of the board and members. (The chart may be adapted to reflect the unique aspects of your association.)

	President elect	President	Immediate Past President
<b>Position Description</b>	An officer on the executive committee and a member of the board of directors, directly collaborating with the president. Automatically succeeds to the position of the president.	The chief elected officer of the association, ensuring that the board fulfils its duties for governance. The principal advocate for advancing the association's mission and goals.	A member of the board of directors and an officer on the executive committee. Supportive of the president and the president-elect, and an ambassador of the association.
<b>Term</b>	1 Year	1 Year	1 Year
<b>Authority</b>	By-laws and Policies	By-laws and Policies	By-laws and Policies
<b>Budget Responsibility</b>	Study and understand the budget.	Responsible for adoption of an annual budget.	
<b>Budgeted Funds</b>	Travel	President's expenses and travel	N/A
<b>Membership Interface</b>	Communication with members and allied organizations when requested by the president.	Primary communicator to the members.	Serves as an ambassador to members to represent board positions when requested.
<b>Staff Interface</b>	Collegial relationship with all staff.	Direct relationship with the chief staff members (EO) and professional relationship with staff.	Collegial relationship with all staff.
<b>Committee Relations</b>	Member of the CEO Performance Committee and the Budget and Finance Committee.	Appoint committees and committee chairs in accordance with guidelines of the by-laws.	Assists the president with committees. Chair of the Nominating Committee.

<sup>1</sup> May be titled Chairman of the Board, Chair Elect and Past Chair.



## ROLES (cont'd)

<b>Specific Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare to perform duties of the president if and when need arises.</li> <li>• Attend all meetings of the Board of Directors.</li> <li>• Become familiar with governing documents and strategic plan.</li> <li>• Prepare for the year prior to installation.</li> <li>• Liaison to all committees upon request of the president.</li> <li>• Attend the annual meeting.</li> <li>• Other responsibilities as appointed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors.</li> <li>• Collaborate with the executive officer and directors to prepare board agenda.</li> <li>• Chair meetings of the executive committee.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with the executive officer to advance the mission and strategic goals.</li> <li>• Coordinate the performance review of the executive officer in accordance with policies.</li> <li>• Promote and protect the interests of the association.</li> <li>• Ensure understanding and compliance with all governing documents (articles, by-laws, policies)</li> <li>• Ensure representation of the association at appropriate times and meetings.</li> <li>• Maintain a close relationship with parent and allied organizations.</li> <li>• Serve as official spokesperson.</li> <li>• Cause reports to be prepared and ensure accuracy.</li> <li>• Prepare president messages for publications.</li> <li>• Chair the annual meeting.</li> <li>• Carry-out board orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair of the Past Presidents' Council and achievement of an annual project.</li> <li>• Mentor new board members.</li> <li>• Act as liaison between board and past presidents.</li> <li>• Serve as the Chairperson of the Foundation.</li> <li>• Proactively serve as a liaison between association and strategic allies.</li> <li>• Prepare to receive special assignments from the president.</li> <li>• Contribute to the review of the executive officer.</li> <li>• Attend the annual meeting.</li> <li>• Other responsibilities as appointed.</li> </ul>
----------------------------------	--	--	--

## ACHIEVING LONG-TERM GOALS

Many of the goals of an association are long-term – they are not achievable in one year. In fact, some of the most important goals take many years to achieve.

A lot of things get in the way of the desire to focus on these long-term goals: one-year terms of office, immediate challenges and unforeseen events can all take our eyes off that long-term strategic goal.

A President can be very busy in their term, but feel disappointed that the bigger, more valuable initiatives are not moving forward.

---

*Continuous effort – not strength or intelligence – is the key to unlocking our potential.*

*– Winston Churchill*

---

### WHAT ARE YOUR STRATEGIC GOALS?

Write down two or three of your association's long-term strategic goals.

1.

2.

3.

## ACTIVITY – PRESIDENTS SPEAK OUT

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Review the two scenarios below
- Be prepared to share your answers with the larger group (you may be called on)
- If you require assistance, use the Ask for Help button
- You have 10 minutes for this activity

### SCENARIO ONE FORLORN REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION

When I became president of the Forlorn Real Estate Association there were a lot of things I wanted to implement. But instead, we spend a lot of our time going over committee reports, financial reports and what's happening at OREA and CREA. By the time we get through these things, it's near the end of the meeting and we haven't addressed some of the important long-term strategic goals.

Since our board covers a large area and some directors must travel quite a distance to get to our meetings, they are often anxious to get back to their business. So, it's particularly frustrating when our meetings get off track, as they often do. At the first meeting of the year the by-law committee made a motion that we should limit the amount of proxies to a maximum of three at voting meetings. Then our Past President claimed the motion violated his rights to collect more proxies. He cited policy after policy, corporation law, Roberts Rules of Order and pretty well hijacked the meeting.

I find that we just aren't able to get to our strategic goals. Now it's November and my year is nearly completed.

*What is keeping this board from achieving its long-term strategic goals?*

*What could this board do to remove those barriers?*

## ACTIVITY – PRESIDENTS SPEAK OUT (CONT'D)

### SCENARIO TWO WEARY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

There is nothing more dreaded by a real estate board president than the EO leaving suddenly. Well, that's exactly what happened to us at the Weary Association of REALTORS®. And the EO's departure came on the heels of losing our Membership Services Coordinator! We found ourselves scrambling because we have a small board office. The other two staff knew how to run the office but knew nothing about our long-term goals. In fact, we could find none of the research that our EO had started on a new approach for our political action committee, which is one of our key strategic goals.

I and the other volunteers found ourselves spending more and more time in the board office. I even stepped into the EO's role for a few days.

Our board meetings were a disaster because we didn't have proper agendas or backup material. And then the MLS® vendor called us and said that we were late getting our new system specifications in.

We never saw this coming and wish we were more prepared.

*What does this board need to do in the short term to get back on track?*

*What does this board need to do in the long term so that they are more prepared?*

## ADDRESSING UNEXPECTED STAFF INTERRUPTIONS

### EXECUTIVE OFFICER CONTINGENCY PLANNING

A contingency plan is a set of procedures that defines how your association will continue its critical functions in the event of an unplanned disruption to normal activities. It allows you to assess your operations and processes to determine how well the association can function when key resources, such as critical personnel, are not available.

Your executive officer is one of those critical personnel. If he or she fell ill for an extended period of time or was unable to work again, your association would need to carry on without this important person. Even the largest real estate boards in the country and their elected leadership will face challenges if the EO unexpectedly leaves:

- What is the status of the key files the EO is working on?
- Are we certain the location of vital information is known and accessible if the EO is unable to tell us?
- Who has the password to the EO's computer?

So...how prepared are you for this possibility?

### THE IMPACT OF UNEXPECTED ABSENCES

Officers and association members may feel that an organization with many staff is immune from the disruption of a key employee's sudden departure. Yet consider the time implications alone for the senior elected officers to meet with current staff to be reassured that they have all the information required to continue the operations, to be briefed on the status of key initiatives, as well as the time the member-leaders must invest in the event that they now need to manage a hiring process to replace an EO.

Imagine this scenario in a small real estate board. Some elements could also apply to larger boards.

*You are the volunteer board chair of the organization. You are extremely busy with your own business and personal commitments but agreed to take on the leadership role. You and the Board trust the experience and judgment of the chief staff officer who has been with the organization for ten years. Members are happy, and the business of the association is performed effectively by staff. Sunday morning the telephone rings at home. The chief staff officer died suddenly late Saturday night. Dealing with the tragic news, you realize by Monday that no one else seems to know some key operational information. What progress was made on all the projects the chief staff officer was managing since the last update was reported to the Board? What is the status of major commitments (meetings, negotiations in progress, reports to be written)? Where are the personnel files?*

## ***ADDRESSING UNEXPECTED STAFF INTERRUPTIONS (CONT'D)***

An effective contingency plan will address areas that relate to the short or long-term absence of the executive officer:

1. Management and Core Operations
2. Documentation
3. Relationships

### ***MANAGEMENT AND CORE OPERATIONS***

In a leadership void, it is tempting for a board of directors to turn to the next employee on the organizational chart hierarchy and hand them the keys to the operation. Problem solved! But what happens when the individual is unprepared and cannot handle the new responsibilities? The individual will either have to rely increasingly on busy volunteers to do the work, outsource functions to professional resources that are qualified but at a cost, or hire another staff member (which is probably not in the budget) with the qualifications to take on the duties the successor cannot handle.

Not-for-profit organizations tend not to view themselves as business operators. But consider the perspective of the customer, or member. The MLS® system is not functioning today. The educational seminar due to start at 8 a.m. with a room filled with registrants cannot proceed because the staff member quit a week ago, and no one else remembered about this key event.

Inadequate contingency planning is more likely to take its toll on the organization over the short and medium term. Diminished service may lead to members seeking other resources for their needs (e.g. continuing professional education). The result can be reduced revenue for the organization, which in turn creates pressure on the budget and a decline in the ability to meet member expectations.

### ***DOCUMENTATION***

Regardless of whether a succession plan is in place or not, the executive officer must take the necessary steps to ensure the organization will have the information and resources to carry on should there be a key staff vacancy or extended absence, especially at the executive officer level.

One way to do this is with an operating (or policies and procedures) manual which contains sections and details helpful to both interim management needs and succession planning. The deliverable is to provide for the person who steps in to the role of EO a single repository of comprehensive information on every conceivable aspect of relevance to performing the job effectively. If it contains sensitive information, it may be stored off-site with an appropriate confidante such as the organization's legal counsel (with key staff and the board president aware of its location).

## **ADDRESSING UNEXPECTED STAFF INTERRUPTIONS (CONT'D)**

### **RELATIONSHIPS**

Poor contingency planning can lead to relationship crises if the association falls short of expectations. It could be as simple as a valued supplier not being paid on time because the invoice fell through the cracks. The issue could be that the former EO had a strong trusted network, and a new EO must start fresh to build credibility and trust. While most stakeholders understand that staff transition is challenging and there may be bumps along the way, poor contingency planning can make the few bumps turn into such discomfort that stakeholders start to question the organization's reputation and good judgment.

To avert such a crisis, create a list of all the stakeholders of the association. Certainly, that includes staff. Government officials are also stakeholders. Suppliers of products and services to the organization are on the list. There are allied associations, such as the local business improvement area, the chamber of commerce, the home builders' association, and other related organizations, with which the association has worked.

### **EO CONTINGENCY PLANNING QUESTIONS**

Discuss these questions with your board of directors and your EO. They will help you create a plan for the unexpected absence of the EO.

#### **Management and Core Operations**

- ☐ Who will be in charge in the EOs absence?
- ☐ Is this person adequately prepared to step into the EO role?
- ☐ What is the status of the key files the EO is working on?
- ☐ What are the critical functions of the operation and what is the EO role in each?
- ☐ How will the functions generally controlled by the EO be covered in his or her absence?
- ☐ Is there someone prepared to step in and immediately assume the duties presently carried out by the EO that will not be assumed by the replacement? (e.g., member services, banking)
- ☐ Is there a back-up plan in place for accessing company funds for payroll, payables and other expenses?
- ☐ Is this person acquainted with key business contacts?

**EO CONTINGENCY PLANNING QUESTIONS (CONT'D)****Relationships**

- ☐ Who are the key stakeholders: current contacts, government officials, allied association executives?
- ☐ Who are our trusted advisors: legal counsel, auditor, banker, management consultants, technology providers, landlord, investment counsel, and other key parties with whom the organization deals?
- ☐ Who are our staff: names, contact information, titles, job descriptions, reporting relationships, contract personnel?
- ☐ Who are our volunteers: board of directors, committees of the board?
- ☐ Who are the key contacts for banks, suppliers, and customers, and how can they be reached?
- ☐ Are the key business contacts familiar with the designated employee?

**Documentation**

- ☐ Is the replacement aware of the location of important documents?
- ☐ Who has the password to the EO's computer?
- ☐ Will records and data disks stored off-site be accessible to the EOs replacement?
- ☐ Are the following documents/information accessible to the replacement?
- ☐ Board of Directors: terms of reference, meeting schedule, briefing/orientation binders, minutes, committees.
- ☐ Staff: personnel policies, performance appraisals, salaries, staff meeting minutes.
- ☐ Organizational details: policies, organization chart, by-laws, strategic plan, business plan.



## TIPS FOR ACHIEVING LONG-TERM GOALS

### ALLOCATE RESOURCES

**Financial:** Allocate from operating budget or reserves. Work with the finance committee to ensure funds are allocated. Consider a special assessment or dues increase if necessary.

**Volunteers:** Select the right people with the skills to help achieve the goal. No politics. No favouritism. Ask, *who has the best skills?*

**Staff:** Make the achievement of goals a priority for your EO and staff. Performance evaluations should be based on the association's goals.

### FOCUS BOARD TIME

80% of your time at board of directors' meetings should be spent on long-term goals. As chair, keep discussion at a strategic level. It will help if your agenda is designed to give long-term goals a prominent place at every meeting.

### ADDRESS ISSUES AT THE BOARD TABLE

Apply Roberts Rules of Order to ensure fair and equitable debate. Orient new directors on how to participate effectively in meetings and coach them to speak up with their input and opinions. Implement documents that define acceptable board member behaviour, addressing areas such as conflict of interest, confidentiality and ethical behaviour.

### PRIORITIZE PROJECTS

Drop projects/activities/events that do not contribute to long-term goals. Lead the discussion on what is important to members.

### POOL EFFORTS

Regionalize or share resources with other associations (e.g. PAC, professional standards, education). Start discussions with other presidents and/or EOs on how the workload could be shared.

### INVESTIGATE MERGERS

Consider if increasing the size of the association will allow access to more resources and improved member services. Ask, *how can we serve our members better?* Can we consolidate MLS® databases? What additional services could a merger provide?

*Vision without action is a  
daydream. Action without vision  
is a nightmare.*

*- Japanese proverb*

## BOARD ASSESSMENT

There is little argument that the strongest organizations almost always have the strongest boards. Those boards are comprised of the right people, with the right information, who apply the best governance practices. They are always asking, “How can we do this better?”. Board assessment is a critical element in being able to answer that question.

### TRUTH OR FICTION ACTIVITY

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Introduce yourselves in your new group
2. Discuss the following statements
3. Decide if each statement is truth or fiction
4. Be prepared to share your rationale for your answer (you may be called on)
5. You have 10 minutes for this activity

		Truth	Fiction
1.	Board assessment should be an ongoing process and not a one-time activity.		
2.	The sole purpose of board assessment is to identify areas for improvement.		
3.	It's always a good time to implement a board assessment.		
4.	It is best to conduct a full board assessment every year.		
5.	Periodic assessment should be included in an association's by-laws or policies.		
6.	If you have one, the governance committee (not your chief executive or the chair) should ensure that assessment takes place regularly and is well organized.		

## **BOARD ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES**

The highest value of board assessment comes when the assessment results in a healthy and productive discussion about the board's strengths and weaknesses and results in an agreed upon plan for building a stronger board and governance model.

A well-planned, well-conducted board assessment:

- Develops team-building skills and demonstrates a problem-solving structure
- Reminds board members of their responsibilities
- Builds trust and facilitates open communication amongst board members
- Identifies areas of strength and areas requiring improvement
- Provides a format for discussing some ongoing issues and concerns (term limits, lack of board commitment, recruitment, etc.)
- Serves as a launching pad for an ongoing governance committee, the development of a governance agenda, and a continuing effort to strengthen your board
- Serves as a baseline from which to measure your governance improvement efforts

## **ASSESSMENT IS AN ONGOING PROCESS**

Consider the administration of the self-assessment tool as the starting point in a journey that the board embarks upon together—a journey towards the development of a board governance agenda. Consider including a board assessment in the association's by-laws or policies. That's the surest way to make certain that assessment is ongoing. Plan to conduct an assessment every two to three years. It is not necessary to conduct one every year — you need time to implement any potential changes and learn new ways to function as a board.

### **IMMEDIATE FACTORS CAN IMPACT TIMING**

Although ongoing assessment is important, it's also important to consider immediate factors when determining the best time to conduct the assessment. Not every organization or every board is ready for the board self-assessment process. For example, it probably doesn't make sense to embark on this process if the organization is facing a crisis or some other pressing matter that is requiring everyone's full attention. Nor should you launch this process when staff and board leadership are at odds with one another or when the organization or the board lack the capacity to enact the strategies they might develop. The greatest chance of success and lasting results come when the board chair (or vice chair) and the executive director are of one mind in this regard. A lack of commitment by either can doom this process and just waste time.

## **RESOURCES FOR CONDUCTING BOARD ASSESSMENTS**

### **CPA CANADA**

20 Questions Directors of Not-For-Profit Organizations Should Ask About Board Recruitment, Development and Assessment

[www.cpacanada.ca/en/business-and-accounting-resources/strategy-risk-and-governance/not-for-profit-governance](http://www.cpacanada.ca/en/business-and-accounting-resources/strategy-risk-and-governance/not-for-profit-governance)

### **IMAGINE CANADA**

Building Your Board: Recruitment, Evaluation, Succession Planning, Board Orientation

<http://sectorsource.ca/managing-organization/board-governance/building-your-board>

### **DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**

Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire and User Guide

<https://mla.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Board-Self-Evaluation-Questionnaire-Dalhousie-University-College-of-Continuing-Education.doc>

## MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS DURING CONFLICT

### RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE THREATENED DURING CONFLICT

Effective association leaders know that their success lies in building working relationships with numerous groups and individuals. This is easy when people share the same goals, they have regular contact, expectations are met, and reasonable rewards are received or experienced.

However, not everything goes smoothly in an association. Often there are interpersonal or association issues that threaten relationships. Leaders are called upon occasionally to manage tough issues in that intricate web of expectations and goals.

Not all disagreements escalate into conflict. However, even when we disagree we are sometimes tempted to give in if we think the issue is threatening the relationship. Or we push through to get what we want even if our relationship will suffer.

#### Manage relationships during conflict

As association leaders, we need to take a more constructive approach to disagreements and especially conflicts. We need to manage issues and help our associations make difficult decisions while maintaining the relationships that are the strength of our community. This involves striking the right balance: valuing both the relationship and the right course of action on a problem or issue.

---

*The best way to keep from stepping on other people's toes is to put yourself in their shoes.*

*– The 17 Indisputable Laws of Leadership, John Maxwell*

---

## ***PRINCIPLES FOR LEADING THROUGH CONFLICT***

Although not all disagreements involve conflict, we gain confidence if we know how to lead through even stormy waters. In fact, lessons learned in those situations help us take steps to prevent conflict when we see disagreements escalating.

### ***RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES***

Here are five principles drawn from the field of negotiation that help us be wise and level-headed in the face of discord:

#### **1. Recognize you have two concerns: people and issues**

Separate the people aspects from the issue. That's job one. Often when people disagree, things become personal. People get angry at one another because they see things differently. At times, conflict changes our behaviour. Some become more aggressive – at the extreme, they are like a bulldozer! Others concede quickly because they want to maintain a friendship. They give in, valuing the relationship over any stake they have in the issue. As a leader, you need to manage your emotions and be clear to others that the goal is to achieve a wise outcome amicably. You need to care about people and the issue. Staying focused on and being guided by the association's strategic goals helps neutralize these situations by eliminating the personally-invested factor.

#### **2. Be sensitive to people and hard-headed on issues**

Once you have separated the people and the issue, you can deal with people as human beings and deal with the problem on its merits. This double-track approach means you strike two different tones. On the one hand, you understand that everyone has egos. They are acting the best way they know how at the time. You can understand empathetically the power of their views and the way they feel, and then convey this to them. On the other hand, you want to establish a tone of seriousness about the issue. If it matters, it should be addressed properly. As leaders, when we respect the issue and express our interest in a wise solution, we help people redirect their energies to working together. In the end, most people want to do the best thing for the association.

## ***RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES (CONT'D)***

### **3. Focus first on perspectives, not solutions**

Perspectives are the motivations and concerns that underlie stated desires. Someone may announce his or her position, but behind that are the “whys” that make up their point of view, that caused them to decide. It pays to look behind positions for the perspectives – the basic concerns. Ask about these directly. You may find there are some perspectives that are shared and some that are different between parties. Encourage people to stay future-focused as they voice their interests and goals. Looking forward is best; visiting the past is less productive. As well, make sure that you express your own perspectives.

### **4. Generate options**

Before any decision is made, explore alternatives. Produce as many ideas as possible to solve the problem at hand and meet everyone’s interests. Joint brainstorming in an informal atmosphere can ensure the interests of those involved are considered and everyone learns from each other. The goal is to invent options or arrangements to resolve things. Even if you never sit down in a formal brainstorming session, you benefit by seeking options before making a decision. It helps to know potential ideas which might have merit before you make a commitment.

### **5. Develop standards for measuring decisions**

Develop objective criteria against which any decision will be measured. Think about when you are negotiating a house for a client. They want the lowest price. The seller wants the highest price. The question is what a fair price would be. There are objective standards around that discussion: recent sales of similar houses in that market, an independent appraisal and so on. Similarly, as with any decision or alternative, there are considerations that will determine whether an idea or alternative is a fair and good one. Someone else may suggest a different standard than we would, so consider each on their merits. The idea is to work with the other person or with the group to develop a checklist that any alternative can be measured against.

## RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO? – CASE STUDY ACTIVITY

Note: Bob is the President of his real estate association.

#### ***Voice Mail 1 (John)***

Hey Bob, it's John. John Staples. I'm calling to let you know that I'm pulling together a short meeting of the public relations committee at the real estate office later this week. I phoned Carol at the office, so she's aware of this. But I have to tell you, I'm pretty fed up right now. You know Sarah, the chair of the committee? Look, I understand that you have to ensure that directors are active, but I believe making her chair of the public relations committee was a big, big mistake. I've called her on her cell phone three times to try to get this meeting set up, and she doesn't return any of my calls. I guess she's just too busy. Oh, and I emailed her too. Bob, I have to tell you – I went to the wall to get better advertising rates with the city paper, and they're better rates than we've ever had before – but I need to get a committee sign off so we can recommend the deal to the board. This Sarah is a no-show as far as I'm concerned. So, I'm just going to go ahead with the rest of the Committee. I thought I'd better let you know. Bye

#### ***Voice Mail 2 (Sarah)***

Hi Bob, it's Sarah Johnson. You're not going to believe this, but I just got off the phone with my friend Helen, who is also on my committee, and she told me that John Staples is calling a meeting this Thursday. John hasn't told me anything about this. And I'm the chair. Oh, he did send me a couple of emails and a few voice mails, but it was always just "call me" and, frankly, I was too busy to follow up. Then, when I did get back to him, he said he was "too busy" to talk and, basically hung up on me. Bob, this is outrageous. John's a lunatic. He has completely overstepped his authority. I'd like to cancel the meeting on Thursday, but thought I'd blow off some steam with you first. Too bad you're not there. By the way, John has to go. As far as I'm concerned, he shouldn't be on the committee after this. Obviously, I'm pretty upset, but there's no way I can work with this guy. Anyway, call me when you get this.

#### ***Voice Mail 3 (Carol)***

Hello, Bob. This is Carol at the office. Sarah just called and she's ranting about John Staples. Apparently, he organized a meeting of the public relations committee and didn't tell Sarah. He asked me yesterday if the room was available, and if I was free, he never mentioned that Sarah knew nothing about it. I guess I should have asked. Anyway, now she's hopping mad. What scares me is that I've worked with John a long time and, I know he's a bit of a handful sometimes, but he does a lot of great volunteer work. I'm afraid he'll walk out. Actually, Sarah is sounding like she's going to ask him to leave the committee. Now I don't know Sarah very well, so I don't think I should be the one to try and calm her down. By the way, the agreement with the paper looks pretty good and the paper is calling the office about it. We need a go-ahead for it. Oh, one more thing. It's Monday, and the Committee meeting is on Thursday. Is it on or off? Sarah said she was going to cancel but she went off on a tangent. Call me when you can.



### **CASE STUDY ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Introduce yourselves in your new group
2. Discuss how you think Bob should handle this situation
3. The script for the voice mails is on page 21
4. Answer the questions on this and the next page
5. You have 10 minutes for this activity

What should Bob do to address the issue and apply the relationship principles?

What messages will be important to each party:

John – the committee member

### ***CASE STUDY QUESTIONS (CONT'D)***

Sarah – the committee chair

Carol – the executive officer

What long-term strategies should be considered to strengthen the association's governance?

## BE SENSITIVE TO PEOPLE AND HARD-HEADED ON ISSUES

Once you have separated the people and the issue, you can deal with people as human beings and deal with the problem on its merits. As leaders, when we respect the issue and express our interest in a wise solution, we help people redirect their energies to working together. In the end, most people want to do the best thing for the association.

Here are some sample statements that illustrate the difference between people statements and issues statements.

### SAMPLE STATEMENTS

People Statements	Issues Statements
<i>I appreciate you feel strongly about this.</i>	<i>What do you think needs to be done now to help resolve the situation?</i>
<i>I can see you're upset about this.</i>	<i>It's important that the committee be involved in any decisions.</i>
<i>You've put a lot of work into this committee.</i>	<i>How might you and (name) resolve your differences so that the group can move ahead with a decision?</i>
<i>It sounds like there's a real opportunity here.</i>	<i>What needs to happen now?</i>
<i>I'm glad we took the time to resolve this together.</i>	<i>How can I help?</i>
<i>Thanks for all your hard work on this.</i>	<i>It sounds like we need to talk about ...</i>

## ***RAPID ROLE PLAY ACTIVITY***

You will be participating in a role play activity that allows you to practice applying what was discussed in the case study analysis. Your goal is to apply the relationship principles in your conversation.

### ***INSTRUCTIONS FOR FIRST ROLE PLAY***

1. You will role play a conversation between
  - Bob (President) and Sarah (Committee Chair)
2. When in the room:
  - Decide who will play the role of Bob
  - Take a minute to discuss how Bob might handle this conversation
  - Then, role play the conversation
3. Take 10 minutes for discussion and role play

### ***INSTRUCTIONS FOR SECOND ROLE PLAY***

1. Switch who will play Bob
2. You will role play a conversation between
  - Bob (President) and John (Committee Member)
3. When in the room:
  - Take a minute to discuss how Bob might handle this conversation
  - Then, role play the conversation
4. Take 10 minutes for discussion and role play

## RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES – SAMPLE SITUATIONS

Here are some examples of how the relationship principles might sound in real-world situations.

Situation	Principle	Sounds like this....
Tempers have flared at a board meeting and three people are lashing out at one another, pointing fingers and blaming the others for what went wrong on a project recently completed.	Recognize you have two concerns: people and issues	Obviously, Tom, Marc and Joyce, I appreciate you feel strongly and passionately about this. We all cared about that event going well. However, the event is over, so let's focus on what we can learn for next time. Let's look at this together and see if we can identify some actions that we can take moving forward.  NOTE: There may be a need for people to have time to let off steam.
The Executive Officer, Rita, has phoned to tell the President that she is upset with Tom, the Committee Chair, and his criticism of the action she took to get something done. She feels that he didn't acknowledge her effort and embarrassed her in front of committee members.	Be sensitive to people – and hard-headed on issues	Rita, it sounds like Tom may not have expressed his point of view in the best way. Obviously, you're upset. I've had my actions criticized in the past, so I know how it feels. However, as professionals, we pick ourselves up and do what we need to fix the situation. Do you think you can resolve the issue Tom's concerned about and find a way to maintain a good working relationship with him?
There is a decision to be made at a board of directors meeting. Two people representing a particular office have come into the room with a fixed point of view based on "how it has to be".	Focus first on perspectives, not solutions	Let's try and understand our interests and goals first before we decide on any solution. One thing we need to think about is the impact on staff here at the real estate office. This will definitely affect them. It sounds like we need to talk about ensuring your office can handle any change we might make. Let's talk about your concerns related to this and then we'll discuss what some solutions might be.

## RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES – SAMPLE SITUATIONS (CONT'D)

Situation	Principle	Sounds like this....
The board is at an impasse. There are two points of view and someone is now saying “I give up. Let’s just split the difference”. People want to just be done with it.	Generate options	I think we should slow down and develop more possibilities than the two alternatives we have right now. There may be options that perhaps none of us have thought of yet. We don’t have to decide right now, so let’s first identify all the different approaches we could take.
Two directors have cornered you in the hallway outside a committee room. They are insisting that a decision go a certain way.	Develop standards for measuring decisions	We all come with ideas as to what we think will work best. Let’s back up and first discuss the criteria for a good decision. We want to be able to say “yes, we took that into account” when people ask if we’ve considered things. I hear your solution right now but let’s talk with the rest of the committee about this and make sure we all agree on the criteria.

---

*A study at Cornell University’s Johnson Graduate School of Management found that compassion and building teamwork will be two of the most important characteristics business leaders will need for success a decade from now.*

*– Doc Childre and Bruce Cryer, From Chaos to Coherence*

---

## ***APPENDIX***

- Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire



# Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

A Tool for Improving the Governance Practices  
of Non-Profit Organizations

❖ User Guidelines ❖

Dalhousie University College of Continuing Education  
© 2013 – Version III





# Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

## *Guidelines on How Best to Use This Tool*

- This tool is designed to be used as an annual board evaluation. It seeks to help a board answer the question: what are we as a board now doing well and what can be do better?
- The tool is designed for organizations large enough to employ staff, those with someone in an executive director or CEO role. The concept though, and many of the questions too, may also be of value to all volunteer organizations.
- Section D on the **Performance of Individual Directors** provides an opportunity for board members to personally reflect on their own performance. This portion of the questionnaire, once completed, should be retained by each board member, although board members may feel comfortable sharing their overall rating for this section at the bottom of the page or what one of the criteria identified they most want to improve upon
- Section E, seeks to provide **Feedback to the Chair of the Board**. This page, once completed may be separated from the others, collected, and then passed to the chair. This section is optional; the chair may wish to conduct a separate process for soliciting advice and feedback at another time.
- The rating scale at the bottom of each page ("My Overall Rating") asks that board members add up the total of the numbers circled on the page. This number is intended as a rough interpretation of the results of each section. The range of numbers will change with the number of questions asked and answered in the section.
- **We would encourage boards to use this as a source of ideas to inform the development of their own board self-evaluation tool.** Your board can complete this assessment as an "experiment" and then develop a customized version based this experience.
- Remember that this tool is best used to stimulate reflection and discussion; it is not a scientific survey instrument that has been tested on a large number of boards and for which there are average results.
- Boards might well consider bringing in an **independent person** (a management student perhaps) to conduct the evaluation and compile, summarize and report on the results. This will insure that individual responses are kept confidential and may result in more honest answers. If you choose to do this then completed copies of Section D could be passed on for that person to compile.

## Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire User Guidelines

- Ask that board members complete the questionnaire at home before bringing it to a meeting. The space for a board member's name on the front cover is meant for distributing the questionnaire rather than for collecting it and compiling the results. Directors may want to hand back only Sections A, B, C and E.
- Consider evaluating other things such as the effectiveness of committees or board "follow-through". Avoid questions that compare individual board member performance; keep the focus on the whole board.
- If your board relies on an **Executive Committee** which meets between full board meetings, a separate section might be needed to assess its relationship to the board (to be answered by everyone), its relationship to the Executive Director and the conduct of Executive Committee meetings. Questions for such a section could be drawn from the other sections.
- Section C on the **Board's Relationship with the Executive Director** is not intended as an evaluation of the Executive Director but rather an evaluation of the quality of the board's relationship with the Executive Director as judged both by the board and by the Executive Director. The items evaluated here should focus on matters that the board can change about its performance.
- Version III gives a bit more attention than previous versions (see Sections A and B) to the board's awareness of, and interaction with external stakeholders. A stakeholder analysis exercise is one boards should undertake on a regular basis. There are lots of tools online to help design one.
- Board evaluation can be done at any time of the year and should be put on the board's annual agenda. It may be best not to schedule it at the same time of the year that the board is conducting an evaluation of the Executive Director or preparing for the AGM.

There are many board self-assessment or evaluation tools available online, some less detailed than this one, which organizations may prefer. These guidelines are for Version III of this questionnaire. Versions I and II have been tested by several organizations and suggestions for improvements from this exercise have been incorporated here. The changes are few. If you are adapting this for your own use we would appreciate crediting us as a resource. We would also welcome receiving your feedback and/or a copy of your own version. Send comments to [grant.macdonald@dal.ca](mailto:grant.macdonald@dal.ca)



# Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

A Tool for Improving the Governance Practices  
of Non-Profit Organizations

Name \_\_\_\_\_ For period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
(optional)

Dalhousie University College of Continuing Education  
© 2013 – Version III



# Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

Questions should be answered by all board members. When completed individually the results of Sections A, B and C should be compiled, shared and discussed by the whole board to determine an average group answer to each question and an overall section rating. Section D should be answered by board members alone but not shared with the group. Sections A, B and C should also be completed by the **Executive Director or CEO**. This questionnaire also includes Section E, which provides feedback to the Chair of the Board.

*Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).*

## **A. How Well Has the Board Done Its Job?**

1. Our organization operates with a strategic plan or a set of measurable goals and priorities.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The board's regular meeting agenda items reflects our strategic plan or priorities.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The board has created or reviewed, in this period, some key governance job descriptions (e.g. board chair, directors and committees	1	2	3	4	5
4. The board gives direction to staff on how to achieve the goals by setting, referring to, or revising policies.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The board has identified and reviewed the organization's relationship with each of its key stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5
6. The board has ensured that the organization's accomplishments and challenges have been communicated to key stakeholders .	1	2	3	4	5
7. The board has ensured that stakeholders have received reports on how our organization has used its financial and human resources.	1	2	3	4	5

*My overall rating (add together the total of the numbers circled):*

☐ Excellent (30-24)   ☐ Satisfactory (23-19)   ☐ Poor (18- 6)

## Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

**B. How Well Has the Board Conducted Itself?**

Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).

1. As board members we are aware of what is expected of us.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The agenda of board meetings are well planned so that we are able to get through all necessary board business.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It seems like most board members come to meetings prepared.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We receive written reports to the board in advance of our meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
5. All board members participate in important board discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
6. We do a good job encouraging and dealing with different points of view.	1	2	3	4	5
7. We all support the decisions we make.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The board assesses its composition and strengths in advance of recruiting new board members.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The board assumes much of the responsibility for director recruitment and orientation.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Board members have some interaction with external stakeholders at board meetings (e.g. as guests) or between meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Our board meetings are always interesting.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Our board meetings are frequently fun.	1	2	3	4	5
13.					

My overall rating (add together the total of the numbers circled):

☐ Excellent (60-50) ☐ Satisfactory (49-35) ☐ Poor (34-12)

## Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

**C. Board's Relationship with Executive Director**

Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).

1. There is a clear understanding on most matters where the board's role ends and the executive director's begins.	1	2	3	4	5
2. There is good two-way communication between the board and the executive director.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The board trusts the judgment of the executive director.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The board provides direction to the executive director by setting and reviewing policies.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The board has discussed and communicated the kinds of information and level of detail it requires from the executive director.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The board has developed formal criteria and a process for evaluating the executive director.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The board, or a committee of the board, has formally evaluated the executive director within the past 12 months.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The board evaluates the executive director primarily on the accomplishment of the organization's strategic goals and priorities and adherence to policy.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The board provides feedback and shows its appreciation to the executive director on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The board ensures that the Executive Director is able to take advantage of professional development opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	1	2	3	4	5

My overall rating (add together the total of the numbers circled):

☐ Excellent (40+)   ☐ Satisfactory (39-28)   ☐ Poor (27-11)

## Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

**D. My Performance as an Individual Board Member (Not to be shared)**

Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).

1. I am aware of what is expected of me as a board member.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have a good record of meeting attendance.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I read the minutes, reports and other materials in advance of our board meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am familiar with what is in the organization's by-laws and governing policies.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I frequently encourage other board members to express their opinions at board meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am encouraged by other board members to express my opinions at board meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am a good listener at board meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I follow through on things I have said I would do.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I maintain the confidentiality of all board decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I have a different opinion than the majority, I raise it.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I support board decisions once they are made even if I do not agree with them.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I promote the work of our organization in the community whenever I had a chance to do so.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I stay informed about issues relevant to our mission and bring information to the attention of the board.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	1	2	3	4	5

My overall rating (add together the total of the numbers circled):

☐ Excellent (40+)   ☐ Satisfactory (39-28)   ☐ Poor (27-11)

## Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

**E. Feedback to the Chair of the Board (Optional)**

Circle the response that **best** reflects your opinion. The rating scale for each statement is: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Maybe or Not Sure (3); Agree (4); Strongly Agree (5).

1. The chair is well prepared for board meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The chair helps the board stick to the agenda.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The chair tries hard to ensure that every board member has an opportunity to be heard.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The chair is skilled at managing different points of view.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The chair has demonstrated versatility in facilitating board discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The chair knows how to be direct with an individual board member when their behaviour needs to change.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The chair helps the board work well together.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The chair demonstrates good listening skills.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The board supports the chair.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The chair is effective in delegating responsibility amongst board members.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The chair ensures the board is aware of his/her organizational activities outside of our board meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	1	2	3	4	5

My overall rating (add together the total of the numbers circled):

☐ Excellent (40+)   ☐ Satisfactory (39-28)   ☐ Poor (27-11)



[illegible]