

in the boardroom

BOARD MEMBER
TIPS AND TRENDS



Whether you are a newly minted board member or a seasoned hand, the ongoing tasks of the association can occupy all your allotted time. You may go to board meetings and find your energy taken up with small decisions. But what you really want to do is accomplish something larger. That is why you have volunteered. You can imagine greater things for your community. You have goals you want to realize. How do you ensure that your term in office is as effective as you hope it will be?

START WITH THE BIG PICTURE

Make goal setting with end results a priority. This is the first thing a new board should do. The board sets results-oriented goals based on considered evaluation of what is best for the association now and in the future. Let's say a major goal that everyone agrees on is to beautify the community; here's an example of steps needed to accomplish this goal:

Beautifying the Community
(the end result)

1. Get yards and driveways cleaned up
2. Renovate the landscaping in common areas
3. Replace outdated street lights
4. Upgrade the exterior of the clubhouse

Build steps that will move your goals forward. This is where the board decides on the direction to take to make goals happen. Let's expand on our beautification example above:

1. Owner clean up goal — enforce existing rules or draft effective ones if yours are not up to standard
2. New landscape goal — research what changes are appropriate and offer the most bang for association bucks
3. Update light goal — look into forward thinking technology and energy savings
4. Clubhouse upgrade goal — what materials give you the best outcome for your vision

Now it is time to delegate. This will not be possible unless the board's expectations are stated and delegated appropriately. Turn to your resources for follow through. Legal counsel, subject matter experts, municipal authorities — have them do the legwork and bring potential solutions to you for consideration.

Monitor progress. Take some time at each meeting to check milestones toward your goals. Course correction is easier if you are keeping a watchful eye on progress.

THE MANAGER KEEPS AN EYE ON DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS

Don't concentrate on the smaller stuff. Association operations are not all big picture items. But, while you are progressing toward your greater goals, it is the manager's job to oversee daily operations.

Remember that the board's job is to govern — not manage. You have hired a professional community manager

or management company whose responsibility is to manage the day-to-day operations of the community. Let these people manage. Instead, the board should take on a more overarching role and set the course.

Respect your fellow board members. You may have all the time in the world to research every agenda item and immerse yourself in the governing documents. The other board members — even though they, too, are dedicated to guiding the association — may not be able to devote as much time. Appreciation and respect are great traits to bring to the meetings.

Authority is wielded as a group — not as individual board members. Discussions can be passionate and heated, but once the vote is taken, the board stands behind the decision as a single entity. Focus on moving forward based on the board's direction — speak with a unified voice.

You won't please everyone. Being on the board involves responsibility to the welfare of the group and not individuals. This means some will get angry at your actions and decisions. There are always some decisions that are right, but not popular; it is inevitable. You need to feel confident that the board has made the best decision it can based on the facts.

Boards can and do achieve big goals while keeping up on operations. As a board, you need to delegate and direct, deliberate and decide. Knowing how and where to focus your energies will allow you to do it all and look good while you are doing it. Enjoy!

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