

THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

Dynamics of a Board

I'm sure we've all heard the terms "left brain", "right brain" and "men are from Mars" and "women are from Venus" to indicate the different ways that people think and process information. Whatever term you choose to apply to it, it is very true. Board members do not all think alike, they are not always in sync with each other and many times some members need more information or different information in order to process it to a conclusion. It's not wrong, just different. Given the differences, it is very important to consider each member's thought process and attribute equal importance to the conclusion. Through discussion and friendly debate, it should be the goal to reach consensus on a subject or issue that is in the best interests of the Association. When there is a majority consensus, even though it still might not be your personal view, the decision should be supported by all the members of the Board to create a united front to the community. If the Board is split, then certainly the community will be as well.

I've heard it said many times and seen it demonstrated, that people are smarter as a group than as individuals because there are so many more points of view represented and so many more experiences that can be brought to the table. An effective group decision making process significantly improves the decision quality. So why do directors get frustrated and discouraged, angry and then quit? It may appear from those intense debates, split votes or postponed matters that a Board is not working well together. It is certainly not presenting a united front that is moving the association forward.

Obviously the make-up of a board changes with each election. The change in personalities will have a definite impact on the dynamics of your Board and their actions. It is important that new Board members are brought up to speed as quickly as possible, perhaps providing them with a "Board Book" that contains a copy of the documents, copies of the contracts with vendors providing services to the association, copies of past Minutes of meetings so they are aware of the actions taken by the Board in the recent past, copies of any adopted policies under which the board and management work. This process will help acclimate the new board member(s) and introduce them to the group's work habits.



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Setting up a policy/procedure for the production of your agenda and the presentation of the material the Board receives prior to the meeting is clearly an important part of the meeting's success. Board members have an obligation to prepare themselves prior to the meeting by reviewing the material that has been provided. If there are questions or additional information is needed, now is the time to request it, not at the meeting when the preparation of the material will require additional time and perhaps delay the decision that is needed causing frustration.

Meeting productivity is not necessarily measured by the amount of time a meeting takes. A great meeting that accomplishes everything on the agenda may take a well spent one-half hour. While a meeting that accomplishes nothing may take hours. Preparation and execution makes all the difference.