

CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO

FEBRUARY 2010

WRITTEN FOR CREDIT UNIONS AND OTHER NON PROFITS

Focus on Board Productivity

It is difficult for any writer to start off any article today without referring to the current economic recession or our troubled times. Quite effectively the times we live in are difficult; more than usual.

You may have heard what you can do with the “fortune” found in a fortune cookie to add fun to it. All you do is add a couple words to the end of 99.9% of all fortunes and it’s funnier.

My Webinar partner, Carolyn Warden, was saying all the topics taught now could have the words “in a recession” added to the titles and they would play better (don’t know how it would play in Peoria though).

So I got to thinking, does every topic sound better with that suffix? Maybe not all but, the recession and the pressures within the credit union segment of the besieged financial services industry suggest that all the things we normally do are not done normally right now.

So we got to thinking about board productivity. Over several recent years, many boards have worked on being more effective and in part that means productive and efficient.

One of the services I added to my list a few years ago was the Board Packet Weight Loss Program. If the clients I performed that service for simplified their packets anywhere

near my recommendations, they improved productivity, saved money, saved time, and feel better about being focused.

In times like these, bottom lines in trouble, employees stressed out about their jobs (I have read of CU layoffs), I’ve seen many board increase the amount of information they request. The belief seems to be, the more confusing things get, more information will help.

The case is the opposite. The more confusing things get, the more focused we need to become.

Getting less information but all of it focused on what’s import to policy makers is the better course of action. Especially our volunteer board members. I have great respect for volunteer board members and my personal volunteer efforts should tell you I know from which I speak.

As a board member with little contact with the day-to-day, more information never made me feel better informed; it made me feel

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- ◆ New Issues: No New Policies
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“ [] for those who are prepared”
~ Ian Davis, “The New Normal,” McKinsey Quarterly, 2009
Number 3, p26



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In time to feed strategic issues to your board's agenda. This eZine's title, "Challenge the Status Quo," reminds us all that as leaders it is our duty to assure our organizations are doing the right things for today and the next generation—our ways change as the times change.

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less informed and inadequate. But maybe that just me.

Here are 11 ways for boards to be productive or more productive:

- 1. Practice punctuality; start on time.
2. Start a meeting with the strategic issues discussion because the most energy the board will have is at the beginning.
3. Define what your board wants in its regular diet of information; focus it down.
4. Insist that proposals be presented days ahead of a meeting, include several viable options, and a clearly reasoned decision the board should make.
5. Allow a little time before the start of a meeting for directors to reacquaint and engage in "small talk," but otherwise keep the meeting on task.
6. Incorporate a "parking lot" discussion period near adjournment; politely park worthwhile discussion topics there until the items on the agenda are completed.
7. Set your meeting days, dates and times such that the majority have the best chance of being on time.
8. Adjourn the meeting when the approved time to adjourn arrives.
9. Keep things moving; gently prod folks to speak succinctly, speak once, and not repeat themselves.
10. Allow for a modicum of jocularly while keeping an eye on the time and the remaining agenda.
11. Do not allow the delay of planned discussion, debate or decisions because a minority of the board is

unprepared.

There isn't enough space here to dwell on each one. Most should be self-explanatory or self-evident. Call or email me and give me to opportunity to clarify any of them. I'll benefit from your questions because I'm thinking of publishing an expanded version of them; your questions will also give me a feel for an interest in it.

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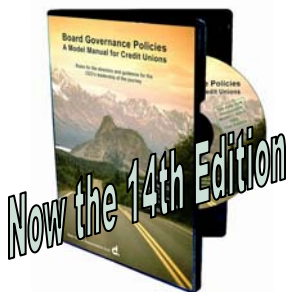
Strategic Issues for Board Meetings

I liked this so much, I had to give it one more read:

"What will normal look like?" For some organizations, near-term survival is the only agenda item. Others are peering through the fog of uncertainty, thinking about how to opposition themselves once the crisis has passed and things return to normal. While no one can say how long the crisis will last, what we find on the other side will not look like the normal of recent years. The new normal will be shaped by a confluence of powerful forces — some arising directly from the financial crisis and some that were at work long before it began.

Ian Davis, "The New Normal," McKinsey Quarterly, 2009Number 3, p26

d.



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• Create stability.
• Succeed in harmony.
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