



6 Essential Skills Board Members Should Master

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 board members talking, hoa, community association

If you've chosen to dedicate valuable time to serving as a board member, giving the job your best effort may require you to refine certain skills or learn new ones. But between your limited time, big buzzwords and best practices, it can be hard to figure out exactly which skills you should cultivate to make an impact in your community. To find out which ones are most important to master, we reached out to our leaders from across globe to identify the most essential skills board members need in order to be successful. Read their responses below.

1. Staying Patient

"Board members need to be patient in order to take the time to learn and understand how and why things work the way they do in homeowners' associations. Laws, whether on a local, state, or federal level heavily impact our daily interactions with homeowners and the board members serving them. A strong understanding of these laws, the community's governing documents, and the management company's inner workings will better equip a board member to respond to a homeowner's requests, questions, and comments."

Melissa Merritt-Darden, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®

Vice President

Associa Carolinas (<https://associaonline.com/locations/associa-carolinas>)

2. Maintaining Objectivity

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"I believe the most important skill for a board member to possess is objectivity. You need to look at all positions and then select the path that provides the greatest good for all members of the association. This may not be the path that benefits *you* the most, but benefits the group. We call this the 'no personal agenda' approach to being a board member."

Jesse Dubuque, CMCA®

Director of Client Development

Associa Minnesota (<https://associaonline.com/locations/associa-minnesota>)

3. Learning to Listen

"Having good listening skills truly allows a board member to hear the message of the person addressing the board, regardless of the manner in which the message is delivered. This allows the board member to focus on the business of the association, rather than get distracted by any indecent or unprofessional personal agendas and/or attacks from homeowners or worse yet, other board members."

Lance Govang, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®

President

Associa Minnesota (<https://associaonline.com/locations/associa-minnesota>)

4. Communicating Effectively

"Communication is at the heart of everything we do. It is the key to life, work and relationships. Without effective communication, a message can lead to error, misunderstanding, frustration, or even disaster by being misinterpreted or poorly delivered. When everyone takes the time to effectively communicate, the relationship between the board, residents, vendors and the manager will strengthen and elevate the levels of mutual understanding and cooperation in successfully reaching the community's vision and goals. When a board properly communicates with their community manager, it will only make their job easier in leading and representing their community."

Erica Horndasch

Director of Business Development

Associa Chicagoland (<https://associaonline.com/locations/associa-chicagoland>)

"Communication as a board member happens daily in written form, verbally, and in person at board meetings. So, I'd say communication is an essential skill for community leaders to hone. Being able to effectively communicate what you want to see accomplished and what your goals are as a board member help to effectively guide progress and explain outcomes. Also, being

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able to communicate with residents, even when it might be something they don't want to hear, is important because as a board member your ability to clearly communicate and be transparent with the membership helps build trust.”

Marc Rodriguez, LCAM, CMCA, AMS

President

Association Services of Florida (<https://associaonline.com/locations/association-services-of-florida>)

5. Becoming Proactive

“It’s important to be informed rather than reactive, and assigning blame or fault to one particular party without having all necessary information available. Always take the time to gather all the facts pertaining to the situation to make an informed decision on how to best resolve the concern. ”

Jessica Bakken

Business Development

C-Era Property Management – An Associa® Company

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6. Understanding Their Duties

“One of the most essential concepts a board member should and must master immediately, is the concept that the journey they’ve just embarked upon is not just one of a ‘neighborly’ nature; it’s a true business that must be run effectively, efficiently, and within their scope of authority. As passionate volunteers, individuals with the heart to serve give of their time on community boards and often take on this role with a lack of understanding for exactly what is expected or, worse, allowed. A board manages the community. The board’s authority to act on behalf of the association is not, however, unlimited. The governing documents—and sometimes the law—grant the board the authority and **obligation** to act, and in some cases, they can restrict the board’s ability to act. In each case, it’s important to know your parameters as a board member. ”

Sandra Vela Mora, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®

Senior Vice President

Associa Hill Country (<https://associaonline.com/locations/associa-hill-country>)

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