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Lining up Leadership

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Many associations say they cannot find enough future leaders.

They offer numerous reasons for the shortage: Generations have changed and don't appreciate the opportunities. The governance image looks bureaucratic or appears to be "good old boys." Leadership is a trap lasting up to ten years. The mission or strategic plan is weak. The merits of volunteer work are ambiguous.

It takes a serious strategy and program to tap, train and increase the lineup of future leaders. For many volunteers the amount of training they receive to be a leader is a brief orientation.

To develop future leaders, design a long-term, quality initiative. Consider these phases.

- **Investment** – There is cost and return on investment (ROI) for training. Identify what percentage of the budget the association is willing to spend for developing future leaders. Asking a volunteer to invest a year of their time requires that the association provide an A+ experience. Registration fees and sponsorships, plus the resulting in-kind services of leaders, can offset program costs.
- **Curriculum** – The content and delivery are vital. What do future leaders want to learn and what are the leadership needs of the association? Who will develop and deliver the curriculum?
- **Enrollment** – Are there enough persons willing to enroll in leadership development opportunities? How will candidates be identified to consider a leadership path? Develop an advance schedule and policies for attendance.
- **Placement** – As persons complete the program you must find meaningful roles to benefit from their involvement. Will they have mentors to ensure they apply the knowledge? What special projects can the new leaders accept responsibility? Maintain a strategy to maximize the use of persons matriculating from the program. Many organizations develop an alumni program to sustain engagement.

Model Programs

Several associations come to my attention as models for leadership development.

Leadership Academy – FCEP

Created by the Florida College of Emergency Physicians in 2012, the Leadership Academy provides the orientation and skills development for those who aspire to become future leaders in the profession and association.

The program is year-long, requiring the commitment of one or more days per month, efficiently held concurrently with FCEP events. The estimated cost is \$4,000. Upon completion the participants advance to association leadership roles.

“One of FES’s responsibilities is to help our members become leaders in their profession, communities and for the association. This program ensures we have a population of trained leaders who have indicated their willingness and competence to serve, explains Chad Faison, FES’ Chief Operating Officer.

Leadership College – TMA

The Texas Medical Association Leadership College (TMALC) was established in 2010 to develop strong, sustainable physician leadership in Texas. After nine years, almost 200 TMALC alumni serve as thought leaders within organized medicine, closing the divide between clinicians and health care policymakers. As confident physician leaders, they are trusted voices in their profession and their communities.

The program is valued at approximately \$4,000. A major sponsor offsets the tuition, making the program free of charge. Curriculum includes communication styles, high performing teams, conflict management, advocacy, community outreach and media training.

“The TMALC ensures that we have competent physician leaders to stand up for our profession as well as serve on the boards and committees of county medical and specialty societies,” Louis J. Goodman, PhD, CAE, the executive vice president and CEO of the Texas Medical Association.

Guest Board Member – MDS

The Massachusetts Dental Society has two programs to develop future leaders.

The Guest Board Member program broadens the scope of the Board of Trustees to better reflect the demographics of the membership, and to provide a more diverse leadership. The program is offered annually to four qualified members (woman, non-Caucasian, new dentist, or new to MDS leadership).

The one-year initiative offers potential MDS or district leaders an opportunity to learn firsthand about the Board of Trustees and issues facing the Society and the profession. Guest Board Member positions are non-voting, but Guests may actively participate in most board functions and are encouraged to offer their input during discussions.

Guest Board Members are required to attend all board meetings and other MDS events. Guest Board Members are approved by an oversight Task Force.

Leadership Academy – MDS

The MDS Leadership Academy provides tools and insights needed to improve leadership effectiveness. It was designed for those wanting to think strategically about emerging issues, changing landscapes, new technologies and long-range planning.

The cost is \$750 per person plus travel costs. Upon completion graduates will become mentors to other leaders. Graduates are asked to identify three new leaders to participate in successive programs.

The Task Force ensures that graduates are placed in leadership roles. The task force participates in the curriculum delivery. The outcome is enhanced communication between experienced leaders, program participants and graduates.

Leadership Institute – FES

The Florida Engineering Society created the Florida Engineering Leadership Institute (FELI). The purpose is to transition engineering professionals into leaders within their professional societies, communities, and workplaces. This aligns with the Society's mission of professional engineers helping to shape society worldwide.

A ten-month program, FELI enhances skills and creates a pathway to put the skills into action in the profession. Approximately 40 participants enroll each year. The tuition is \$4,000 for members.

FELI also facilitates networking across current and past classes. The graduates become ideal candidates for board and committee positions.

In summary, successful associations have developed programs to identify and develop competent future leaders. The opposite of leadership development is the recycling of leaders because of a shortage of candidates, seating unqualified leaders, or telling volunteers, "you won't have to do anything when you get on the board of directors."

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and templates at www.nonprofitcenter.com.