

May 2017
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Volunteers Define Excellence

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Ask association board members to “define excellence” and the answers vary. Here are the thoughts of 40 volunteer leaders.

Efficiency – The ability to optimize resources to best serve members’ needs. Another director suggested *efficiency* means being brief in communications and meetings.

Continuous Improvement – Implementing processes for continuous improvement. “Making excellence a part of our association’s culture.”

Service – A level of service that members come to expect. Driving members to talk about the association because of the quality service they receive.

Adding Value - Excellence is the ability to add value to information and programs. Transforming general information into customized reports to save members time and effort.

Achievement – Reflecting on how the association’s work has had favorable impact. Some leaders described achievement as providing platforms for members to contribute to societal corporate responsibility, and “providing scholarships.”

Benchmarks – Surpassing benchmarks agreed upon by the board of directors.

Member Satisfaction – Getting high marks from members on surveys. Maintaining a high member retention rate.

Recognitions – Receiving awards and recognitions for the work of the association from organizations promoting performance excellence.

Accuracy – Making knowledge based decisions; not influenced by hearsay or group think.

Visionary – One director said, “It is the responsibility of the board to be thought leaders. Forward thinking should be reflected in our programs and services for members.”



Confidence – Knowing that the board is doing the right thing for members and protecting the organization. “Confident we are advancing our mission and goals.”

Structure – Maintaining a structure that best serve our members. Removing barriers and behaviors that don’t add value to the processes.

Results – Meetings end with meaningful outcomes that benefit members.

Strategy – Developing and relying on a strategic plan to guide the work of board, committees and staff.

Succession – Having a culture that promotes sustainability of qualified leaders and staff. Seamless transitions with new administrations.

People – Ensuring that staff and volunteers are respected and satisfied with their job descriptions, assignments and work environments.

Finances – Maintaining safeguards to be certain assets are protected and revenue streams are stable.

The discussion was facilitated by the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence in Amman, Jordan. It demonstrates that associations around the globe define excellence in similar terms.

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

