

Creating a Competency-Based Board

Many in the association management profession are asking, “Why aren’t all associations doing this”? Simply put, it's more difficult.

The conversation about board composition and structure has been shifting because of a high degree of frustration with current models ... even before we read the [Race for Relevance](#). Most nominating committees are tasked with generating a list of people who are representative of the membership. For many associations, it is difficult enough recruiting qualified candidates who are willing to serve, no less members with the essential skills and specialized knowledge to develop and guide initiatives that achieve organizational goals.

No one has time to waste. If you don’t have the right people on the bus (a nod to Jim Collins), much time will be spent spinning wheels. It is well-worth investing time in envisioning the team you need to create --- and not just filling available seats. Casting a more focused net may actually save time. Clarity of purpose and goals may actually make service more attractive to the best candidates who will be assured that their talent and time will be well-used. In the end, spending the time creating (and preparing – see [“Getting Your Board Off to a Good Start”](#)) a competency-based board will result in more productive use of time and a more effective board.

Old habits die hard. In most associations, including those managed by AMCs, the encouragement to transform the process must come from the ED. Volunteer leaders are experts in their professions and industries with primary responsibility for their own businesses. They have loyalties, personal agendas, and comfort zones. Association management professionals should take the lead in guiding their organizations to appreciate and strive for competency-based leadership. It may not be easy but it’s worth the effort.