



# insights

EMPOWERING LEADERS TO EXCEL

## The Importance of Changing Leaders in an Association

### The Leadership Challenge

*The effectiveness of a volunteer leader depends greatly on the core skills that the individual possesses, as well as the personality that he or she brings to an assignment. While a leader's behavior should be guided by the generally accepted principles of leadership, 'who' the leader is as an individual will also influence his or her effectiveness.*

Even the most highly skilled leaders will have one or two personality traits that are appealing to some volunteers while disturbing to others. A leader who tends to focus strictly on the business at hand will appeal to the volunteers who want to "get the job done" and get back to the office. However, this leadership trait may be less appealing to those volunteers who want to include some networking/socializing as part of their volunteer activities. For the members of this group, simply focusing on the work at hand may be interpreted as a bit cold and impersonal, and may cause them to withdraw from volunteering for assignments that involve this leader.

*Association executives and senior volunteer leaders must recognize the importance of rotating leaders through the leadership positions on a regular basis, and never allow one person to "own" a leadership slot.*

When a leader is recruited for a position, he or she should be told that the assignment is for a specific length of time, whether that is defined by the completion of the task(s) or a date certain. When a volunteer leader is doing a fabulous job, it is tempting to bend the rules and allow that person to continue serving in that position for an undefined period of time. Leaving a leader in a position for a long period of time can send the message to the membership of an association that leadership positions are filled by a select group of members. Long-term leadership assignments can also cause a committee to avoid searching for new ways to approach situations, because the leader will tend to apply the solutions that worked yesterday to tomorrow's problems. And, of course, the leader will develop those "special" relationships with certain members of the team that will limit the leader's ability to recognize and deal with problems when they arise.

*Leaders must understand the risks of overstaying their welcome, and must be continuously searching for and training the leaders who will guide their association in the future.*

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