

## **Building a Knowledge-based Culture** **Tecker, Eide, Frankel** **Concept Summary**

### **Overarching Themes**

- In order to succeed in the competition for member loyalty and to offer value in the age of the Internet,
  - Associations must become key navigators of information for their members
  - They must move from being providers of data and information to resources of knowledge.
- In a knowledge-based ('KB') organization:
  - **Who makes decisions will not be nearly as important as the quality of information on which decisions are made**
  - Knowledge-based governance considers what it does not know as carefully as it builds on what it does understand.
  - The culture promotes decision making based on purpose, policy and considered perspective, rather than on politics, power, personality, or perceptions of the moment.

### **A useful working definition of leadership is “influencing the behavior of others.”**

- The first obligation an association leader has, therefore, is to ensure that he or she has access to a continuous stream of info from members.

Members expect their leaders to be able to communicate, through language and behavior, three things:

1. A clear, common and positive **vision** of an achievable future
  - a. People will not follow someone who brings them bad news, even if the news is correct.
  - b. People do not want to feel bad about anything important to them.
2. **Appreciation** for their values, expectations, needs and anxieties.
3. **Optimism** that ability, good plans and hard work will lead to success.

**“The Grand Marshall Syndrome”** results from failure to access members’ opinions, which causes the leader to get too far ahead of the membership.

**“Leading from the middle”** is preferable; it enables leaders to look to the left and right to see whether key constituencies are falling behind, or surging ahead.

**Effectiveness** = “Am I doing the right thing?”

**Efficiency** = “Am I doing things right?”

- 70% or more agenda items should be directly related to issues of strategic direction or policy, NOT on administration.

### **Four criteria for sorting priorities**

1. **Impact** – a measure of strategic importance relevant to the relationships among things. The greater the number of other items related to an item, the higher its strategic importance and impact.
2. **Consequence** – a measure of strategic importance. The greater the significance of addressing, or not addressing the issue, the greater the consequence.
3. **Immediacy** – a measure of time, in two dimensions:
  - a. **Sequence**: the earlier the item appears in a required sequence, the higher its immediacy.
  - b. **Window of Opportunity**: the smaller the opening of the window, the higher the immediacy.
4. **Likelihood of Success** – Helps focus resources on the tasks that are most important to accomplish in a short time frame.

### **Effective Board Partnerships**

- Good boards spend their time using information, not collecting it.
- 90% of the Board's meeting time should NOT be taken up with reports; 80% of the time should be taken up with dialogue, deliberation and decision making.

### **Three Major Roles of Boards**

**Corporate:** Hire/manage Chief Staff Executive

**Legislative:**

Distribution of responsibility

Development of external policy

**Judgment:** Make, take or choose a position between competing, or conflicting entities within the association.

### **Consensus and the Leadership Partnership**

- Normal definition: Consensus occurs when no one in the group disagrees so strongly with what has been suggested that he or she will not go along with it for the time being.
- When there exists an understanding of what Boards and executives are to be doing together, it is evident that **both good and bad directly result from those common responsibilities**. This is referred to as a “**leadership partnership**.”
- When leadership in a knowledge-based association has ensured that a Board's deliberation is truly information-based, it can take satisfaction not in *making* the decision, but in *seeing that a good decision has been made*.

### **Board Members are People**

“Wantivation” – occurs when volunteer leaders determine that it is in their own self-interest to do the job and do it well – as defined by their own terms, not ours.

### **Why people volunteer:**

- ♦ To use knowledge, or skills
- ♦ To give their life purpose and significance
- ♦ To help
- ♦ To be recognized and acquire status
- ♦ To feel useful and needed
- ♦ To develop their skills
- ♦ To participate in enjoyable activities ('social joiners')
- ♦ To gain competencies and visibility
- ♦ To reduce loneliness and boredom

### **Three Leadership Profiles of Typical Board Members**

1. Achievement Board member: wants feedback, challenging work
2. Power-motivated Board member: wants influence, prestige, authority
3. Affiliation-motivated Board member: needs to interact and feel liked

### **Three Leadership Styles**

1. The Leader Style
  - Want large, broad, long-term assignments
  - Want to have an impact, influence over something important
2. The Manager Style
  - Wants large-scope effort, on shorter-term basis
  - Want to be in charge of tasks of short duration
3. The Task Style
  - Want small scope, short-term tasks
  - They want to do more than managing; want to do the task themselves

### **Sustaining a Successful Program Portfolio**

Three Causes of Program Decline:

1. Program was created in the past to meet a need that no longer exists
2. Program was created in the past to meet a need that still exists, but there is now a far better way to meet that need – and someone else is, or could meet it that better way
3. Program was created in the past to meet a need that still exists and is being met the best way, but the proportion of membership who views the need as a high priority has significantly declined

The life span of association programs is decreasing as members' worlds change and associations respond.

### **Benefits vs. Features**

Features do not attract people to membership; benefits do.

**Benefits** = the impact a feature has on the member after experiencing it (*e.g.* education, insurance that is unavailable elsewhere, *etc.*)

**Enlightened, Common Self-interest:** Looking beyond the limited interest of the moment into the longer-term opportunity, or consequence to the membership served.

### **Trend: Greater Diversity and Specialization**

- ♦ Your members are, most likely, becoming less and less like each other
- ♦ The world is changing more rapidly than ever before
- ♦ Membership is becoming increasingly diversified
- ♦ The target (consensus) is hard to hold onto because the context changes frequently
- ♦ Your association does not operate in a vacuum; it operates in a context
- ♦ That context is characterized by rapid, less predictable, more significant change

### **Driving Change**

Members see change as either constructive or destructive.

Whose job is it to decide whether change is in the best interests of the members? The association leader!

- A value-laden judgment is what you are most likely to be remembered and held accountable for.
- Your objective, as leader, is to **create knowledge that overcomes the unknown** and increases the resistor's comfort in what things will be like.
  - Whether the change will be good, or bad is a totally different issue
  - Your job is to create a tangible vision of how things will be
- There is no single, comprehensive strategy for navigating through serious resistance.

### **Four Key Tools for Promoting Constructive Change & Battling Fear of Unknown**

1. Foresight about the industry, or professional future
2. Sensitivity to members' views of the world helps you select the language and examples that will be meaningful to them
3. Insight into the capacity and strategic position of the association
4. Consideration of the ethical implications

### **Change: The Only Certainty**

Five Key Trends Reshaping Associations

1. The nature of change itself: faster, less predictable, more complex
2. Increased demand for outcome accountability: show results!
3. Volunteers looking for minimum time involvement, maximum influence and major benefit
4. Technology's promise, possibilities, expectations, realities
5. Greater degree of generational and multi-cultural diversity everywhere