

A WORD FROM NCWC PUBLIC RELATIONS

Why do Organizations Flourish or Flounder?

Recently at a luncheon, a treasured friend and member of several boards spoke to me about her concerns regarding associations. The main question was why some organizations stagnate and others flourish.

Over the years, as the head (Chair, President, Facilitator) of a number of local, national and international organizations, I have been fortunate to see many grow and flourish. However, I have also seen other organizations stagnate and flounder.

At a time when many organizations complain of dwindling numbers and seek to increase their membership with campaigns to solicit new members, it appears that some have forgotten [the importance of the basic requirements of an organization to exist and grow](#).

Organizations are like living organisms. They must be nourished and cared for with a lot of hard work, coupled with creative ideas. Fundamental to a flourishing organization are good communications, transparency, compassion and understanding for its members.

[Concern for every member, in personal contacts and email communications, is imperative.](#)

Emails today are a major communication tool that can positively or negatively impact relationships among members. Answered in a polite and timely manner engenders appreciation by the members. In cases where an answer will take time, a quick note to acknowledge receipt of the email is courteous and respectful. For example, *"I received your email and will be in touch when I have an answer."* It is an insult to a member, and a sure way of losing a member, not to respond to an email.

One often finds that foundering, stagnating organizations have boards that forget they exist to serve their members and not their personal agendas. [Member satisfaction drives strong organizations](#).

Furthermore, boards have [By-Laws that must be followed](#) and are there for a reason. *"Bylaws basically establish a contract between members and define their rights, duties, and mutual obligations."* They prevent one individual or small group from controlling an organization for their own purposes and benefit. ByLaws must never be surpassed by hastily devised changes that often are put in place to serve individual whims. Changes in ByLaws must be approved by all the members and other governing authorities.

Meaningful programs and regular yearly events that members anticipate are appreciated. One such event held by the Montreal Council of Women in past years was the Federates' Tea where members could connect and network. Federates would bring their contact information.

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These teas always sold out. They were so enjoyable because they brought in many new friends who would consider joining.

Satisfied members stay loyal to the organization and retain their membership. Happy members also bring in new members. Word of mouth is a proven way that organizations grow and flourish. It is also a much easier and less costly way of growing membership. All organizations should spend more time focusing on what is not working well among their membership and what to do to increase member satisfaction.

My friend's parting remark was "Sandra, you know meetings should also have a fun factor."

"True," I said.

***Sandra Cohen Rose, Vice President, Public Relations, NCWC
Past President, MCW (2006-2008, 2011-2013)***