



ADVOCACY ADVOCATE

If advocacy and government relations are imperatives for your association, then it's also part of your job. Four simple tactics to keep in mind:

1

Give your GR team the resources it needs.

If your association thinks that advocacy is important enough to include on the agenda, the board needs to provide resources to do the job right. That may mean dollars for staff, consultants, technology, PR, and other tools.

2

Know your own story. Legislators and their staffs want to know about your business in their state or district, the people you employ and serve there, and how and why the advocacy issue at hand matters back home. Show up as an earnest constituent and you will get a warm reception.

3

Learn your pitch. Your GR team should give you a few talking points on the advocacy issues of greatest importance. The message should be straightforward and easy to remember, it should dovetail nicely with your own story, and it should include a specific request, such as asking the lawmaker to cosponsor a bill you support.

4

Follow the rules. Federal and state laws govern lobbying and political giving. Take them seriously. Every board member should understand the basics of lobbying disclosure and related requirements issued by federal, state, and local governments.

—CHERYLYN T. CEPRIANO, JD, CAE
VP, PUBLIC POLICY, PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION

SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION

Planning for your replacement may feel a bit odd. Yet every board member has a responsibility to identify potential future leaders. A plan to get started:

1

Assess the current board. The process should examine both performance of the board (its knowledge and effectiveness) and the leadership capacity and performance of individual board members. Where there are gaps or weaknesses, the board should seek people to fill those needs.

2

Conduct exit interviews. If you are not conducting exit interviews with departing board members, now is the time to start. Some members may feel more open when they are leaving and more willing to comment about board operations and the competencies it needs in future members.

3

Identify competencies and candidates. Competencies that associations seek may include demonstrated leadership skills, capacity for forward thinking, and team orientation. Also consider reaching out to those who hold diverse perspectives. Their viewpoints will enrich the board's discussion and deliberation.

—DONNA FRENCH DUNN, CAE
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