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## **Taking the Pulse of Leaders, Influencers and Staff**

Bob Harris, CAE

Environmental factors are encouraging organizations to regroup and consider what the future holds. Many are making positive, long-lasting changes during this time of recovery.

Two distinct groups working as a team to lead an association. Volunteer leaders govern while the professional staff manage.

During the springtime, associations were responding to member urgencies. Soon after, organizations propped up their operations, ensuring sustainability and relevance. Now they are asking influencers, leadership, and staff what the future holds.

### **Visioning**

Ryan T. Conrad, CAE, CEO at the Northern Virginia Association of REALTORS® created a visioning session for the NVAR staff.

“We wanted to take a moment to step back and think about what we’ve learned as a team during the pandemic and our ability to serve members in a completely remote environment. Talking openly about lessons learned is helping us shape what the future of our association will look like when we get back to so-called ‘normal’.”

Whether visioning or polling, the focus should be how a membership organization will stay relevant and increase value. This is an opportunity to be an indispensable partner to members during uncertain times.

Reach out to the leadership, loyal members, big contributors, visionaries, and past leaders.

### **Questions of the Leadership**

Find a time and method to poll the leadership and organization influencers. What has changed for them and their relationship with the organization? Their candid input should be invaluable to decision making.

- Has the pandemic changed how you want to engage with our organization? How long do you expect these changes will last?

- How do you want to receive communications? Frequency, digital, printed publications, technology, etc.
- Has the pandemic changed your own organization's culture and relationship with membership organizations?
- How would you describe our responsiveness to members and community since the start of the pandemic? Are we on the right track?
- Have your education and learning needs changed; how should we adjust delivery?
- How can we deliver even more value to the membership and your own organization?

### **Questions of the Staff Team**

The staff should be polled, too. Ask them to share in creating a vision.

Beware of staff focusing on things like working from home more often and flexible work schedules – leaders should keep them focused on the membership and how the association will meet member needs in new and innovative ways post COVID-19.

- What does a world-class member-focused and engagement experience look like post COVID-19?
- How is our staff team delivering simpler, quicker, and customized access to resources members need, based on the ('new') way members do business?
- What have we learned about what (and how) members need most from their Association?
- What are members doing differently in the field and for their business?
- What have we done for members differently that has been successful, or not successful?
- What is the staff vision for the future in 2020 and beyond?

Use the input to create a shared vision for the future. Organizational buy-in and support of what the association looks like post COVID-19 will be critical to ensure long-term success.

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and template at [www.nonprofitcenter.com](http://www.nonprofitcenter.com).