

Replacing Association Chapter Board Members In The Middle Of A Term



You just learned one of your board members is stepping down – well before the end of their term. Maybe they're moving across the country, leaving to take care of a family member or leaving your industry. Whatever the reason, you know you have to find the right replacement, and you need to find the person quickly.



Once your breathing comes back to normal, it's time to pull out your board member replacement plan.

What? You don't have a plan? If you don't, you're not alone. Most chapters aren't expecting to lose a board member mid-term, And with everything else they need to do, putting together a plan for that situation isn't a priority. But it should be - having a plan to replace chapter board members outside of the normal cycle is important for the success of your board and your chapter.

This plan can keep you from spending more time than you need figuring out how to replace a person you weren't expecting to lose. Instead, you can spend your time focusing on finding the right person, getting that person up to speed and keeping your chapter focused on its mission. Maybe you'll need a certain group of people to interview potential board replacements or maybe you have a certain place

you'll look for candidates. A mid-term board member replacement plan should include both activities that are specific to your chapter and more general activities every chapter will need to do.

3 things that should be in every mid-term board member replacement plan

Support for a mid-term replacement in your by laws. When was the last time you reviewed your bylaws? To avoid having to wait till your next regular election to replace a board member, approval for replacing a board member mid-term needs to be in your bylaws.

Will you hold a special election, or will you hold a board member vote? Often, chapter bylaws are written to include term lengths, but they don't address what happens if a person steps down in the middle of their term. Include how you'll find a suitable replacement, nominate them, and vote them onto the board. And don't forget to include whether the replacement will finish out the term of the departing board director, or if they will serve a full term.

An understanding of who you need in a replacement. When you learn you need to replace a board member, it'll be too late to first figure out what you need to look for in a replacement. This is where job descriptions are very helpful.

Create a job description for each role on your board and include experience, skills, responsibilities, time commitment, reporting relationships, and even the personality traits that are necessary for the role. Having this information documented will make it easier for you to find the right replacement and easier for those considering volunteering for the position, because everyone will understand exactly what is involved in the role.

Clarity on where to look for a replacement. Succession planning can be very helpful for the success of an association chapter board. Maybe you have a member who would make a great treasurer or secretary. Get potential successors interested and up to speed on how your board, and board roles, work, before you need them. No succession plan? To get people interested in joining, share what your board members do. Share stories of existing board members on your website, in your communications and in your meetings. What does their board member job include? What do they enjoy about their role?



It'll also be important to think ahead of time about where you'll look for replacements for the different roles – since the responsibilities are different, the people won't all come from the same place. Need a new treasurer? Check out your finance committee. Look for a new VP of Membership in your membership committee, etc. And don't forget to ask other chapters where they found their board members. And finally, don't be afraid to look outside your organization, in adjacent industries and partner companies. And even on LinkedIn. The person you find may not already be a member.

Replacing a board member mid-term doesn't have to be a super stressful activity. And it won't be, as long as you have a plan in place ahead of time, to help make that experience as seamless as possible.

