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Execs Voice Pandemic Concerns
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In varied forums association executives are sharing concerns about the pandemic. Topics range from missing their offices to cancellation of conferences essential to their revenue.

Here are some of the discussions:

**Virus Fatigue** – “How much is too much information?” Members are being bombarded with information, sorting fact from fiction. Avoid regurgitating what is readily accessible. Summary important information. Set a frequency for posting.

**Trusted Resource** – “We need to position our association as the indispensable resource for members.” Members should be able to rely on their organization. If they visit the website, see a promotion inviting them to next week’s conference, and notice of support and service for recovery, they will lose interest.

**Governing Documents** – “We missed our annual meeting.” The articles of incorporation and bylaws may prescribe specifics such as date of the annual meeting, frequency of board meetings and rules of order. Relax governing documents so long as laws are not broken.

**Empower** – Most bylaws empower the executive committee and executive director to make decisions when the board cannot be convened. Use the authority for timely decision making.

**Cancellations** – “Do we cancel the meeting?” Not an easy question with so many unknowns and technicalities. Review contracts, options and insurance. Repurpose what can be saved, for example speakers agreeing to do webinars and articles.

**Strike Forces** – Reorganize committees with motivated volunteers to work on solutions. Appoint high impact quick action teams, strike forces and task forces. Now is not the time for routine standing committee meetings.

**Board Service** – “Do we still have volunteers able to serve?” Inventory the directors to determine their commitment. Some are fighting for survival of jobs or companies, unable to fulfill board service. Offer them support. Some directors may be willing to extend their terms.
Official Messenger – “Who controls the messaging?” There will be calls to the association from media, government officials and others. Be the most credible resource for your community or sector. Appoint an official spokesperson, crafting clear messages.

Be Proactive – The largest companies quickly created commercials about what they are doing to stay strong and serve customers. Associations should empathize, and without having to be asked, address hardships with waivers, grants, dues extensions and added value.

Strategic Plans – “What about our strategic plan?” Put it on pause to address immediate priorities. Expect a new emphasis on “Pandemic and Economic Recovery,” identifying how the association will support member recovery.

Stay Focused – Written plans should be created to address immediate needs of association and member survival. Adopt a short-term mission such as, “Sustaining our organization while delivering value to members.” Assign people and deadlines.

Efficient Meeting – “My board is uncomfortable with virtual meetings.” For on-line meetings, scrap the irrelevant reports. Keep the agenda focused on urgent actions. Provide tutoring or a guide for using meeting technology. Moderating the meeting (mute button), is critical.

Stay Positive – “I am exhausted.” Pace yourself. Associations have proven to be resilient through wars, economic depressions, and even pandemics. Recognize achievements of volunteers and staff along the way.

Around the world I hear executives express similar concerns. Thankfully associations are a tight community. Their mastery of leadership, strategy, technology, communications, advocacy and member service position them to survive and thrive.

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and templates at www.nonprofitcenter.com.