

**Leadership Day #3**  
**Building an Effective Board**  
Tuesday, January 19th, 2:00-4:00 PM (EST)  
Participants: 81

**Dianne Crilley** welcomed the group and notified the group that the meeting is being recorded and told the group to use the chat function. Events are being sponsored by Craig Kelman & Associates. Dianne also updated the group about upcoming WEFMAX 2021.

**Jamie Eichenberger** WEF President-Elect: Jamie spoke to the group in a welcome address. "We're going to have a great year and hope we can return to normal before the year is out. I would like to say thank you to all those who have registered for this series; [How to Build an Effective Board](#). He stated, "Just practice and implement what you learn today and apply it to your future board meetings. Have a clear vision and work toward a common goal tend to be effective, energizing and provide for unending learning opportunities." WEF, looking back at 2020, has emerged stronger due to the Board. We built trust and have diverse viewpoints so we can consider all angles to any problems. This provides us a clear vision to our strategic decision-making which supports our strategic plan. We have at WEF:

- A *north star* to guide us
- Understand our role as leaders
- Having a clear vision
- From a cross section of our membership, we Created & ensured diversity
- Invest in building trust with other Board Members

**Opening Poll** (Dianne Crilley)

1. Does your MA offer Board Retreats? About 50-50
2. Does your MA provide non-profit training? Yes 40%, No 60%
3. Is your Board rep. by a x section of your membership? Yes 78%, No 22%
4. What is your Board Size: less than 8: 17%, 12 or less: 45%, 18 or less: 34%
5. One word which describes spirit of your Board: Smart, passionate, supportive, diverse, scattered, traditional, engaged, well-rounded, cohesive & dedicated

## PRESENTATIONS

**Fred Smith (Ohio WEA)**

Creating a Board that reflects your Membership. We track 7 sections: Geographic, Membership Type, Professional Type, Employment Type, Gender, Generation & Racial/Ethnic

- Ohio Board is a 12-member Board with President on the top of the Board
- **Location:** Each of our Board is from a different section
- Each year the 8 Board members are adjusted and moved "up"
- WEF have 3 WEF delegates elected to 3-year terms
- Ohio has 4 WEA Delegates (1 from each section)
- NE section is the largest with 33% of membership
- **Membership:** We look at the WEF membership type (Professional & Operator)
- We are trying to get YP's on the Board but due to timing requirements, they are no longer YP's
- Most Board Members are Operators (Professional Type)
- Employment Type: Private=5, Public=7

- Gender: Male=7, Female=5
- Generation: Gen-X (1965-1980) & Baby Boomers (1946-1964), 3 Millennials (1981-1997)
- Generations are important due to how they communicate/culture characteristics
- Have a balance of who to communicate with the younger members and not alienate older members
- EC makeup can drive Board culture
- We are starting to work on racial/ethnic diversity

### **Catrice Jones (North Carolina AWWA/WEA)**

- How we do our Board Training (Pre-Post COVID-19)

#### *Pre COVID-19*

- Traditionally we have an orientation (onboarding)
- Training/resource manual and video is provided to the new Board
- Board Vice Chair is provided a transition outline
- Board Chair-Elect has meetings with ED, provided transition outline & participate in CEO Symposium (beginning of term)
- Board Chair has weekly meetings with Executive Director (ED)

#### *Post COVID-19*

- Entire Board: provided training videos, has meetings with ED (video), resource manual and has facilitated training
- Board Vice Chair: Transition Outline
- Board Chair Elect: Transition Outline, Monthly transition planning meeting with ED, participate in weekly check-in with Chair and ED
- Board Chair: Participate in weekly meetings with ED
- Route to Facilitated Training: Bang for our Buck & Need for Broader Board Knowledge (Dianne mentioned this was very important).
- Most training is typically delivered in Training but due to COVID-19, it is delivered virtually. (Upside: Videos can be used as a future resource in non-COVID-19 times.)
- Facilitated Training Overview contains 5 Parts: Understanding the Organization, Leading Together, Governing the Organization, Board Leadership & Critical Issues for Today's Leaders.
- Board Feedback was positive. Our external facilitator was very good (created a neutral and unbiased facilitation and new perspectives to the group). The group entered various breakout rooms and there was a lot of information over a short amount of time. Information was very valuable and for some Board membership it was their first time and for seasoned Board Members, some information changed their perspectives.

### **Valerie Lucas (Clean Water Professionals of KY & TN)**

#### Board Retreats-A Connection Point

- What does it mean to connect on a personal/professional manner with other board members? Our retreat takes place over 2 days. We used this time to *set a course* for the year to come.
- We created a vision, mission & a strategic plan for our MA. We hired a consultant. Very hard but well worth it. So much work, we had to have a follow up meeting.
- We created a strategic plan in 2014. We wrap our retreats around this, and we revisit and recommit to it. It is our "north star".
- Retreat Focus: It is a *blank space* for creativity to share our ideas and our lives and to share why we are together. The retreat gives the Board permission to reconnect & make memories, slow down and breath.

- We are more than our roles in the MA. As Jamie stated, “We are building trust.”
- Retreat Success Points: Highlights people & Place, Creating Space & Expanding our comfort Zones (We raced cars in Bowling Green, KY)
- Host City Chattanooga with President Shannon Lambert
- The Upside of Downtime: Keenland Racetrack, KY. This was “Joe’s” retreat
- Recap: Primary point is to connect with people to make difficult decisions easier, creating space and identify common focus (takes us back to our strategic plan)

## **Q&A from Presentations**

### **Marc Rosso:**

**Q:** Does Ohio elect Board members via all the membership or select and have the membership approve?

**A:** It varies, Sec/Tres is elected by the general membership at the business meeting held at the annual conference meeting; each section elects their person who will go forward to the state board; WEF Delegates are elected by the Board...generally comes from past presidents but not always

### **Marc Rosso:**

**Q:** Does Ohio have paid staff?

**A:** Yes, three to include Dawn Larsen

### **Tom Galeziewski:**

**Q:** Are the Operators on the Ohio Board front line staff or more superintendent/supervisor or utility manager level?

**A:** Generally, at the state level, we get supervisory level and up; we do have more front-line operators who serve through our sections

### **Janet Cann:**

**Q:** Who manages the diversity matrix, does Ohio have a nominating committee? In other words, how are you board members put into office?

**A:** We have a nominating committee but it is more of a figure head as it mainly looks at the WEF Delegates as the sections take care of the who moves up to the state board

### **Samantha Weidenbenner:**

**Q:** What was the non-profit organization name? Association of ...?

**A:** American Society of Association Executives <https://www.asaecenter.org/>

**Comments:** Lisa Ruane - Another good source for nonprofit boards, <https://boardsource.org/>

**Comments:** Jenn Jones: yes! highly recommend ASAE's CEO Symposium - we (usually, in non-COVID times) attend with our President and Pres-Elect each year, so each Chief-Elected Officer has access to the training twice.

### **Lou Storino and Doug Pike:**

**Q:** Who covers the cost of the retreat?

**A:** Board made a decision to cover the cost for the retreat for one night hotel stay and food/event at the retreat

### **Shira Colsky:**

**Q:** How many days are the retreats? weekend or during work week?

**A:** During the week so 1.5 days

## **BREAKOUT**

Provided 20-minute breakout time to discuss “Creating a Positive Board Culture & Ways to maintain the culture”. Attendees broke out into 14 rooms of 5 – 6 people in each room. Report-Outs to be provided via Chat or email Dianne (dcrilley@wef.org)

## **REPORT OUTS**

The following information from the breakout room discussion have been compiled and shared below.

### **1. Barbara Scapardine**

- Both Pennsylvania and Illinois spoke about their strategic planning retreat that also served as some time away.
- Both Pennsylvania and Illinois spoke to diversifying the board which helps in keeping a positive board culture.
- Both agreed that hanging around for beers after an event helps with board cohesion and fosters a positive board culture.
- Both agree COVID provided opportunities for webinars and meeting sometimes previously unattainable due to distance or cost.
- Both agreed more diversification is needed. Illinois is working on a program called INFLOW to attract young professionals.
- Illinois has a young professional in line to become President of the IWEA.
- Pennsylvania has 3 different sections that come together to elect board members from across the state.
- Illinois membership is largely from the Chicagoland area.
- includes the public and private sector.  
In both states membership includes the public and private sector
- Neither state at this time has investigated analyzing the mix as talked about today

### **2. Casey Gish**

A positive board culture:

- acknowledges tradition, builds on the organization’s history, and embraces the future.
- nurtures a culture where members are free to share ideas.
- considers board decisions as made by the group not by individuals.
- welcomes and embraces hard discussions.
- optimizes group decisions by embraces the diversity of the board members.
- uses the organization’s strategic plan to maintain focus, retain cohesiveness, and provide clarity of board responsibilities.
- uses a social event to nurture a strong team mentality.
- remains nimble by creating a diverse board (young professionals, generational diversity, etc.)
- reflects on what perspectives are missing from the board and uses this information to inform future board member selections.

### **3. Raj Bhatara**

- Respect each other
- Be open-minded
- Have clear Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals
- Be united and share common goals to build consensus when possible
- When there are differences, encourage healthy and respectful discussion and listen to all points of views
- Agree on decision making process
- Define the rules of the game and play by the rules
- Define roles of each board member
- Have retreat and training of board members as needed
- Agree on decision making process
- Create overlap between new board members and seasoned board members so there is no rapid turnover and loss of institutional knowledge
- Communication plan among board members, good platform to connect with each other
- Agree to have effective meetings – prepare an agenda, start and stop in time
- Documentation procedures and actions taken and a brief description of why an action was taken
- Commitment to be effective – follow through on tasks and come prepared to meetings
- Mentoring of new board members

#### **4. Zonetta English**

- Everyone feels like they are included and have a voice. Provide honest communication and feedback.
- Trust Have opportunities to build Trust.
- 3 Importance of understanding every role, clarity of roles and everyone has an overall picture of the mission, goals, and objectives.
- creating value for the membership even if there are different backgrounds 5) Retreats are critical, provide a sense of flow, provide an excellent opportunity for early on-boarding.

#### **5. Laura Oakes**

Mutual respect for Board Members, try to diffuse antagonistic.

- Respect different experiences
- Finding people with emotional intelligence
- PowerPoint presentation about how to treat each other; business ethics – Ohio
- Rules of conduct at meetings to reiterate about being civilized
- Opportunities for members to get to know each other personally to build relationships
- Growth mind set; do not need all answers; cultural approach
- Come up with ways to add diversity; different portions of the industry; cover all needs of membership; avoid group think

#### **6. Pete Cavagnaro**

Achieving a Good Culture

- Relations
- Respect
- Common Vision

- Understanding Leadership & Role on the team
- Leadership takes input from everyone and makes best decision / guidance.

#### Dangers

- Avoid “going through the motions”.
- Make it enjoyable.
- Everyone realize that their voice will not always be heard.

#### Best Practices

- Have an agenda – keep the meeting flowing, stay on task, be respectful of people’s time.
- Respect all members – everyone is a volunteer.
- Organization/Commitment (e.g., Ohio)
- Communication in states with large geographic areas, and/or large populations
- Delegation
- Celebrating Success
- Accomplish Something

#### **7. Kylee Daily**

A positive board contains a diverse group of individuals, inclusive of race, gender, age, type of employment. A positive board is respectful, provides the ability for everyone to have a voice, as well as being open-minded, and understanding everyone has a role to play. We also discussed how an open line of communication is crucial to the success of a board and how 2020 did impact the ability for the board to bond, which is a crucial aspect in ensuring the board is comfortable with one another to create an open and safe place to have positive and impactful conversations to benefit the organization.

#### **8. Brad Lovett**

We discussed the value of spontaneous interaction to build trust among board members; being intentional about building leaders, not just collecting individuals who are eager for some spotlight time; dealing with staying CONNECTED during COVID remote times; leaning into intentional diversity for the sake of dynamic leadership. Small groups can be the enemy of dynamic thinking and diversity!

#### **9. Rika Lashley**

Three of us listened to the fourth attendee describe their board culture, which was vibrant and productive. Two of us lamented that we were missing the passion among our board members and really found our boards just going through the motions.

#### **10. Dawn Larsen**

We discussed the push and pull of the old order vs. the new, along with the challenges to bring in new blood.

#### **11. Lisa Ruane**

We talked about being open and supportive of new ideas as good for culture.

#### **12. Mike Welke/Catrice Jones**

However talked about benefits of a diverse board (via location). Talked about how the diversity would spark heated conversation but once the board voted the whole board stood by that vote. also talked

about the passion of board members and how that keeps the board focus in the organization. Liked the training of board members as they start on the board.

Positive Board Culture includes

- Trust & Respect for each other
- Commitment
- Respect for decisions that are made by group.
- Ownership of ideas and willing to do the work
- Diversity (location, job function, race/ethnicity...)

How to create & maintain

- Mentorships to train younger members
- Reach out to recruit to increase/maintain diversity in leadership
- Open conversation
- Willingness to tackle tough issues

**13. Jamie Eichenberger:** Positive Board Culture:

- Trust
- Confidence that your voice will be heard
- However, beware of cliques forming with long-time volunteers
- Regular turnover to bring in new voices and viewpoints
- Diversity – Hear viewpoints for a cross section of your membership
- Be intentional about meeting these goals. Good for the board and for membership to demonstrate the process
- Have a “North Star” with a clear mission/vision and strategic plan
- “Soft” events to get to know each other and build trust
- Personal connections with board members and leadership
- An outside coordinator can help shape culture and take some of the emotion out of contentious discussions
- Make space for people to speak up. Call them out if they have not been participating
- Hold each other accountable to agree upon “code of conduct”

## **WEFMAX 2021**

**Mike Milius, WEF HOD WEFMAX Committee Chair**

WEFMAX (Introduction comments)

- WEFMAX will be virtual. Trying to work with our group to provide for an exciting 2-2.5-hour virtual event. The hosts have some great things planned.
- Trying to get some timely/useful topics valuable to MAs
- Also like to thank the WEFMAX committee who pulled this together.

**WEA of Utah** – Clint Rogers

- April 8, 2021

- We have missed holding in-person events and so we have experienced either no revenue or reduced revenue this past year. Luckily, we have a *Rainy-Day Fund*.
- Host Topic by Utah
  - *Rainy-Day 101*
  - What we learned and how it saved us to continue our operations because of that Fund.
- WEFMAX Topics
  - Making the most of your virtual conference
  - Operator Training are the 2 topics of our WEFMAX. Operators are 60% of our membership.

**Pennsylvania WEA** - Jim Degnan, Doug Pike & Mike Sedon

- April 22, 2021 followed by a social event, YP event and an Operator event.
- Host Topic by Pennsylvania
  - How we turn out WEF Grant into a successful program
- WEFMAX Topics
  - MA Engagement with Academic Institutions
  - Recruiting and Maintaining Members
- An operator virtual training on 23 April with assistance from Steve Harrison (WEF)
- WEFMAX YP Summit will be hosted jointly with PWEA, PNCWA and ACWWA on April 21
- We will have a social Bingo social & swag bags for first 100 people.

**Pacific Northwest CWA** - Casey Gish

- May 6, 2021
- Host Topic
  - Summit Series
    - 6-part summit series (networking, CEU's & new topics: How we hosted the summit series, reach for speakers and resources outside the NW to expand our horizon for our members We have meetings on communication, women of water, stormwater, etc.
    - How we turned this into a revenue generating opportunity
- WEFMAX Topics
  - Operator Training Initiatives
  - Recruiting and Maintaining Members

**Atlantic Canada WWA** – Dave Galbraith

- May 27, 2021
- Host Topic
  - Diversity in Atlantic Canada
  - Share how we developed a survey giving us a snapshot of wastewater from Atlantic Canada.
- WEFMAX Topics
  - Making the Most of Your Virtual Conference
  - MA Engagement with Academic Institutions
- We will have lobster too.
- We are still in the planning phase but looking at having a special guest speaker



### **Closing Remarks by Jamie Eichenberger**

Happy to participate in the Leadership Series. WEF understands we are nothing without our member associations. All of you are on the front line to growing our membership and continuing to serve them. It is a never-ending battle to continue to improve...we never get to say something is done, we always add something new. The down to WEFMAX is we come away with 3 to 4 new things to implement from attending these events. Always looking to improve. Making sure we have an effective board is critically important.

From the presentations, a few things that stood out were:

**Fred (Ohio)** – You hit on one thing...the **intentionality**. Taking a look at growing diversity but the need to focus on it, measure it and be able to take some clear and intentional steps to keep driving that progress.

**Catrice (North Carolina)**– The need for **continuous training**. Really liked your weekly updates and the fact you go through your ASAE training with your current and incoming chairs. Continue to reinforce fundamentals by revisiting on a regular basis

**Valerie (Clean Water Professionals of KT)** your **emphasis on planning a Board retreat** and the need to have that North Star so you can all come together to work for that common goal.

Next Leadership Series is scheduled for March 23, 2021 led by WEF Staff, Lisa Ruan.

Thank you to our Sponsor Craig Kelman & Associates

