

Trust

Trust takes a long time to establish and an even longer time to re-establish once broken. Managers and board members need to have faith that both parties are working towards the same goal and can trust each other.

Managers need to let the board know when mistakes have been made and not express non-factual opinions. Let the board know when you do not know the answer, but advise you will do your best to get the answer to them in a timely manner. People appreciate honesty and would rather wait for the truth than to have it formulated.

Be honest with your manager; if you have trepidation about hiring a contractor because of past experience, let them know so we can talk it out. The manager may be unaware there were past issues. Let the manager know of these previous negative experiences before a tender is sent out, no sense wasting everyone's time, this includes the manager, board and contractor if they have no chance of being successful. As a board member you have a duty to declare conflicts of interest and remove yourself from voting on these particular subjects.



Know Your Documents, Be Up-To-Date On Industry News, Educate Yourself

Although the *Condominium Act* applies to all condominiums registered in this province, each and every condominium has a different declaration, bylaws, rules and policies. As a manager take the time to read, review and understand them. If you don't know the answers, investigate the documents in order to respond properly. In all cases cite the rule, bylaw or excerpt of the Declaration in response to the board. Board members should also have strong familiarity with the documents.

Managers should be up-to-date on industry regulations or any new code requirements. Board members should take as many director courses as possible. These are usually paid for by the corporation. Read your ACMO and CCI Magazines for stories on industry challenges and success stories.

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Establish Roles Within The Board

Any board that functions at a very high level has the proper personnel in their respective roles. If you have a retired accountant on the board involve them in the review of the monthly financials. If people have a green thumb involve them in gardening committees, interest in social functions have them involved in the social aspect of the corporation. Use people to better the community you live in.

Establish a liaison on the board. The manager cannot take direction from three, five, seven or even nine board members. The direction from a quorum of the board should be delivered by one person.

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Foster A Good Working Relationship With The Board

No one says the board and property manager need to be best friends and vacation together. However, it is important that a friendly atmosphere is maintained. Take an interest in their activities, their lives. A close – but not too close – relationship will benefit the corporation.

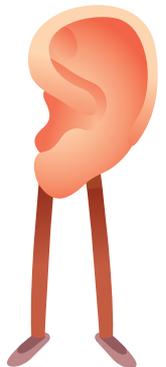
On the same note, ensure a friendly relationship does not get in the way of the business relationship. The board is the boss and has a responsibility to the owners to ensure management, like other contracted employees, is doing their job as per the contractual obligations.

Listen With Your Ears

Many times managers receive instruction from the board and immediately formulate what their next thought will be. Take the time to digest instructions and write them down, document the instruction in the minutes of the meeting so it becomes a written account of what the Board requested. This reduces the possibility of error and misinterpretation. Don't be afraid to slow down the pace of a meeting to repeat instruction so that everyone is clear on what needs to be done.

Properly document board direction in the minutes, and repeat the direction to the board at the meeting so everyone can agree that what they voted in favour of is in fact what they agreed upon.

Listen to your manager; although the situation you are facing may be new to you, there is a good chance the property manager or someone they work with has encountered the situation in the past and learned from the experience. How we communicate with people has an effect on how the message is received. Speak in respectful tones; be careful how your message is being received.



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Be Prepared

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Show up for the meeting knowing what questions the board may ask and have the answers ready. Managers should review financial reports as a board member would, and investigate variances that require explanation. Have your quotes ready well in advance of your meeting to allow the board time to review and ask questions. It is not fair to expect the board to make a decision on a large project when they are handed the quotes at the meeting. If you need more time, delay your meeting. It is more important the board be given enough time to properly arrive at a decision. Ask board members to review past minutes to get an accurate history of the corporation.

T – Together, E – Everyone, A – Achieves, M – More

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Always include the board in the process. Let them know when you will be meeting with trades or when you expect to receive tenders from contractors. Also, keep them in the loop with any project delays. They are the people who interact most with owners so it is imperative they are kept up-to-date. Remember the manager makes recommendations, but it is the board that makes the decision. No information soon becomes misinformation. A better-informed board fosters a better working relationship. Upon arriving at a consensus on a decision board members should not waffle or individually attempt to retract or undermine policies or decisions. This is the purpose of having a discussion period prior to approving motions. If you have doubts or questions speak up and express your viewpoint.

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Ways to Improve Manager/Board Relations

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Consult Professionals

Although experienced people often sit on boards, it is the role of the manager to bring professional opinions to the board they can rely on. As managers we have some knowledge of the legal system, accounting protocol and engineering work but the *Condominium Act* states that for the Director and Officer Insurance to be in place we must consult professional opinions. Many boards are hesitant to consult professionals due to cost. However, it can be more costly not to consult in the long run. Consider your manager a professional advisor. He/she works in the business 24 hours per day, seven days a week, 365 days per year.



Here is a summary of a presentation made by Mike Mullen, BA, RCM Executive Director of Property Management, Wilson Blanchard Management Inc. at the annual condominium conference in November. The theme of the session was Relationships with Boards, Managers and Management Companies. One of its focus areas was: A team that works together, flourishes together. And we thought it was a perfect carry-over for our own *CM* magazine theme: Nurture your Condo Community.



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Make The Board The Hero

In all cases make the board look good, they are the boss. Although we can equally share blame, we must ensure our successes are shared. Don't let owners know when board members vote for or against proposals. It is important a united front is presented to owners. This is also important for board members. Never disclose who voted in favour of or against a motion. The majority of the board passes the motions and the board must present this united front to owners.

Be Professional

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Show up to the meeting prepared, well dressed and alert. Take the time to prepare and do not offer up a management report with spelling or grammatical errors. This shows you were rushed and did not put aside enough time to prepare for the meeting. Show up on time.

Board members should take the time to read the Meeting Package. Managers in many cases put a lot of time and effort into the preparation of this package. A well-prepared board leads to a more effective meeting and a more effective corporation. A good board meeting starts with a strong management report and well-planned agenda. Set an agenda and follow it. Try to stay away from discussion on personal issues or world events until after the meeting.