



MATERIALS RESEARCH SOCIETY

Advancing materials. Improving the quality of life.

3.4.6 Board/Headquarters Interactions

Purpose: To provide guidance for Board and Staff Interactions

Applies to: Board and HQ staff

Purpose/scope:

MRS achieves its vision through the shared commitment and teaming of its volunteers, its Board of Directors, and its HQ staff. Each brings a unique value to the Society, and all are critical to achieve success. This policy is intended to provide guidance for Board and staff interactions in order to create a high-performing and rewarding Board and HQ staff team, and to encourage an enduring culture that brings out the strength of the individuals and of the unique synergy.

Value Statement:

MRS depends on effective teaming of the Board, staff and volunteers. The desired Board/HQ relationship is one of mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual accountability.

The vision of the end state is one in which the Board/HQ's shared commitment to MRS and the skills and input of each individual is respected. This is exhibited by:

- Showing mutual respect, viewing each other as teammates and as components of a true partnership.
- Listening to and soliciting each other's input; acknowledging each other's contributions; respecting each other's time.
- Communicating expectations and needs between both parties.
- Celebrating successes.
- Holding each other accountable to give honest, candid, and constructive feedback and to follow through on commitments.
- Establishing an open relationship between Board and HQ Directors without subverting leadership.
 - o Recognize that constructive tension is part of most endeavors; in cases of conflict, existing policies developed for conflict resolution will be used.
- Acting with Integrity in all interactions.

Recommended Training:

MRS will invest in training to help remove obstacles to the desired end state. Training should be at least once a year to continue the culture of productive teaming. When appropriate, consultants will be engaged to facilitate training.

Training sessions may focus on:

- Team building: how to be a high-performing team
- Communication behaviors: understanding what individuals and the team need from each other. (Include this in annual training sessions, either full training or refresher)
- Communication styles: how one communicates and transfers information (Refresher training regularly)
- The annual training session should include a module on Board/HQ interactions, and revalidation of the value statement.
- Engagement: Reminding members of the Board and staff of their responsibility to engage in the meetings—to prepare, to participate, to be fully present, and to help bring out the best of the group.
- Mentors: Where beneficial, engage mentors for teams and/or individuals.
 - o The assignment of mentors for new Board members is encouraged. The Immediate Past President shall solicit mentors from previous Boards, if possible

Anchoring Teamwork into Processes:

To maintain the desired high-performing and rewarding Board and HQ staff team and to encourage a strong culture that brings out the strengths of the individuals as well as the strength of the synergy, efforts must be made to anchor the activities that support the desired culture into Society processes. Some possible means of ensuring the culture is maintained this way include:

a. Building Teamwork in Meetings:

- The chair shall remind the Board and staff of the importance of the Board/HQ team, and review the Board Behaviors Policy.
- MRS leadership shall ensure that everyone is encouraged to express their opinion during meetings and conference calls, especially soliciting staff input prior to each vote.
- In order to make efficient and productive use of Board and staff time, the chair or facilitator of a meeting or call shall terminate repetitive discussions in a timely manner. (“ELMO” -- Enough, Let’s Move On)

b. Building Teamwork through Respect for Appropriate HQ Authority:

- Board members should understand that while the MRS staff is there to enable volunteer efforts, the staff reports to the Executive Director and departmental directors, not the Board or Officers.
- Not having full insight into HQ staff workload, the Board should respect that HQ sets staff prioritizations; the Board should work with the Executive Director to provide input to prioritizations when needed.

c. Building Teamwork through celebrations and sharing experiences:

- Successes, independent of who accomplished what, should be celebrated.
- Opportunities for Board/staff brainstorming sessions should be periodically scheduled.
- Fun activities together--dinners, ice breakers, games, etc.—should be regularly planned.

Deliverables: N/A; Review policy every three years or as needed

Who: Governance Committee

When: At least 8 weeks before the Board meeting at which amendments should be considered.

To: OpsCom

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