

Board Brief

Designed for Club Board of Directors
October 2025

INSIGHTS:

Most Pressing Concerns and Trends Impacting Clubs Today

Clubs and combined Clubs with HOAs/POAs (Homeowners Associations or Property Owners Associations) today face many similar challenges, but in a different context.

First, the identification of the corporation is paramount. Is your Club/HOA/POA organized as a 501 (c)(7), 277, for-profit, not-for-profit, or other? Even with this identification, the matter comes down to financial, governance, best practices, and transparency. The manner in which the corporation is identified dictates how you handle your finances. From the financial aspect, how is the revenue collected and taxed, how are reserves built, and how are the dues and/or assessments allocated? What do your governing documents allow you to do, and how is it communicated to the member(s) or resident(s)? Following State Statutes and Industry standards serves Boards well.

Once the entity is identified, a Board may move forward in the context of State Statutes, Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs) for HOAs, and Governing Documents for Clubs.

A private club is a member-controlled organization that provides a gathering place with updated amenities and facilities for all who pay fees and adhere to its rules and governance. The Board should ensure this is followed by their commitment.

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The HOA/POA Board's purpose is to enhance property values, maintain sufficient reserves for common areas, ensure the safety of residents in today's climate, and ensure the Association's compliance with CC&Rs, State Statutes, and regulations. In many states, this is a mandatory requirement.


For both entities, the financial component presents a challenge in determining the appropriate dues level, assessment levels (also known as HOA dues), and reserves.

Until recently, both Boards concentrated on other matters, such as over-involvement, micromanaging food and beverage costs, payroll costs, and agronomy, as well as communication, while neglecting the safety of Club members/residents and the big-picture infrastructure of the Club or Association, resulting in the disrepair of the amenities.

In their roles, Boards should stay at a high level for planning, relying on Operations experts for day-to-day operations.

While many Clubs and Associations have reinvested and upgraded, one-and-done is not the answer. The Board should have both short-term and long-term plans to address the current and future state of their organization.

Long-term strategies should and need to include a clear long-term financial vision and a plan for achieving their end goal of being a relevant and viable Club or Association. If Clubs and Associations are short-sighted and do not invest in their long-term strategies, they run the risk of becoming irrelevant or financially unstable. Addressing infrastructure replacement, revenue strategies (including initiation fees, dues, and assessments, special or regular), and member culture diversity for current and future amenities.

To conclude, know your Club or Association. Follow best practices and guidelines, being adaptable to changing circumstances, while taking your responsibilities as a Board member seriously, to pass on to the next generation a Club or Association that is sustainable, relevant, and attractive to future members/residents. 

Insights by Terra S.H. Waldron, CCM, CCE, ECM, CMAA Fellow, AMS, CMCA, and Secretary of The Club Foundation. She currently serves as the Executive Director of Desert Mountain Club in Scottsdale, AZ. Waldron was recently named the Large Scale Manager of the Year at the 2025 Guiding Excellence in Management Awards hosted by the Arizona Association of Community Managers, recognizing her outstanding leadership and the many ways she has strengthened the Desert Mountain Community.





BY THE NUMBERS:

More Opportunities to Strengthen Club Governance

Private clubs are making progress in adopting the best practices of governance, but significant opportunities for improvement remain. Club leaders can focus on strategic oversight, risk management, and improving member communications to increase governance effectiveness.

The 2025 edition of the Club Leaders' Perspective Report from CMAA and GGA Partners dives into these insights. The following is excerpted from the 2025 Club Leaders' Perspective Report:

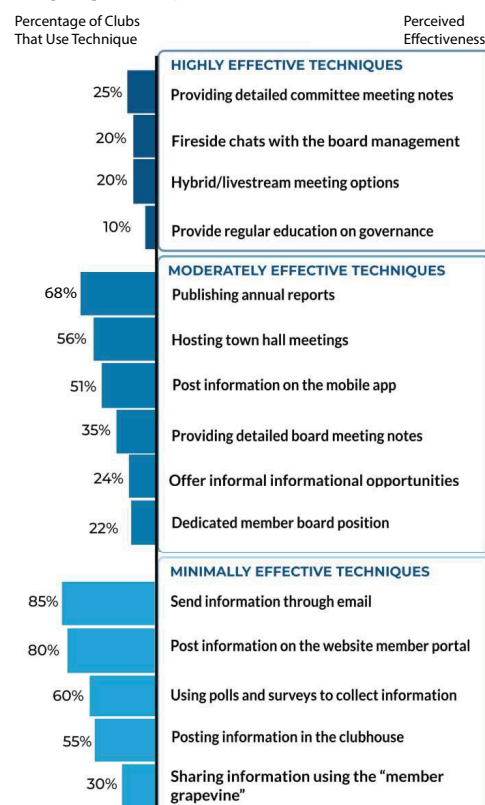
Enhancing Member Communication

According to [the] research, data indicates that outward board communication is a significant governance challenge. Only 46 percent of clubs rate current communication as adequate, while 18 percent report it as ineffective.

But how can clubs address these concerns to foster clarity, engagement, and alignment between the board and the members they serve? Figure three offers

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Figure 3. Aligning Techniques with Successful Communication



Note: Respondents were asked to select tactics they use to share information with their members. These results were then compared to overall board communication effectiveness to identify the effectiveness tiers.

insights into the methods that clubs most commonly employ and communication techniques that can be effectively replicated across the industry.

[Survey] results indicate that clubs prioritizing education and transparency by offering regular governance education session and publishing clear, detailed updates on board and committee activities are experiencing higher levels of communication effectiveness. Enhancing direct member engagement by assigning a board liaison, hosting informal networking events, and facilitating town hall meetings fosters meaningful dialogue and helps build open lines of communication.


Technology Usage. Effectively leveraging new and emerging digital tools has been shown to enhance communication, especially with younger members, given their desire for more technology usage. Supplementing traditional email with hybrid meetings, website updates, and mobile app notifications helps create accessible information for members. Reducing dependence on passive and informal channels, such as clubhouse message boards and member-to-member discussions, enhances the effectiveness of messaging as these methods are perceived as less effective.

Club Leaders Opportunity

To strengthen governance and enhance board effectiveness, clubs should focus on the strategic planning process, then set in motion the essential steps required to implement effective plans and manage the risks that may threaten the achievement of the club's strategic priorities or stand in the way of the desired member experience. Clubs can also focus on the following opportunities:

1. **Emphasize Strategic Outcomes for Board Meetings:** Shift board discussions toward strategic priorities by ensuring that reports align with the club's strategic plan. Management can incorporate key performance indicators and strategic milestones into board reporting to monitor progress toward long-term goals.
2. **Implement a Risk Management Framework:** Creating a structured risk management framework moves beyond risk compliance to identifying, assessing, and mitigating potential risks.
3. **Develop and Implement a Board Policy Manual:** This living document enhances governance consistency by clearly outlining policies related to decision-making, leadership responsibilities, and crisis management, thereby strengthening oversight and mitigating risks.
4. **Enhance New Board Member Orientation:** Strengthen governance by creating a comprehensive board orientation program that introduces governance and reviews essential documents to support new board members in contributing effectively.

By focusing on these key areas, clubs can significantly enhance their governance and board effectiveness. Implementing these recommendations will ensure a more strategic, risk-aware, and well-prepared leadership team.

CMAA members may access their complimentary copy of the full report through [CMAA Connect](#) in the [Best Practices Exchange Community Library](#) in the [CMAA Annual Reports](#) folder. 



Governance *Harmony* Leadership

BEST PRACTICES:

Understanding the Distinction between Governance and Leadership

Success in private clubs relies on the harmony between governance and leadership. Though both strive to advance the club's mission and elevate the member experience, their responsibilities differ. Misunderstanding these roles leads to blurred authority, inefficiency, and dissatisfaction. When governance and leadership work in concert, clubs thrive with clarity, alignment, and excellence.

Governance in a Private Club

Governance is the framework by which a club is directed, resting with the board of directors. Elected by members, the board represents collective interests and ensures alignment with mission, bylaws, and long-term vision.

Core responsibilities include:

- **Strategic Direction:** Defining mission, vision, and goals.
- **Policy Development:** Creating guiding policies without micromanaging.
- **Financial Oversight:** Approving budgets, monitoring fiscal responsibility.
- **Accountability:** Acting in members' best interests.
- **Hiring & Supporting the General Manager:** Selecting and empowering management.

Governance focuses on what should be accomplished and why, requiring objectivity, strategy, and fiduciary discipline.

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Leadership in a Private Club

Leadership lies with the General Manager or COO and senior team. It is execution-focused, transforming strategy into action and ensuring exceptional service.

Core responsibilities include:

- **Operational Management:** Overseeing daily functions.
- **Team Development:** Recruiting, training, and mentoring staff.
- **Member Experience:** Ensuring services exceed expectations.
- **Financial Management:** Managing budgets and sustainability.
- **Communication:** Maintaining transparency with board and members.

Leadership addresses the how. Action-oriented, member-facing, and grounded in adaptability and people skills.

Key Differences

- **Focus:** Governance sets strategic vision; leadership executes.
- **Primary Role:** Governance defines what and why; leadership determines how.
- **Responsibility:** Governance serves membership; leadership serves board and members.
- **Skill Sets:** Governance requires strategic thinking; leadership demands operational expertise.

Problems arise when boards micromanage or when managers overstep into policy making, creating inefficiency and tension.

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What Makes Good Governance

Excellence in governance stems from discipline and clarity:

- **Role Clarity:** Boards focus on strategy, not daily operations.
- **Strategic Focus:** Time spent on long-term planning and value.
- **Effective Communication:** Unified, transparent messaging with management.
- **Fiduciary Responsibility:** Serving the collective, not individuals.
- **Board Development:** Training and evaluation to ensure accountability.
- **Mutual Respect:** A professional, trust-based partnership with the General Manager.

What Makes Good Leadership


Strong leadership powers member experience and operational health:

- **Member-Centric Mindset:** Decisions driven by member satisfaction.
- **Operational Excellence:** Efficiency, service consistency, and best practices.
- **Staff Engagement:** Motivated employees with growth opportunities.
- **Financial Acumen:** Accurate reporting and responsible budgeting.
- **Problem-Solving:** Quick, adaptable responses to challenges.
- **Communication & Presence:** Visibility with members and staff.

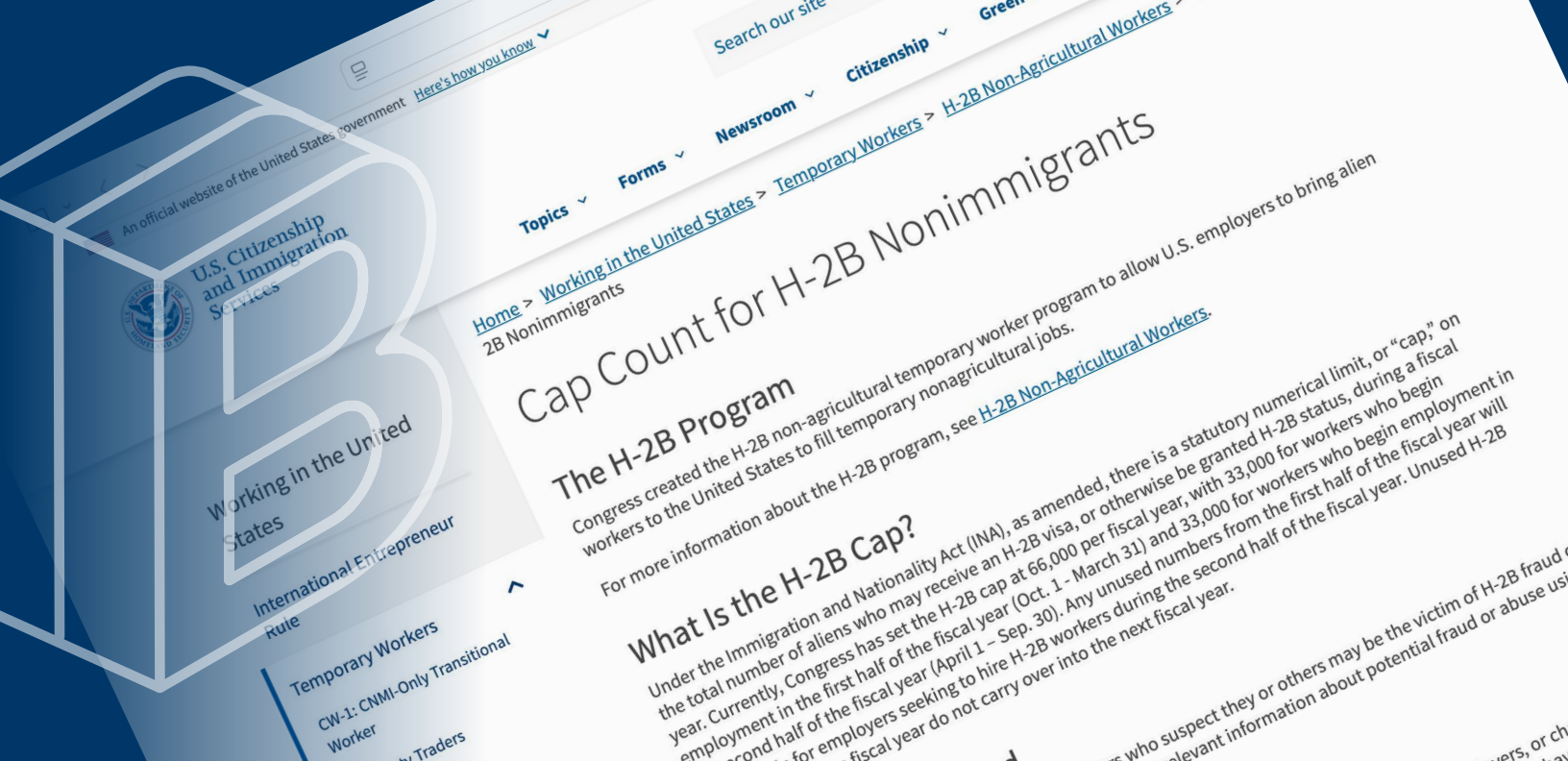
Interdependence and Consequences

Governance and leadership are complementary. A board's vision fails without strong execution, and even the best GM falters without a supportive, disciplined board. Regular strategic planning, goal reviews, and mutual respect keep both sides aligned.

When governance fails, micromanagement or personal agendas leave management without clarity, causing turnover and dissatisfaction. When leadership fails, weak operations or financial mismanagement erode trust and stall progress. Either way, the member experience and the club's reputation suffer.

Clubs succeed when governance sets the course and leadership navigates it. Good governance provides strategy, clarity, and oversight. Good leadership ensures operations, engagement, and satisfaction. Together, they create a club where members feel valued, staff thrive, and the organization achieves both immediate excellence and long-term sustainability. 

Insights by Rob Schlingmann, CCM, CCE, CAM, Senior Club Consultant, Strategic Club Solutions



EXTERNAL INFLUENCES:

H-2B Visa Update & Understanding the Impact on the US Workforce

Availability Update

As of September 12, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has received enough petitions to exhaust the supply of 33,000 H-2B visas allocated for the first half of Fiscal Year 2026. In 2025, this same allotment of visas was exhausted on September 18.

USCIS will continue to accept petitions for FY2026 for employment start dates beginning on or after April 1, 2026.

As part of the H-2B Workforce Coalition, CMAA continues to request the release of additional visas by the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Labor as well as continue advocating for permanent cap relief.

For the latest availability information, visit the [Fiscal Year H-2B Cap Count webpage](#).

Economics and Understanding the Impact of the H-2B Visa Program

The H-2B Workforce Coalition recently released a new comprehensive economic analysis that explores the impacts and realities of the H-2B Visa Program. Completed by Edgewater Economics, the study finds that the H-2B program has not had a detrimental effect on jobs and the salaries of US workers. It has increased wages and supported the labor force.

Traditionally, the H-2B program has allowed businesses to hire foreign national guest workers for seasonal jobs when they are unable to identify and hire domestic workers for these positions.

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Through this new study, the program has found no evidence of the increase of H-2B visas issues and a negative impact on the US workforce's employment and wages.

In fact, the study notes each H-2B worker supports about three-to-five local US worker jobs, where areas with greater H-2B workers saw wages grow 1.6 percent higher.

"Areas that were able to hire more H-2B workers due to the increase in H-2B visa cap experienced more employment growth and higher wage growth among US workers," said Dr. Steve Bronars, Partner at Edgeworth Economics, validating the findings of an early analysis by the U.S. General Accountability Office.

Largely, the H-2B program has allowed businesses to address seasonal labor shortages more efficiently during their peak season benefits full-year employees, who have the support they need to do their jobs more efficiently. The landscaping industry accounts for almost 40 percent of certified H-2B seasonal workers, on average. The industries that account for the second, third, and fourth most certified H-2B are Hotels and Motels (8.67 percent), Support Activities for Forestry (6.3 percent), and Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging (5.65 percent).

"This study reaffirms what our members have long recognized: despite extensive recruitment efforts, there remains a critical shortage of US workers willing or available to fill temporary positions that are currently being filled by H-2B workers," said Arnulfo Hinojosa, Chief Operating Officer at Federation of Workers and Employers of America, and Vice Chair of the H-2B Workforce Coalition. "H-2B workers allow seasonal businesses to operate at a higher capacity and create more US jobs."

The H-2B Workforce Coalition is comprised of thousands of employers and their representatives from the lodging, landscaping, seafood, restaurant, tourism, equine, forestry, amusement parks, golf courses, and other industries. Its members are businesses that rely on the H-2B visa program. 





CMAA NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

How CMAA Membership Benefits Your Club

It is the time of year when Club Management Association of America (CMAA) members renew their connection to CMAA. As a Board member, you may be curious how being connected with CMAA benefits your club.

CMAA is the professional Association for managers of membership clubs. With 8,100 members across all classifications, CMAA Professional members oversee operations for more than 2,600 country, golf, city, athletic, faculty, yacht, town, and military clubs. As a mission-driven organization, CMAA fulfills the educational and related needs of its members.

The objectives of the Association are:

- to promote and advance friendly relations among persons connected with the management of clubs and other associations of similar character;
- to encourage the education and advancement of its members; and
- to assist club officers and members, through their managers, to secure the utmost in efficient and successful club operations.

Featured Benefits for Your Club

Educated Professionals: Professional Development is at the core of the CMAA's mission. The curriculum is based on 11 competency areas covering all aspects of the club manager's role. The Association delivers educational content in a variety of ways through five-day university-based Business Management Institutes (BMI), Chapter and regional programs, conference education,

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summits, webinars, and online education. CMAA's educational programming leads to its sought-after certification program; the Certified Club Manager (CCM) designation is the centerpiece of this program.

Research and Benchmarking: CMAA members have unlimited access to a robust database of club and hospitality-related articles, white papers, guidelines, and statistics covering every aspect of the club management universe. CMAA conducts annual surveys on compensation and benefits and finance and operations that are complimentary to clubs that participate.

Club Resources: CMAA members have access to a wide range of reference/resource materials and services that are designed to help clubs. Membership provides access to publications, research archives, peer-tested club ideas, best practice tools, staff training via the Club Resource Center, CMAA University (a dynamic online learning platform), and much more.

Advocacy: CMAA prepares its members to influence outcomes in club boardrooms and the halls of government through resources, education, and skill development. Further, it provides the latest information on legislative, regulatory, and legal updates through its grassroots advocacy platform, clubindustryvotes.org.

Board Education: CMAA offers multiple resources for club boards, including this monthly publication Board Brief. Additionally, CMAA offers four Governance & Leadership Symposiums to prepare club's elected leadership for success.


Clubs and their governing boards benefit directly by having a CMAA-educated professional(s) at the helm. Encourage your club management professionals to renew their membership today! Learn more at cmaa.org/membership/. 

Upcoming Virtual Governance & Leadership Symposium

Do you want to be better prepared for your role as a club leader? Attend CMAA's next Governance & Leadership Symposium on November 5.

This one-day, virtual event is specifically designed to bring together the GM/CEO/COO and their club's Board Members for collaborative education and leadership development. These Symposiums offer actionable insights and tools to strengthen club governance, and you will walk away with a deeper understanding of your role and valuable strategies to improve your leadership contributions.

Presented in partnership with KOPPLIN KUEBLER & WALLACE, a CMAA Executive Partner, these highly rated sessions provide a unique opportunity to gain new perspectives and foster stronger partnerships between club management and elected leaders.

Attend from anywhere with a computer and an Internet connection. 

[Learn more and register now.](#)

