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## Is your condo board prioritizing properly?

Strategic plans for condos are not completed nearly enough

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By Steve Ilkiw

Thirty-five minutes to select the flower arrangement in the lobby for the holiday season, balanced by a five-minute update on the \$500,000 HVAC renovation. Sound familiar?

Many condo corporations struggle to prioritize. In fact, it's a challenge facing several organizations across industries, from a board level, right down to day-to-day task assignments. Condo boards and their management teams are no different.

Other findings reveal personal priorities often trump the greater good. Forty-six per cent of condo board members reported a unified board working in the interests of the condo community, but 54 per cent reported individuals, or several people, trying to drive personal agendas, rather than put the needs of the community first.

So, what does a condo board director or manager do when they feel condo priorities aren't balanced correctly?

The easiest solutions lie in the condo board meeting. Here are five simple tips that can have any condo board or condo manager prioritize better.

1. Draft an agenda that indicates the time expected to spend on each topic. Slot 15 minutes for the flower arrangement conversation and 40 minutes for the expensive infrastructure project.
2. Beyond time on a topic, give thought to the order of items on an agenda. Board meetings can be long and tiresome. Leaving a complex issue for the end of a long meeting almost assures a rushed decision.
3. Allow people to speak their perspectives in a meeting, but encourage people to avoid restating what others have already said to keep to timelines. As the chair of the meeting, ask, "Does anyone have anything new to add to the conversation?"
4. When points have been made, but discussions carry on, ask for a straw poll. You may find everyone is in agreement and the board can move forward with a vote quickly and efficiently.
5. Create a parking lot for good ideas that require time at another meeting. Record these ideas as part of a rolling agenda so that when time allows, these ideas can be given their due.

While the above five tips on prioritization will help your board deal with some issues, some more holistic foundational solutions may be required for long-term success. For those boards who really want to step things up, nothing is more effective than a strategic plan.

### **Strategizing long-term**

Strategic plans for condos are not done nearly enough. With data collected from the diagnostic, just 17 per cent of condos report any sort of strategic plan, 44 per cent use their reserve fund as a strategic plan and 39 per cent simply tackle issues as they arise.

For boards going down the path of creating a strategic plan, here are a couple things to consider.

First, collect some data from the condo to give your board insight into what owners and residents care about. A three- or five-person board can't possibly have insights into what the whole population of the condo is thinking about on different topics. So ask. Survey tools have never been easier and cheaper to use. Look to Survey Monkey, Google Forms, or your in-house communications software to get a pulse on your community's perspectives.

Second, during the strategic planning process, account for what you're not going to do. As your board and management make plans, lots of ideas will be tabled and dismissed or allocated for a distant future. Be sure these items are identified and the board's rationale recorded as to why the items are not prioritized. Share these as part of documentation to your ownership. They'll appreciate the insights and [transparency](#).

Finally, be sure to share your plans with the condo through a town hall event or at the AGM. Be prepared for a good idea to arise that your team may have missed. This will have given everyone an opportunity to participate, voice their opinions, and play a role in the future of your condo.

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*[1] A free online diagnostic tool via the CondoHive website gathered intel from 150 condo board directors over a three-year period. Data was gathered from a series of questions that condo board members answer to receive a score determining their board's efficiency*