

HEIDRICK & STRUGGLES

74% of Association CEOs Admit Facing Doubt In High-stakes Decisions Involving Uncertainty and Risk

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Heidrick & Struggles and George Mason School of Law release findings from 500+ Association CEOs
- Fundraising and growing membership are also among top concerns for today's association CEOs
- Findings show higher rate of associations have board involvement and support

CHICAGO and WASHINGTON, April 21, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- Three-quarters of Association CEOs concede that they often doubt themselves when making major decisions involving high stakes and uncertainty, according to a study by Heidrick & Struggles (Nasdaq: HSII), a premier provider of [executive search](#), [leadership consulting](#) and [culture shaping](#) worldwide, and George Mason University School of Law.



Click to download the full report:

<http://bit.ly/AssociationsSurvey>

The study included input from more than 500 CEOs at trade groups and associations, gaining insight into how they are responding to change and uncertainty. Other topics included association CEOs' perceived top leadership traits and challenges, their toughest decisions, and whom they turn to for strategic counsel.

"Like other industries, associations are not immune to changing stakeholder expectations and demands, be it from the boardroom or members of their industry at large," said [Julian Ha](#), trade association and government affairs practice leader at Heidrick & Struggles.

Heidrick & Struggles' proprietary study, [The CEO Report: Embracing the Paradoxes of Leadership and the Power of Doubt](#), noted that managing doubt is a central part of being an effective CEO; having constructive doubt often guides them when they are making crucial decisions. The ability to embracing self-doubt is seen as a positive trait, especially when considering the uncertainty of today's business climate.

"Association CEOs who are well-positioned to manage through change are engaging with their boards early to establish a well-rounded vision, and relying on senior teams to make tough decisions," [Dr. David Rehr](#), senior associate dean and professor at George Mason University School of Law in Virginia. Rehr served as lead researcher on the project.

Top Three Challenges of Being an Association Leader:

- #1 - Fundraising (cited by 32% of CEOs)
- #2 - Team building (10%)
- #3 - Communication ability (9%)

Top Three Most Important Leadership Traits:

- #1 - Honesty and ethics (cited by 36% of CEOs)
- #2 - Vision (25%)
- #3 - Relationship building (10%)

Challenges & Vision

CEOs were nearly split on whether it has become harder or easier to define a clear vision for the future, though most were positive about their relationship with their association's board of directors.

- Nearly 50 percent of CEOs reported that it has become harder to retain and grow membership within associations.
- More than three-quarters of CEOs reported that the board engages in creating the vision and mission of the association,

considers trends and embraces change.

"Association CEOs must continue to step up," said Ha. "Boards are engaged and they are demanding more transparency and results."

About the Survey

Researchers asked a random sample of more than 2,600 association top executives to participate in the survey. Of these potential respondents, 525 completed the entire survey between Nov. 20 and Dec. 11, 2015, resulting in a margin of error of less than four percent. *CEO Update* assisted with generating the initial random sample.

The CEOs who completed the survey represent a cross-section of the association world in terms of tenure, group size and gender: 20 percent of the CEOs had been on the job for more than 15 years, compared with 20 percent for four to six years and 24 percent three years or less; 65 percent of the associations led by these CEOs had annual revenue of less than \$10 million; 34 percent of the respondents were women.

The survey's report was co-authored by Julian Ha, Bill Hudson and Dr. David Rehr, senior associate dean and professor at George Mason University School of Law in Virginia, who acted as the lead researcher on the project.

About Heidrick & Struggles

Heidrick & Struggles (Nasdaq: HSII) serves the executive talent and leadership needs of the world's top organizations as a premier provider of leadership consulting, culture shaping and senior-level executive search services. Heidrick & Struggles pioneered the profession of executive search more than 60 years ago. Today, the firm serves as a trusted advisor, providing integrated leadership solutions and helping its clients change the world, one leadership team at a time. www.heidrick.com

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