

HEIDRICK & STRUGGLES

Onboarding Is Point of Weakness on Association and Nonprofit Boards

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- Heidrick & Struggles, with George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School, releases new report: **Association and Nonprofit Boards: Maximizing Effective Service**
 - The mission of an organization is the greatest motivation for board members to serve
- More than half of survey respondents feel demands on association and nonprofit boards have increased in the past five years
 - Just over half say that their organization had an onboarding process when they joined

CHICAGO, Oct. 10, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- The onboarding process is a key area for improvement for association and nonprofit boards to better prepare board members to be effective, according to a new survey from [Heidrick & Struggles](#) (NASDAQ: HSII), a premier provider of executive search, leadership consulting and culture shaping worldwide, in partnership with Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University.

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[Association and Nonprofit Board: Maximizing Effective Service](#) reflects the input from more than 500 association and nonprofit board members across North America, building on last year's survey to include the nonprofit sector. The report also sheds light on best practices for consideration to improve the onboarding process, ensure a positive experience and strengthen the board's impact.

Less than half of respondents (45%) said their organization's onboarding experience properly prepared them to be an effective board member, while just over half (53%) had experienced a defined onboarding process when they first joined the board of directors.

"Boards are under increasing demands to fully engrain themselves in the organizational vision, contribute to financial performance, and generate sustainable results, so it's worrisome that most boards in the association and nonprofit space lack a formal board orientation that sets up board members for success," said Bill Hudson, partner and member of the Education, Nonprofit & Social Enterprise Practice at Heidrick & Struggles.

More than half of respondents have been on their board for three years or less and two-thirds of association and nonprofit boards have term limits, further underscoring the need to formalize the process to help new directors serve more effectively as boards experience turnover.

Additional gaps in the onboarding process include: Just one-third of incoming board members received an explanation about the board's evaluation of the CEO; 51% didn't receive an explanation of its organizational culture; 40% didn't receive an explanation of internal organization staffing; and 24% of survey respondents weren't informed of board leadership hierarchy. "Engaging board member involvement begins with setting the right expectations with onboarding best practices. This research provides a roadmap for success," added Dr. David Rehr, Professor at Antonin Scalia Law School, George Mason University.

Other key findings of the study include:

- **The majority (91%) of association and nonprofit board members choose to serve because they believe in the mission.** Other top motivators include one's ability to make the organization more effective with their involvement (68%); serving out of obligation for the industry or sector (53%); and having a personal connection with the organization (43%). "In looking at the perspectives of association and nonprofit board members, we found that directors are laser-focused on how they can positively impact the vision and mission of the organization. In fact, they believe their main responsibility is to think big to help drive the organization forward," said Julian Ha, partner and practice leader of the Government Affairs and Trade Association practices at Heidrick & Struggles.
- **Board service is more time-intensive and demanding than ever.** Respondents reported spending on average 172 hours per year in service and 64% of respondents feel demands on boards have increased in the past five years. Yet 93% of association and nonprofit board directors feel that their board service is a good use of their professional time.
- **More progress needed in gender diversity on association and nonprofit boards.** Just 30% of survey respondents are female, and about one-third of our respondents said they feel gender identification on their board is unbalanced.

For the complete *Association and Nonprofit Boards: Maximizing Effective Service* report, visit http://www.heidrick.com/Knowledge-Center/Publication/Association_and_nonprofit_boards_Maximizing_effective_service.

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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