

TEAM BUILDING, TED TALKS AND PANDEMICS



How well does your Condominium Board work together? Communication is key to effective collaboration amongst the directors on your condo board. A lack of familiarity with each other because of personnel changes or because of the lack of in-person meetings during this pandemic can result in miscommunication and adversely affect board decisions and productivity. Condo boards should consider virtual team building sessions during the pandemic, even if it is just for getting together online for an informal discussion over a coffee.

As a case in point, the CCI Manitoba Chapter Board has 15 directors with five elected each year at our AGM. During periods of low turnover, those five elected directors can be mostly re-elected directors. However, at our AGM in October 2020, we added seven new directors and there were three other new ones (me included) added in 2019. With 10 new directors in the past 16 months and the continuing pandemic, we certainly have to ensure we establish good lines of communication. To that end, the Manitoba Chapter had, as part of the first post-AGM board meeting, a virtual (Zoom) session to facilitate team building.

In preparation for our CCI Manitoba team building session, we were asked to watch the TED Talk *Where Good Ideas Come From*¹. It highlighted the need for regular and recurring communication to spawn creative and innovative ideas, rather than hoping for so called "eureka" moments. To enable and encourage communication amongst your board members - relying on emails for discussion adds time lag and introduces opportunities for misinterpretation of comments. Phone calls are better than emails but still don't allow for visual cues and body language reading that you would have in

in-person meetings. With the availability of free applications such as Skype and Zoom, it is relatively easy for boards to get together.

Besides formal board meetings with a defined agenda, include informal discussions and brainstorming sessions. Some other CCI Chapters have started monthly or biweekly 'coffee' meetings with their members - just a recurring virtual meeting with no fixed agenda. The format allows wide ranging discussions about condo issues and even non-condo issues at times - whatever is currently at the forefront of people's minds. The key is to keep the communication channel open.

During the TED Talk mentioned above, the presenter discussed the problem of infant mortality in the developing world and how to improve the situation in an African village - the solution was to build neonatal incubators out of car parts (watch the video to understand why). The solution came about after numerous discussions and brainstorming sessions and was not a 'eureka' moment. In the last part of the TED Talk, the presenter also described how the launch of the Sputnik satellite by the Russians in the late fifties spawned the technological innovation of the Global Positioning System (GPS) in the USA, which started with a group of engineers and scientists talking during their coffee breaks over a span of a few weeks.

The main message is especially important during this pandemic, that communication is essential - keep talking, keep meeting, discuss issues with your other directors. Ponder and reflect to gain insight into the problems and solutions. Communicate and collaborate.

After watching that TED Talk, I was suitably impressed and since I had spare time, I watched a few subsequent TED Talks which led me from feeling enlightened to being thankful to a feeling of



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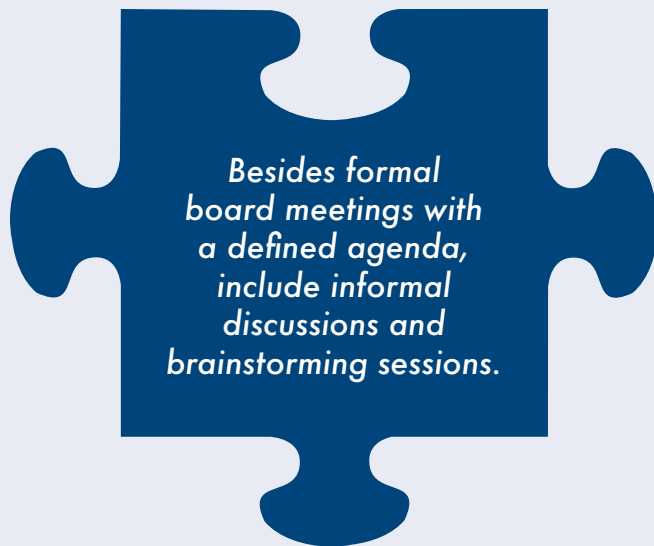


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despondency because of this Covid pandemic. I don't know how the next Talk appeared in the queue, but it was from 2006 and the same presenter - *How the "ghost map" helped end a killer disease*². The topic was recurring cholera epidemics in 19th century London England and how physician John Snow (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Snow) through inspiration and perspiration over a decade or so solved the problem, allowing great cities to flourish. This Talk emphasized the need to stick with your convictions and persevere to solve the problem, but also not do it alone - collaboration is required along the way.

Feeling suitably inspired and enlightened, I watched the next TED Talk in the queue, coincidentally also from 2006 but by a different presenter - *My wish: Help me stop pandemics*³. This Talk was especially timely as it dealt with pandemics. The presenter covered the progress to eliminate smallpox as a pandemic risk and the significant effort and results towards eliminating polio. He started talking about other pandemic risks, such as the 2003 SARS pandemic. Then he highlighted the risk of the next flu pandemic, which occurred a few years later in 2009 (swine flu). The presenter's mantra to mitigate the risk of pandemics was "early detection, early response". An "early detection" tool he touted was the *Global Public Health Intelligence Network*⁴ (GPHIN) created by the Canadian Government in the late 1990s. The GPHIN played a key early detection role in the 2009 swine flu pandemic and kept SARS, Zika virus, H5N1 bird flu, MERS and ebola from becoming more than serious outbreaks. This left me feeling even more inspired and enlightened. Then after a bit more research on the web, a feeling of despondency set in - apparently in May 2019 or so, the Canadian Government made some changes to GPHIN, affecting its ability to communicate its early detection of Covid-19. Perhaps instead of a pandemic, it could have been just an epidemic in a few locations, just as the first SARS was. An investigation is now underway to determine what happened - *Hajdu orders a review of pandemic alert system after scientists claim warnings were ignored*⁵. Sigh.

ALAN FORBES
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¹ https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_johnson_where_good_ideas_come_from by Steven Johnson at the TED Global 2010 event


² https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_johnson_how_the_ghost_map_helped_end_a_killer_disease#t-1849 by Steven Johnson at the TED Global 2006 event

³ https://www.ted.com/talks/larry_brilliant_my_wish_help_me_stop_pandemics by Larry Brilliant at the TED Global 2006 event

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Public_Health_Intelligence_Network

⁵ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/patty-hajdu-global-public-health-intelligence-network-1.5715831> by John Paul Tasker of CBC News, September 8th, 2020


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