



## **NomCom: Your Most Vital Asset**

By Jonathan Lightman, CAE

One of the first things I learned as an association professional was the most important volunteer committee, other than Executive who speaks for the Board between meetings, is not Finance, Legislative, Communications, or Membership. It is the Nominating Committee, often seen as a backwater and given limited responsibility during the year. Ultimately, it's the Nominating Committee that shapes governance and their recommendations can make or break an organization.

Nonprofits typically ask their Nominating Committees to do one of two things, develop a recommended slate of candidates for election to the Board or solicit individuals who volunteer to run through some kind of nominations process. Occasionally, organizations will use a combination approach where the Nominating Committee develops its recommended names while continuing to solicit candidates who self-select. I'm not particularly fond of this as the elections tend to disproportionately favor the Nominating Committee's recommendations.

What are the relative advantages of producing an official slate of recommended candidates? Without question, the vetting process should produce knowledgeable leaders who have demonstrated their worthiness to the organization. The flip side is the potential for stultification of leadership through a self-replication of the Nominating Committee. After all, why wouldn't the Nominating Committee choose those who mirror their ideas and styles.

Organizations who don't pursue a slate leave themselves vulnerable to personally charismatic candidates with limited appreciation of organizational history or culture even if they meet established qualifications for office. I've personally witnessed this and it's devastatingly frustrating for those who have carefully worked years, if not decades, on developing an organizational track record.

At the end of the day, there is no foolproof way to do this; each group has to determine for itself the best method. Nonetheless, all organizations should be asking whether their leadership is sufficiently dynamic, diverse, and reflective of the membership. This should be a regularly scheduled conversation, every three to five years, and include a variety of voices, not just those on the Board.

If your NomCom is not your most important committee, let's have that conversation, [jlightman@whatsb-yond.com](mailto:jlightman@whatsb-yond.com) or (916) 712-5827. It's amazing what you might find.