

Virtual Leadership

Tools for Success in NACURH

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Benefits of a Virtual NACURH

- Regional & National Officers are able to be geographically dispersed
- Time and money spent on travel is reasonable
- Members/Officers have the flexibility to complete projects on their own time frame

Why NACURH Works as a Virtual Organization

- Much of our work can be performed over the phone, computers or using other forms of communication
- Members and officers do not need to spend much time in direct contact with each other
- Having a central office is not critical to our performance

Effective Virtual Leadership

- Having an initial set of leadership skills is important
- Leaders must make the adjustment from managing time to managing projects
- Building relationships and trust is crucial
- The leader must set the tone and help the group to see the big picture
- There should be a clear mission

Virtual Communication

- Frequency of communication should be increased significantly
- Understand that members will have different communication preferences
 - E-mail, forum, phone, face-to-face, instant messaging, etc
- What isn't said matters too
 - Check for understanding or ask for clarification
 - Always interpret e-mails and Instant Messages as if they were written in a neutral tone

Online Meeting Success

- Establish and state the amount of time that will be spent discussing each topic
- Stick to agenda topics
- Ask members to send a private IM to the facilitator to gain a spot on a speakers list
- Establish an appropriate response time, be patient for the additional time that it takes to type
- Be aware and tolerant of connection issues that members may face

Creating Virtual Structure

- Both leaders and members must be more disciplined
- Establish ground rules and expectations early on
 - Primary form of communication?
 - Timeliness of responses?
 - Meeting deadlines?
 - Participation?
- Always test assumptions

The Effective Virtual Leader

- Self-motivated
- “Multiple” communication skills
- Confident decision maker
- Strong technical abilities

Realities of RBD/NBD Positions

- Separated from other board members and advisors
- Can experience feelings of isolation
- Need for self-organization
- Balancing NACURH work, academics, and extra-curricular activities from a Residence Hall room can be stressful

Developing Expectations

- Find a way to introduce board members and NCCs
- Map out individual and group commitments
- Set clear goals and timelines
- Find occasions to meet in person
- Set up a mentoring program for new members
- Create clear boundaries around communication and when members should be available
- Establish a sense of belonging and worth
- Make sure that the team understands everyone's responsibilities

Challenges RBD/NBD Members Face

- Isolation and independence
- Uncertainty of their place in the organization
- While technical communication allows for information to be shared quickly, members lose the ability to benefit from other's ideas and experience in an unstructured way
- Assumptions about progress of other member's projects can lead to resentment on the team

Challenges RBD/NBD Members Face

- Lack of accountability
- Lack of motivation
- Inability to ask questions & interact with a person rather than a computer screen

Virtual Team Building Tips

- Hold online meetings
- Use instant messenger and phone conversations for more than business
- Send regular updates on work progress
- Acknowledge birthdays, academic success, and other personal achievements
- Let members know that you are thinking of them by sending a note or card to their campus address