

Event: Virginia Board of Accountancy 2007 Retreat

Date of Event: May 16, 2007

Consultant: James M. Burke, Ph.D.

Background

I have prepared the agenda for May 16 based upon the common themes that emerged from my discussions with the Executive Director, Nancy Taylor Feldman, as well as Katherine Idrissi and three Board members. It is an ambitious agenda in many respects, but given the high quality of the Board, we should be able to achieve all the deliverables contained in the "Detailed Agenda."

The common themes from my discussions were as follows:

1. **The Virginia Board of Accountancy is a leader among other states.** Certainly, the Board and the Executive Director should be proud of being in the lead among the states in many respects. The members of the Board bring an impressive array of credentials and experience with them. People spoke with respect of their colleagues on the Board and the quality of the relationships seems to be very sound, providing an excellent foundation upon which to build.
2. **The Board is not complacent.** Anytime you have a successful organization, there is always the danger of complacency. However, it seems that the Board is focused on taking their excellent track record to a higher level. There are many opportunities to make the Virginia BOA even more of a leader.
3. **The Board wants to use the May retreat as a chance to look ahead, not back.** This is in keeping with the two above points. While the Board is pleased with what it is done, it is more interested in what it needs to do. As such, the "retreat" will be more of an "advance." The Board needs to address several issues related to orienting new members, laying the groundwork for succession planning, enhancing communication between the Executive Director and the Board, and developing systems of accountability to assess progress toward agreed upon goals.
4. **A key goal for 2007-2008 will be to update the regulations.** Updating the regulations is one of the main tasks of the Board for the coming year and any additional changes must consider that this task will occupy significant time and energy on the part of some or all of the Board members.
5. **Attention to enhancing relationships with the Board is important.** Many of the Board members bring a wealth of experience from other boards and they understand the importance of getting to know their colleagues who also serve on the Board. The retreat could serve a valuable function helping the Board to become even more cohesive.

Detailed Agenda

May 16, 2007

Prior to the beginning of the day, the Board members and the Executive Director will have reviewed the BOA Key Roles and Responsibilities and the Strategic Plan 2005-2008.

9:00 Welcome and Introduction to the Day

The consultant will introduce the outline of the day and lead the Board in a brief discussion of goals and expectations for the day. The consultant will negotiate with the Board over any goals not anticipated in this agenda and will work with the Board to amend the structure or focus of parts of the agenda.

9:20 Mission-based Foundation

The consultant will facilitate a very brief discussion/review of the mission of the BOA to bring everyone to a central focus. The consultant will ask the Board members to explain the mission in concrete, behavioral language and the consultant will chart these and add to it through the day as needed. Everything that we do during the day will be linked back to the mission of the BOA. After the retreat, the list will be transcribed and serve as a document for new and existing Board members to explain central functions of the Board in plain language.

9:40 The BOA at Its Best

Board members will split into two groups and brainstorm a *highly detailed vision* of what “the best” BOA would look like in terms of specific identifiable behaviors. This exercise will help the Board come to a clearer understanding of what the Board would look like when functioning at an optimal level to achieve its mission.

10:30 Break

10:45 Creating One Vision

Each of the two groups will report out regarding the vision and the group as a whole will look for key areas of agreement and any areas of disagreement that emerged. The consultant will work with the Board to assess where the Board is at today as it moves toward living out the full vision of what the BOA can become. The final document will also serve as a basis for the rest of the day and beyond.

11:30 Identifying Priorities and Planning Practical Steps (Part 1)

Having identified the key areas for growth, the Board will need to prioritize goals and identify specific steps to achieve those goals. We do not want to re-create a new strategic plan *per se*. However, we are functionally amending the strategic plan with a stronger focus on milestones and accountability.

12:00 Lunch

Depending upon the progress made thus far, however, the consultant may suggest a semi-structured conversation over lunch to identify priorities for 2007-2008 based upon the previous exercise.

12:45 Identifying Priorities and Planning Practical Steps (Part 2)

After lunch, we will conclude the work done thus far. By the end of this exercise, the Board will have identified a clear vision for the BOA's future, top priorities, key goals, and specific action steps.

1:30 Building Systems of Communication and Accountability (Part 1)

In order to take successful and concrete steps toward attaining the goals identified thus far, it will be essential for the Board to develop a system for communicating progress between the Board and the Executive Director in a bi-directional manner. Through a series of individual and group exercises that will form the core of the afternoon's work, the consultant will assist the Board and the Executive Director in developing 1) a clear list of expectations related to communicating progress and 2) a method and/or assessment that can be used immediately to this end. We can incorporate some already established methods and tools into our discussion.

2:30 Break

2:45 Building Systems of Communication and Accountability (Part 2)

3:30 Enhancing New Board Member Effectiveness

This exercise/discussion seems vital to maximizing the functioning of the Board. I am placing it at the end of the retreat to allow the new Board members more of an opportunity to feel comfortable articulating their needs. Also, some established Board members noted that "it is hard to know what you don't know as a new Board member." The retreat should have served as an education for the new members and they may be better able to articulate what they need from established members to get fully up to speed. The consultant will assist the Board in coming up with a specific plan to create a more effective orientation process for the future. This should be a relatively easy end-of-the-day activity that will yield positive results for future Board members.

4:30 Review, Next Steps, and Final Words

We will review everything that has been achieved, focus on upcoming deliverables and responsibilities, and establish deadlines.

5:00 Adjourn