



NADO ATC CONFERENCE

Reno, Nevada
October 19, 2026

BUILDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- ## AND BOARD RELATIONSHIPS
- Board Structure
 - Executive Director Contracts
 - Board Meeting Frequency
 - Invitees to Board Meetings
 - Personal Visits
 - Conferences
 - How Do You Deal with Difficult Board Members?

CASE STUDY

Background: The Southeast Regional Council (SERC) serves a six-county region by securing federal economic grants, planning infrastructure, and attracting employers. SERC has a 15-member board consisting of mayors, commissioners, and private sector representatives. A major automaker announced a multi-billion-dollar manufacturing plant just outside the region's northern border. The facility will create 4,000 jobs, requiring regional infrastructure upgrades.

The Challenge: Two highly influential board members, Mayor Vance (largest, wealthiest city) and Commissioner Diaz (rural, economically distress county), began aggressively pushing opposing agendas.

- Mayor Vance demanded the training hub be placed in his city. He threatened to withhold his city's annual SERC dues if he didn't get it. He intends to use the project to boost his upcoming re-election campaign.
- Commissioner Diaz boycotted meetings and publicly criticized SERC, demanding that 100% of the utility expansion budget go to his rural county, even though his county lacked current grid capacity to support it.

The gridlock stalled the grant application, risking a hard federal deadline.

STEPS YOU WOULD TAKE TO RESOLVE THE IMPASS...

CREATING PARTNERSHIPS

- Public Sector Partners
- Private Sector Partners
- Other Partners
- Do You Actively Recruit Partners?
- What are Some Characteristics You Look For in Seeking Partners?
- Challenges in Working with Partners

CASE STUDY

#2

Background: Middle State Regional Council (MSRC) is a regional development organization serving eight counties and thirty-five cities/towns. For many years, MSRC had operated in relative obscurity. They primarily wrote and administered grants for their member governments. Their longtime Director retired, and a new Director joined the organization. The new Director was a former Mayor and previously served on the MSRC Board of Directors. With his knowledge of the organization, the Director decided to have regional meetings with local elected officials, education and healthcare leaders, economic developers, and the private sector. The regional meeting aimed to gather input on the region's most pressing needs and determine how MSRC could help develop a plan to address them. The meeting identified several pressing issues, but the top issue was the lack of a quality workforce in the region. The MSRC region had the lowest percentage of its high school graduates obtaining any post-secondary education in the state.

CASE STUDY

#2

The Proposal: MSRC began studying low post-secondary education rates and brought a plan of action to a second regional meeting. The proposal was to place mentors in each high school in the region to help students complete the FAFSA application and arrange college visits. Most of the MSRC Board enthusiastically endorsed the plan.

The Challenge: This project would require funding to place mentors in high schools. The local governments did not have additional funds to support the project. Both the public and private sectors would need to work together to secure the necessary funding. Local chambers were hesitant because they did not want to risk losing funds to this project from their members. Counties bordering MSRC contacted MSRC about joining this project, but their RDO Directors had done nothing “outside the box”.

What recommendations do you have to resolve this dilemma?

TRUST

**WITHOUT ACHIEVING TRUST,
ACHIEVING POSITIVE RESULTS
IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE!**

THREE CAUSES OF DISTRUST IN ORGANIZATIONS AND TEAMS





CHANGE

UNCERTAINTY

INCONSISTENCY

RESULTS OF LOW TRUST.

• TURNOVER

- MARGINAL WORK**
- GOSSIP**
- INCREASED COSTS**
- SUSPICIOUSNESS**

OUTCOMES OF TRUST

- **HIGH PERFORMANCE**
- **ACHIEVED GOALS**
- **INNOVATION**
- **JOB SATISFACTION**

BEST PRACTICES TO BUILD TRUST

- **MAKE AND KEEP COMMITMENTS.**
- **EXPLAIN DECISIONS AND DIRECTION.**
- **GIVE RECOGNITION.**
- **SEEK AND IMPLEMENT FEEDBACK.**
- **SEVER GRAPEVINE.**
- **USE EMPATHY.**
- **ACKNOWLEDGE ERRORS.**
- **ENGAGE IN CRUCIAL**

COMMUNICATION

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KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- **BE CLEAR AND CONCISE.**
- **PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME.**
- **WATCH YOUR TONE.**
- **LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN!**
- **UNDERSTAND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION.**
- **IMPLEMENT A WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY.**
- **OVER COMMUNICATION IS BETTER THAN NO COMMUNICATION.**

MAKE CUSTOMER SERVICE PART OF YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- **CUSTOMER SERVICE HAS BECOME A FORGOTTEN ART
IN
THE PUBLIC SECTOR**
- **REMINDE YOUR TEAM WHO THEY WORK FOR**
- **IMPLEMENT CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING**
- **BE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT NOT EVERYONE AGREES
WITH YOUR POLITICS OR VIEWS**

DEALING WITH C.A.V.E PEOPLE

1. LISTEN TO THEM.
2. GET INTO THEIR SHOES.
3. STAY CALM.
4. CREATE A BUFFER.
Set a time limit. Don't meet alone.
5. WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS... EJECT!



GROUP DISCUSSION

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Consulting

Build Your Local Leadership Capacity

Joe W. Barker has been involved with local government and not-for-profit organizations for more than five decades. The success or failure of these organizations, mostly, depends on effective leadership.

“Building Local Leadership Capacity” is a two-hour training session focused on essential leadership traits: Creating A Vision, Building Trust, Communication, Team Building, and Asset-Based Planning.

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