



Membership Engagement Services

Democracy Healthcheck

The smooth running of ballots and elections is crucial to the perception of effective leadership and transparency within your organisation. It is vital that all related aspects of the electoral process are effectively managed as well. Problems in the nomination period or in post-election communication can undermine an otherwise successful process.

Even if your organisation has procedures which have been in place for years, there may well be room for improvement and a new approach might be beneficial. Remember - the effectiveness of your internal democracy will ultimately lead to a more democratic and coherent process for your members. Here are 10 points to consider when evaluating your electoral procedures:

1. Consider the very structure of your organisation's ruling body. Is it structured by region or trade for example? Is it too flat? Could a change bring you closer to your members? A summary & observational review of your structure with a fresh pair of eyes may be useful to allow you to take an overview and start asking some questions.
2. Analyse your voting trends over the past few years. Is it possible to break this down by gender, region, age or trade group for example? Are some voting but others not and if so why? Look at things like how many candidates you are attracting, turnout, and so on.
3. Ask colleagues who are involved in the electoral administration what works for them. Perhaps discuss current processes and areas of concern they may have. Perhaps procedures are being followed just because that is the way they have always been done. A different approach may prove to be very useful.
4. Talk to the candidates from past elections. Assess their views and observations on current processes and methods adopted. They may see things that we administrators do not and point things out from a different perspective.
5. How do you communicate with voters? Is it regularly and in a consistent & strategic way or is it more haphazard? Do they only hear from you when they receive a voting paper? Is the design and format of your voting material engaging and accessible? These issues can make a real difference if addressed properly.

6. Make the process transparent and understandable. Clarify areas of responsibility, timescales, what voters can expect and what is needed from candidates.
7. Ensure there is a complaints procedure and that this is logical and clear to all.
8. Do not impose unrealistic or unfair timetables. Putting yourself under unnecessary pressure, not giving candidates or voters enough time and cutting corners can compromise the process - a process that at all stages should be beyond reproach.
9. What do you do after an election? Do you liaise with the candidates? Do you support and induct the winners appropriately and consider the feelings of the losers sensitively? Do you ask them for feedback? Do you inform the members of the results of the election you were so keen for them to participate in the first place? Engage with your members - that is where participation and involvement starts.
10. After an electoral process is complete do you assess it and see what can be done better next time? A brief report on the process, kept on file for next time may be time well spent.

MES can help you with each one.

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