



Michael Worthington, Chief Executive Officer, Produce Marketing Association (PMA) Australia-New Zealand

Interview

with Michael Worthington

The success of any organisation depends upon the capacity of its Board to provide the vision and direction needed not only to survive but to develop and grow.

Produce Marketing Association Australia-New Zealand (PMA A-NZ), the first global affiliate of PMA, is a voluntary member organisation that adds value to the entire fresh produce and floral supply chain.

Michael Worthington, Chief Executive Officer, PMA A-NZ Limited, talks with us about leadership and Board performance.

MCI: As a volunteer-led association, what makes a good volunteer leader and why?

Being prepared to make decisions based on a good understanding of the organisation's needs, but then always testing these decisions with volunteers. Be decisive but bring people along.

MCI: How do you ensure volunteers and staff successfully share leadership responsibilities?

Keeping the two-way flow of information, but remembering that staff are there to get the work done and volunteers are there to provide guidance and support; each have their roles and responsibilities.

MCI: How does good governance matter to your organisation's performance?

No different to any other organisation, good governance is critical. By their very nature, volunteer organisations are supported by companies and individuals who give freely of their time and they have an expectation that the organisation is being well managed at all times.

MCI: How do you evaluate your Board performance?

Every year all Board members are provided

with clear objectives and responsibilities. Board meetings are continually evaluated, with key expected outcomes clearly shown for each and every agenda item. Staff (CEO) is closely involved with the Chairperson to make sure the Board is effective, inclusive and outcome-focused.

MCI: How do you achieve a faster decision-making process from your Board?

By providing comprehensive, concise and clear information to Board members for their review and then setting deadline dates for decisions.

MCI: How do you guard against the effects of dominant personalities on your Board?

By trying to ensure that all Board members have their say on all matters, both within the confines of the Board meetings and outside.

MCI: In your opinion, what attributes do high-performing Boards have?

Good Boards have a diversity of views and a good process to ensure those opinions

are debated before decisions are made; good Boards are integral to developing and implementing the strategic direction and they take the time to keep abreast of the issues affecting the organisation by being actively engaged.

MCI: Any suggestions on creating more Board member engagement and volunteerism from your members?

Identifying "what's in it for me" is the best way to get Board member engagement and people willing to participate in committees.

MCI: Do you have the feeling that Australian associations could do more to modernise their governance structures?

Often volunteer organisations have financial constraints which mean they cannot employ good leadership and management which in turn affects the standard of governance. All organisations should be able to develop standards of governance that are most effective for their organisation. ■

Insider's view

MCI: How does MCI help PMA leaders/ Fresh Connections Local Organising Committee (LOC) achieve faster decision-making?

Conducting an annual event design workshop determines stakeholder priorities and maps out the core requirements of that particular year's conference and trade show. Creating a robust event blueprint and comprehensive budget at the start of the planning period enables the team to anticipate decisions and proactively drives faster decision-making.

MCI: What role do you play within PMA's leadership?

Having built on the fundamentals of the PMA Fresh Connections conference and

trade show, I have taken on an account management role in providing greater strategic direction for the association's annual event.

After conducting an annual needs assessment with PMA A-NZ at the start of 2014, I coordinated a business analysis workshop facilitated by MCI's Asia Pacific COO, Oscar Cerezales. This workshop was designed to challenge the association and stimulate discussion around alternate models to achieve its objectives.

MCI: How often do you communicate with PMA's leadership?

I have been appointed to the event task force which provides overarching and strategic input into the planning of the

conference and trade show. It is through these formal quarterly meetings that I am kept abreast of new developments and planning progress across the event at all times. Additionally Michael and I have regular touch points throughout the year via phone, email and face-to-face - often inviting Michael and his team to share in social invitations from industry suppliers and other MCI networking opportunities to connect him with other like-minded associations. ■

Cindy-Lee Bakos
Project Director, MCI Australia

