Interface
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Keeping Up with the Changes
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As I thought about what to write about for the Spring issue of Trustee Quarterly that the membership might find relevant and useful, I looked around and realized that “the one thing that is constant is change.” Over the last few months, two of El Paso Community College’s board members resigned after they were elected as a state representative and a district court judge, respectively. I had worked with both of these individuals for a number of years. This spring, our college will also hold elections for three seats on our board of trustees.

Experiencing so many changes all at once is not unusual at my college, and I realize that my college is not unique in this respect. All of this made me think about change and how we as board professionals deal with it.

When I think about my work, I feel that I experience quite a lot of change throughout the day. I believe that most of us do. Whether it be the daily calendar that has to be adjusted for meetings that go too long, reports that you just spent several hours working on, travel itineraries that have to accommodate last-minute changes, or changes to your board meeting schedules or agendas — something is always changing.

Having worked directly with a college president and with members of the board of trustees for the last 24 years, I have learned how to adapt my habits based on the individuals that I worked with. It isn’t always easy and sometimes can be very frustrating. As a Professional Board Staff Network member, you probably have mastered this skill as well.

Having pondered all of this, I decided to see what Webster’s Dictionary had to say about change as it relates to our jobs. The definition of change as a transitive verb includes: a) to make different in some particular: alter; b) to make radically different: transform; c) to give a different position, course, or direction to; d) to replace with another; and e) to make a shift from one to another: switch. As an intransitive verb, the definitions included: a) to become different; and b) to undergo transformation, transition, or substitution.

As a noun, the definition was the act, process, or result of changing: such as a) alteration; b) transformation; and c) substitution.

The one word that really stood out to me was transformation. As board professionals, we see transformation in everything around us. We see it on our college campuses with the growth and development of new programs, we see it in our students as they graduate, we see it in our presidents, and we see it on our boards. But do we see the transformation in ourselves?

How can we transform? While there is the old saying that “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” I don’t believe that is true. Although change can be scary, it is a necessity for the board professional — to keep up with change, at times to catalyze change, and to change ourselves. I am sure that all of us have had to learn a few new “tricks” to keep up with the demanding jobs we are in. I know I have!

Among the things we can do to transform on the job: Take advantage of opportunities at your college. As college employees, we are in the best place to take a class to improve our expertise.

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in numerous areas. Many of our institutions offer continuing education courses that will allow us to update existing skills and even learn a few new ones. Technology is always the first thing that comes to mind. It seems as soon as we become proficient in one area, the technology is changing again. There are several other areas that come to mind when thinking about updating our abilities, such as writing, public speaking, time management, and leadership, just to name a few. Do more with the PBSN — and bring your peers! Becoming involved in PBSN is another way to learn a few new tricks to help you on the job. Each year at our conference, we cover relevant information that can assist the board professional in our day-to-day jobs. Networking with your peers from around the country is essential in learning from others. The new board professional can learn from those of us who are more seasoned, and the more seasoned members can learn new and innovative ideas from our younger counterparts. We all have something meaningful that can be shared with each other. For example, I was never comfortable speaking in front of a group of people. Since becoming active in PBSN, I have forced myself out of my comfort zone and am becoming more at ease addressing an audience. I have learned so much from my peers and have made so many new friendships along the way.

As I think back to the trailblazers who created PBSN and worked to be recognized by ACCT, I am reminded that they were seeking change as well. I pulled this from a PBSN brochure from 2011: “In October 1993, board staff assistants and secretaries attended workshops at the ACCT annual convention in Toronto. Those attending realized a need for a more formal networking mechanism to offer year-round support and outreach to higher education board staff.”

A founding committee was formed and submitted a proposal to ACCT, which was later approved. The Professional Board Staff Network (PBSN) was recognized and the first officers were elected during the ACCT Leadership Congress in October 1994.

This February, the current PBSN Board met during the ACCT National Legislative Summit in Washington, D.C. Our conversation focused on planning for the PBSN workshop and business meeting during the ACCT Leadership Congress in San Francisco this October. As we considered topics to discuss this year, we also talked about how we could change our format for upcoming conferences. We will continue to explore those ideas throughout the coming months and will share this information during our business meeting in October to be voted on by the members of the Association. The officers hope that these proposed changes will improve the experience for our members.

Help transform the Network. As ACCT celebrates its 50th anniversary in October, PBSN will celebrate its 25th anniversary. As members, I believe it is all of our responsibilities to continue to move the organization forward. We will continue to strive to provide an opportunity for the members to network and learn from each other during our workshops. Consider running for an office on the PBSN board. It is a great experience and a way to “pay it forward.”

I hope all of you can attend the ACCT Congress in San Francisco this October. I look forward to learning from each of you!
A Message for Professional Board Staff Network from ACCT

ACCT’s board and staff understand how many responsibilities professional board staff juggle, how many hats you wear on any given day.

On behalf of all of us at the association, we thank you sincerely for the effort that you put into this work.

Please remember that this association is your association as well. We have a great deal of resources to assist your college, and we want them to be as easy to access as they can be. If you need advice, guidance, reference material, or other resources about governance, advocacy, or any special issue your campus is facing, please don’t hesitate to contact us. If you need any help accessing resources online or getting a hold of printed copies – or anything else – please do not hesitate to ask.

We appreciate everything you do to support the vital missions of your colleges, and we are here to support your work. Our website, [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org), includes an abundance of resources. By going directly to [www.acct.org/members](http://www.acct.org/members), you’ll have ready access to an overview of ACCT membership benefits, a section of the site dedicated to the Professional Board Staff Network, and much more.

Please contact Membership Services Associate Diane Hsiung at dhsiung@acct.org or (202) 775-4452 for all your membership needs.