



Dr. Jack Cottrell

The Foundation of Trust

The relationship between the leadership and membership in any organization is the fundamental link in a chain of elements that ultimately leads to member satisfaction.

In these times of continuous change, associations are faced with a variety of phenomena and occurrences that can greatly affect the needs and wants of both its individual and corporate members. An association must be nimble enough to adapt to this constant flux while also recognizing that change cannot be effectively achieved in the absence of a solid foundation of trust. A framework for building such a foundation is based on adhering to 3 imperatives: delivering results, acting with integrity and demonstrating concern.

The delivery of results helps CDA members thrive and prosper within the current professional environment. Establishing clear, ambitious and strategic goals places a high degree of responsibility on CDA and allows our performance to be measured. Communicating our actions, and paying attention to detail while executing these strategies, ensures that our members receive first-class results. For instance, when members asked for more tangible benefits, CDA delivered by offering the Lexi-Comp drug databases and the Member Savings Centre.

The next imperative is integrity, which I define as a combination of honesty and consistency. People will trust those who are honest in what they say and consistent in how they act. Integrity within an organization requires a commitment to follow a set of values and operating principles. CDA's governance structure is based on transparency and accountability — both of which are consistently achieved by the leadership of the Association.

Integrity requires acting in a cohesive manner within a culture that emphasizes inclusiveness and knowledge-sharing. It also means having the fortitude to deal with the challenges and prob-

lems that have an impact on our membership, while realistically assessing the areas where we can or cannot effect change.

The final imperative of trust entails demonstrating concern by showing that the organization understands and is responsive to the needs of its membership. The size, diversity and segmentation of the CDA membership base make this a challenging endeavour. Our Association must avoid favouring the interests of a particular segment of the membership if these interests conflict with the interests of the membership as a whole.

To demonstrate true concern, it is important that we encourage a “one-vision” mentality which reinforces the idea that we are all connected and members of the same team. The collective goals and needs of the profession must guide the overall strategies of our Association.

Delivering results, acting with integrity and demonstrating concern can sometimes conflict with each other. For example, the CDA Board of Directors constantly wrestles with balancing the urgency and prudence of meeting financial targets, prioritizing projects and delivering results. The challenge lies in developing and strengthening the organization so it can achieve an ideal balance between all 3 imperatives while keeping the concerns of its membership foremost in its strategies.

Encouraging a sense of familiarity and establishing an open dialogue is paramount. We need to be approachable and available to all members, both individual and corporate, and we must continue to listen to and understand their concerns. Above all, the Association must avoid any tendency toward a paternalistic culture that defines its members by a membership number rather than as dedicated professionals who perform an essential health care service to the citizens of this country.

A foundation of trust should permeate every aspect of an organization's culture, beginning and ending with the actions of the leadership. Sustaining an appropriate balance between results, integrity and concern is difficult for any association. However, leaders must model these 3 imperatives of trust themselves, personally exhibiting this behaviour and reinforcing a culture of integrity. This helps CDA members realize that they belong to a responsive, dynamic and accountable association.

Jack Cottrell, BSc, DDS
president@cda-adc.ca

“The collective goals and needs of the profession must guide the overall strategies of our Association.”