



PROFESSIONAL BODIES

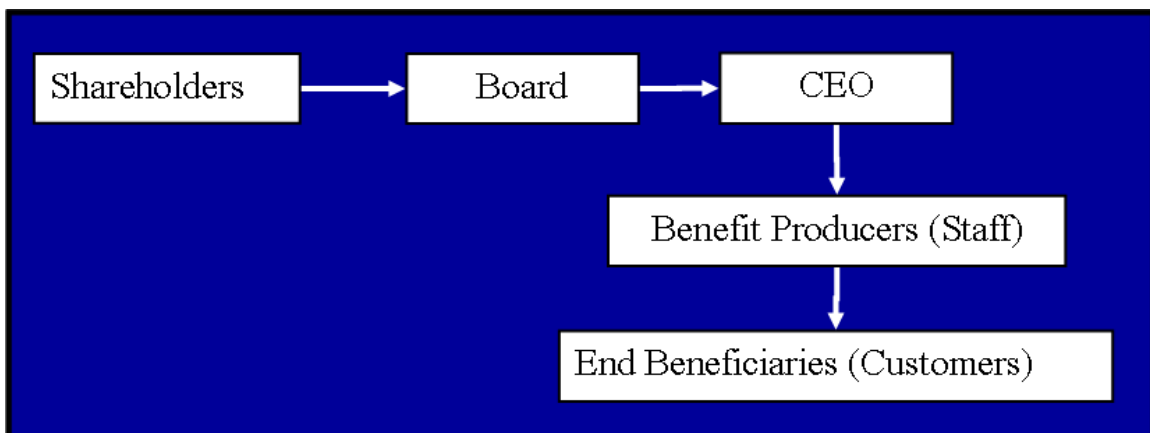
MANAGING THE COMPLEX STAKEHOLDER MIX

Within Professional Bodies, Learned Societies and other representative organisations, there are numerous in-built conflicts, largely connected with how the different people involved interact with each other.

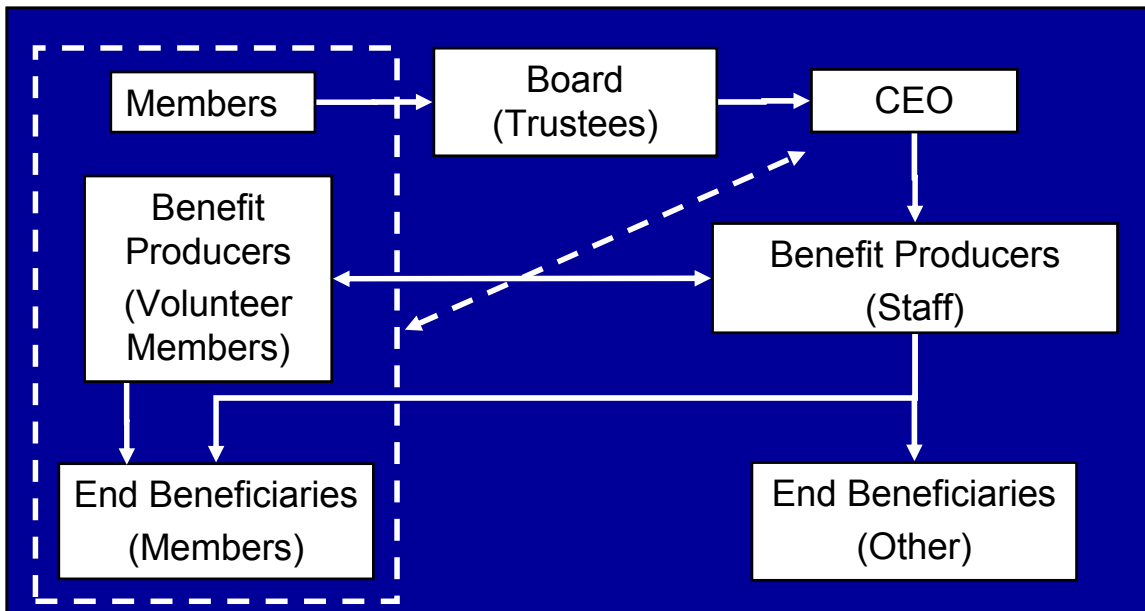
Whilst the stakeholder mix may be very broad, often the biggest issue is how the interfaces work between:

- the Board (the Council, the Trustees)
- the Members
- the Chief Executive
- the Staff (employees).

In commercial organisations a Chief Executive must strive to meet the requirements of the Board (who represent the shareholders) and to do so by delivering benefits to customers via the Staff (employees). This is of course a gross oversimplification in terms of the corporate stakeholder mix, but in pure “line management” terms, that’s about it!



However, the Chief Executive of a Professional Body faces a far more complex situation, where Members are the nearest equivalent to shareholders, but are often also the prime beneficiaries of the activity. Furthermore, Members are often also at the forefront of delivering the benefits. Thus Members have a more complex attachment to their Professional Body than mere shareholders would to their company, and this leads to a myriad of potential conflicts.



Members of the Professional Body occupy many roles, and this can lead to real difficulties when defining the division of responsibility between those involved. Members can be:

- Subscribers to the cause/altruistic champions
- Beneficiaries themselves
- Deliverers of the benefits (volunteer workers)
- Local branch office-holders
- Members of the various committees which form a part of the governance structure
- The constituency that elects the Trustees
- The de facto “owners” of the organisation
- Simply practitioners or consultants.

Given this mix of roles, Members will naturally seek to have a high level of influence over policy and action, although the way that they seek to do so is not always very well structured and can be disruptive.

There are yet more factors that can add to the challenge:

- Trustees are not always clear as to how to fill their role and sometimes step outside it unwittingly, causing management difficulties
- Trustees are very often drawn from the profession that the body represents rather than from the world of business, and whilst Officers and Staff are appointed to run the business, individual Trustees often get involved in the day-to-day aspects of the business to an extent which is not only beyond their responsibility but also their expertise
- Often there are too many Trustees, making consensus difficult to achieve
- Trustees, being unpaid, are there for the non-financial benefits, including simple enjoyment. Therefore they may naturally tend to want to get involved in aspects of the organisation's work which are of most interest to them personally
- Often the Trustee selection process results in a Board of Trustees that does not possess an ideal mix of experience, wisdom, influence and "standing", but rather one that is no more than a collection of individuals representing a rag-bag of differing views and causes
- Staff members wishing to curry favour with Trustees can undermine the Chief Executive.

These are often the harsh realities and are thorny to deal with, but a failure to address the issues can result in Chief Executives spending their entire working day on managing the interface between themselves, their staff, the wider membership and the Board.

There is usually a further network of stakeholders who have an interest in the wellbeing and activities of the Professional Body and wish to be involved in, consulted on, or at least kept informed about the development of the profession. These may include:

- Academics and others involved in education
- Employers
- Government regulatory agencies
- Charity Commission
- Privy Council
- Ex Trustees and other “very senior” members of the profession
- International affiliated groups
- Related Trade Bodies.

It is essential that communications with these important groups are well designed, and managed at a senior level because, again, if they are not, such is the nature of the beast that many Chief Executives will find themselves spending a disproportionate amount of time on this, at the expense of other parts of the business.

Innovating, improving performance and developing the business in other ways is very difficult if the stakeholder environment is not conducive to bringing about change.

Oriel helps Professional Bodies to create the circumstances where they can deliver results, even in these turbulent times.

We work with Management Teams to develop revenue streams, create strategies to achieve the objectives and move the organisation forward.

For further information or an exploratory discussion,

call Oriel on 01252 727625

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