



How to Prioritize “Urgent” and “Important” Tasks

A very common complaint that our law firm hears from association board members is that the board never accomplishes anything. Some boards complain that they spend a majority of their time “firefighting” maintenance issues and dealing with angry or litigious homeowners. That being said, many boards never spend time thinking about strategic long-term planning for the association, funding reserves and important/urgent problems with difficult solutions. In my opinion, association boards need to radically change how they prioritize their important and urgent tasks as board members to create healthy and successful associations.

The Eisenhower Principle Can Be a Guide to Associations

In a 1954 speech to the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was quoting Dr. J. Roscoe Miller, president of Northwestern University, said: “I have two kinds of problems: the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent.” This “Eisenhower Principle” is said to be how he organized his workload and priorities.

Eisenhower recognized that great time management means being effective as well as efficient. In other words, we must spend our time on things that are important and not just the ones that are urgent. To do this, and to minimize the stress of having too many tight deadlines, we need to understand this distinction:

- **Important activities** have an outcome that leads to us achieving our goals.
- **Urgent activities** demand immediate attention, and are usually associated with achieving some else’s goals. They are often the ones we concentrate on and they demand attention because the consequences of not dealing with them are immediate.

When we know which activities are important and which are urgent, we can overcome the tendency to focus on unimportant urgent activities (such as fire fighting maintenance issues that could be delegated to others such as your manager or responding to hundreds of emails), so that we can clear enough time to do what’s essential for our success. This is the way we move from “firefighting” into a position where we can truly improve our associations.

How to Use Eisenhower’s Principle

To use this principle, list all of the activities and projects that your board needs to do. Try to include everything that takes up your time as a board member, however unimportant. Next, think about each activity and put it into one of



How to Accomplish the Board's Goals Using the Eisenhower Method

four categories:

1. Important and urgent.
2. Important but not urgent.
3. Not important but urgent.
4. Not important and not urgent.

Then schedule tasks and activities based on their importance and urgency.

Source: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_91.htm

Analysis of Strategic Challenges for _____.

Step One: List Your challenges/problems and rate level of urgency and importance (between 1-10, with 10 being highest urgency and importance).

1. Urgency # — _____ Importance # _____
2. Urgency # — _____ Importance # _____
3. Urgency # — _____ Importance # _____
4. Urgency # — _____ Importance # _____
5. Urgency # — _____ Importance # _____
6. Urgency # — _____ Importance # _____
7. Urgency # — _____ Importance # _____
8. Urgency # — _____ Importance # _____

Step Two: Graph your problems on the following chart below and determine which challenges/problems you need to do now, schedule on the calendar, assign or delegate or drop.



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	My Condominium Board Challenges	Urgent	Important
1.	Create 2024 Budget	4	9
2.	Owner threatening to sue over lack of electric car charging station	8	8
3.	Prior embezzlement / follow-up (criminal hearing, attendance, contact bank, contact insurance co.)	10	10
4.	Special Assessment of \$160k (need vote of owners)	7	7
5.	Flowers in planters dying (homeowners complaining)	2	3
6.	Allegations and complaints by former board member	2	3
7.	Master association resists change; not functioning properly	1	6
8.	Problem owner with rule violations	3	4
9.	Association finances (CDs expiring soon, FDIC insurance)	9	9
10.	Lack of Reserve Fund	4	8
11.	Handyman insurance for building	2	2