



# Tools to Thrive in Community Living

2018 Condo-HOA Conference & Expo  
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## Stop The Madness!

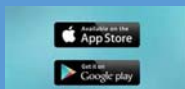
How Effective Communication Can Make Your Life Easier

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## Different Kinds of People

- The Board Member
  - a. The Boss
  - b. The Pessimist
  - c. The Micromanager
  - d. The Socialite/Chatterbox
  - e. The Hothead

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## Different Kinds of People

- The Owner
  - a. The Repeat Offender
  - b. The Complainer
  - c. The Hijacker of Board Meetings
  - d. The Former Board Member

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## How to Successfully Work with Difficult People

➤ **What To Do**

- Proactive Communication
- Detailed Communication (Newsletters/Websites)
- Listen
- Acknowledge the Problem/Validate Them
- Be Professional

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## How to Successfully Work with Difficult People

➤ **What To Do (cont.)**

- Be a Problem Solver
- Wear Kid Gloves When Needed (Disability Claims/Litigious Person)
- Seek Advice
- Show Empathy
- Promote Being a Team

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## How to Successfully Work with Difficult People (cont.)

➤ **What NOT To Do:**

- Take It Personally
- Let the Difficult Person Paralyze/Control You
- Communicate Only By E-Mail (EVIDENCE!)
- Try to Change the Other Person's Mind
- Wait to Seek Advice When It Is Too Late (and Too Hostile!)

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## Discussion on How to Be a More Effective Communicator

**Best Practices**

- Designate one person to deal with the difficult person
- Before you respond too quickly, stop and think about your response
- Set a realistic goal for each communication
- Rely on Your Team

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# Electronic Communications

By Gabriella R. Comstock

With technology, we all can communicate so quickly, with more than one person. In the association world, it allows board members to discuss issues well in advance of a board meeting, so that business can really be achieved at the meeting. Just as easily, technology also permits Owners to communicate with board members. Questions can be submitted so answers can be given quickly. Owners can submit complaints, in writing, to the Board. Yet, the convenience that technology enables for other parts of our lives also creates problems for association living.

Electronic mail has become the primary means of communication. As such, its use has created a new source of challenges for associations. Ask any board member how often she gets an e-mail from an owner who is submitting a request or a complaint, and the answer will likely be too often to keep track. Then ask the same board member how often *before* an answer is given to the Owner does the board member stop and think “how will this response affect the Association?” Likely, the number of times that occurs can be counted on one hand.

The following are some common problems created by the many ways we communicate.

**Board Member Statements Affecting an Association.** How does what a board member say affect the Association? Is the board member speaking in her capacity as such or simply as a neighbor? Often it is a distinction without a difference. If a dispute or litigation develops centering around such statements, admissions made by the board member may be used against the Association and/or part of the Owner’s defense.

**How does what a board member says expose the board member to individual liability?** Tortious, reckless or discriminatory commentary imperils both the board member and the association. A board member has a fiduciary obligation to uphold for the association.

**What should and should not be said in an email?** If you cannot say it in an open meeting, do not say it in an email! Further, assume that such communication will get into the “wrong” parties hands. Avoid personal commentary.

**Other issues raised by communicating via email** include (a) Attorney-Client Privilege; (b) Discovery in Litigation; (c) Saving e-mail communications; and (d) Deleting e-mails. Boards are advised to adopt a policy governing e-mail communication addressing each of the foregoing.

Caution is advised to each board member that communicates orally or in writing on behalf of the association she represents. Cavalier statements have no place in the administration of board business and may serve to prejudice its interests. Periodically assessing the manner in which a board conveys information to the homeowners who they serve is good practice.