



FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO A BORING BOARD IS A GOOD THING

BY ROB DINGMAN

It is not often that the AMA Board of Directors is addressed in this column. And that's actually a good thing, because it means the activities of the AMA Board, while vitally important to our members, aren't really all that interesting, and rarely exciting enough to hold your attention through even a short column.

Let's be honest...good governance is kind of a snooze, and in this case, boring is a very good thing. This subject is on my mind because our board recently concluded its first meeting of the year in Florida, just prior to Daytona Bike Week. I also conducted a day of new board member training for a couple of our board's newest members, and one who had managed to avoid the training since he had joined the board during COVID.

I think new board members are struck by how complex an organization the AMA really is, and how many different facets it has. The training addresses not only those complexities, but the responsibilities of board members and their need to be accountable while holding their fellow members accountable, as well.

See? It's all quite boring. But here's why that's good.

There was a lot of palace intrigue at the AMA when I began my tenure as president and CEO almost two decades ago. Palace intrigue in an organization is frequently a result of bad or misaligned corporate governance, and that was certainly the case at the AMA back then.

At that time, some board members were using the AMA to further their own personal or business interests, as the board was then dominated by industry representatives and those involved in race promotion. There was

little to no accountability among board members. One was even caught embezzling AMA members' money by padding expense accounts.

Quarterly board meetings were typically scheduled for two full days, and the board rarely got through their entire agenda. The board was generally preoccupied with professional racing issues, while the needs of the

AT THAT TIME, SOME BOARD MEMBERS WERE USING THE AMA TO FURTHER THEIR OWN PERSONAL OR BUSINESS INTERESTS, AS THE BOARD WAS THEN DOMINATED BY INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES AND THOSE INVOLVED IN RACE PROMOTION. THERE WAS LITTLE TO NO ACCOUNTABILITY AMONG BOARD MEMBERS.

membership often took a back seat. Contentious meetings were the norm.

I dreaded those early meetings because many of the board members treated them like a game of gotcha, hoping to trip me up so they could pin the blame on someone other than themselves for the failings of the organization.

The sale of professional racing assets in 2008 completely changed the dynamic of our board of directors. (For a full examination of the sale of professional racing, see our September and November 2024 issues.) Representatives from both business members and individual members of the AMA sit on our board, and this shift was helped by the fact that a majority of our 12 board members are now individual members, while only four are elected from business members.

Other improvements included the creation of a board nominating committee to help find qualified candidates, and the imposition of term limits on board members.

Fast forward to today, and what a difference from that early period. Today's AMA Board of Directors is highly functional and accountable to each other — and most importantly to our membership.

Under the leadership of AMA Board Chairman Russ Ehnes, good governance and accountability have been common themes among board

members for the last several years. The current board works very well together. Members respect each other's views and set their personal and business interests aside. They recognize they are there for the good of the AMA and our members. Just as important, this respect extends from the AMA executive staff, who welcome the board's role in keeping us accountable, as well.

The board today has a great committee structure, and much of the board's work is done in committees and then brought before the full board for a vote. This has enabled the completion of board meetings in less than a day, all while being much more productive.

I'll take boring good governance over palace intrigue any day of the week!

Rob Dingman is the President and CEO of the AMA, and a Charter Life Member.

