

Organizations and Their Leaders as
**BEACONS OF HOPE,
DRIVERS OF POSSIBILITY**

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Let's be honest – there have been calmer starts to the decade than what we have experienced in the 2020's. Yet, as we approach the halfway mark, our organizations and leaders need to choose what story they want to tell about the years to come.



In a time of uncertainty, do we reinforce instability?

In a time of rapid advancements, do we concentrate our voices on what we don't know?

In an age of new discoveries, do we retreat to the 'safe space' of what has always been?

In a time of division, do we circle the wagons and build higher walls, leaning into perceived safety in isolation?


The stakes have never been higher for how much society needs associations to provide the architecture and strength to lead professions and causes into the future. We are rapidly learning what we need to know to navigate ever-shifting waters. We need to carefully and willingly sunset that which once served us well but no longer does, to create capacity for the innovations and advancements we need to build. It is a time of amazing possibilities. It is a time of ever deeper potential pitfalls. It is a time where mission-focused and strategic leadership is not a "want to have," but a necessity.

Fear will not drive organizations to success in this critical moment.

As we look to the year to come, as we look to how we approach the rest of this decade, we NEED our organizations – and every leader's voice – to be a beacon of hope. We need to create the narrative of the world we want to see – not by echoing the messages of fear and threat that surround us from every outlet – but by demonstrating how, through the strength of community and association, we see a future that is better than today. This tone, this culture, this promise of building a better tomorrow is how associations will thrive.

I want to be clear – I am not professing taking the route of the ostrich or for leaders to put their heads in the sand and ignore the challenges of the present. Nor am I asking for a Pollyanna "everything is wonderful" perspective. We live in a moment with no shortage of challenges, and it is critical to face them head on, acknowledging they exist, and trying to understand the many perspectives and ever-emerging circumstances defining each.

Associations were built to meet and overcome challenge. We do not face any challenge – to society, to a profession, to our organizations – alone. We have



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strength in community. What we need are voices to provide inspirational projections of real future possibilities and to work together to make them reality. It does not mean everything will always work out, and by striving together, the outcome will be better.

Leaders and organizations must not be afraid to acknowledge the challenges their members face. They are the center-point, the clarion call to bring the community together with a clarity of purpose – uniting their hopes for the future to pursue the future they want to see.

We need our boards, our leaders, our organizations to be beacons of hope – drawing to that light all who want to build a mission- and purpose-focused future. We need our organizations to be builders of possibility.

2030 is not far away – I believe we can create a path – through all the messages of fear, hate, and despair – built with hope, possibility, confidence, resilience, and powerful voices of purpose, direction, accomplishment, and welcoming.

Perhaps that is an item for your next Board agenda.

For questions about board governance or to learn more about Vista Cova, contact Lowell at Lowell@vistacova.com.



Meet Lowell

LOWELL APLEBAUM, EDD; FASAE; CAE; CPF IS THE CEO OF VISTA COVA – a company that partners with organizations on strategic visioning and planning, reviewing & aligning governance structures, training stronger Board members, and providing expert facilitation. As an IAF Certified™ Professional Facilitator, Lowell frequently provides dynamic sessions to organizations - getting volunteers, members, and staff involved through experiential learning approaches.