Possibly the best counsel to an incoming elected president comes from a past president.¹

**Time Flies** – Though you may have some anxiety about the year ahead, time will pass quickly. Before you know it half the term will have passed. The last months will come and you’ll wish you had more time.

**Simple** – Keep it simple. Don’t complicate the job by setting too many initiatives, too lofty goals or too many assignments.

**Not a Prom** – First comes the exhilaration of winning the election, soon after follows the installation. Remember it’s not a prom and it’s not about you. Don’t mistake the meeting gavel for a crown or scepter.

**Perspective** – Remember your perspective. “There will be instances when you would like to vote your preference or conscious but you must always make decisions in the best interest of the organization,” explains Shannon Bone, past president of the Tennessee Chiropractic Association.

**Don’t Take Yourself Too Serious** – You’re responsible for guiding the association. Don’t start out thinking about leaving a legacy or creating to-do lists for others.

**Listen** – Listen more than you speak. “You should facilitate discussions rather than dominate them. Listen to the ideas or concerns of others and facilitate a dialog to reach consensus instead of trying to impose your will,” offers executive director Peter McNamara, CEO at the New Hampshire Automobile Dealers Association.

**Respect** – As president you’ll encounter new ideas and people. Diversity adds value to the organization. You don’t want to only include your friends on committees.

**Mission Driven** – Know the mission statement, it is the organization’s purpose for existence. Every action and discussion should be framed by the mission.

¹ Elected president might also be called chair of the board.
Strategic Plan – Your job is to advance the plan; familiarize yourself with it and keep it on the board table.

Bylaws – The bylaws describe your relationship and responsibilities between leadership and membership. Follow them precisely.

Discipline – There will be many distractions such as member grievances, demands, challenges, and limited resources. Stay the course with discipline and dedication.

Best Friend – The executive director is your work partner; respect their responsibility for management while you govern. There may be occasions when you must respond to questions about the role of the executive and what they do; be prepared to show your support.

Timeliness – A sure way to demonstrate efficiency is to be timely. Start and end meetings on time to respect the commitment of volunteers.

The Agenda – An agenda ensures a meeting will have a purpose and achieve results. Craft agendas so that meetings conclude with actions (not only listening to reports.)

Collaborate – Don’t work in a silo; find new partners with which to collaborate. Nearly all alliances make an organization stronger.

Perspective – Develop and share your vision of success. Communicate it clearly with performance metrics.

What’s Next – Make sure every meeting ends with action items and deadlines. “No one should leave a meeting feeling uncertain about what is happening next,” says Jill Bryant, past president of the NC Optometric Society.

Pass along these tips to incoming officers.

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and tools at www.nonprofitcenter.com.