



Peter Walpole
Condominium
Corporation Director

Your Manager is not Your Clerical Assistant

By training and personality, your condo manager is a skilled organizer. By government regulation, the manager is a trained professional — having studied for, and passed, a set of carefully developed courses and exams. Your manager is required, and willing, to take continuing training.

Put simply: your manager is a professional. You can think of your manager in the same terms as your condo's lawyer, your physician, the Reserve Fund engineer, or even your electrician and plumber. As a general concept, a professional has the particular knowledge and skills necessary to perform their specific role within that profession. Professionals are required to complete detailed training (usually over a number of years), display a defined set of skills, and adhere to a professional code of conduct.

The pay scales of professionals may vary greatly. However, we expect all professionals to perform to a given set of expectations. What your professional

condo manager is not, is your personal assistant, your personal clerk, or your punching bag.

If you would not ask your lawyer, or your plumber to do a task, then you should never ask your manager to do it. Your manager is hired to manage a corporation — much as a CEO might be tasked with managing a railway, a factory or a hospital.

The manager's day-to-day tasks will include finances, staffing, investor relations and other high-end duties. They might involve responding to disasters, complaints or failures. Duties will inevitably relate to safety issues, trades and construction, and personnel. Ask your manager to list the various duties carried out just yesterday — it might be illuminating.

What your manager should not be asked to do is make coffee, organize a social event, prepare posters for such an event, shop for gifts, or attend events that have nothing to do with managing the condo.

Your manager should be encouraged to attend training sessions, or meetings of other condo managers — but only 'on the clock.' Do not suggest such meetings be held after hours. Be prepared to offer time off in lieu.

Your manager should never be called at home to discuss board issues. You might reasonably call your manager's personal phone for incidents such as 'murder in unit 602,' or 'a fire/flood in the underground parking garage,' or even, 'the Superintendent just quit.' But calling about the budget, next week's meeting agenda, or a complaint from unit 1012 should be understood as totally unacceptable. You'd never call your physician at home about an in-grown toenail or a headache. Same concept.

Rethink your relationship with your manager. Elevate your expectations from clerical to managerial, from petty cash to multi-million-dollar projects, from cigarette butts in the lobby to multi-thousand





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cost overruns. Your manager is way too busy to be designing posters or producing your newsletter.

Rethink the responsibilities of the board and its directors. Communications is a board responsibility. Balancing a budget is your responsibility. You are obliged to follow professional guidance. So, don't be asking advice from your lawyer, engineer or manager, and then go do your own thing.

Think like a board of directors (not a coffee club). Follow professional advice

diligently, and respect your manager as a professional. If you can't do so, then you need to resign. If your manager does not act professionally, then it's time for a replacement. But the new manager will expect to be treated with respect as a manager, not a clerical assistant to the board. ■

Peter Walpole has been a director of a condo board for a number of years — having been elected, acclaimed and appointed. He was also a director of the CCI Huronia chapter.

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