#60 What is success as a professional regulatory body?

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Professional regulatory bodies and professional associations have different definitions of success. This is hardly surprising given that professional regulatory bodies and professional associations have different missions and mandates. It is interesting to note however that the definition of success is often implicit rather than explicit. Nonetheless, having an explicit statement of success is important for any organization.

The ultimate definition of success for any not-for-profit organization is to do an excellent job of carrying out its objects. For professional regulatory bodies success also includes being seen to carry out its objects well. For professional regulatory bodies, stakeholders’ perceptions are an intrinsic component of what makes professional regulatory bodies successful.

The idea here is that the definition of success follows from the mission and mandate of the organization which is set out in the objects of the corporation. HRPA does not have a single object but a set of interrelated objects. One can take each object and write out for each a description of what success would look like if the object were carried out well.

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<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>What success looks like</th>
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<td>...to promote and protect the public interest by governing and regulating the practice of members of the Association and firms in accordance with this Act and the by-laws</td>
<td>That as a result of effective governance and regulation, members and firms practice the profession of human resources management in a competent and ethical manner that is consistent with the promotion and protection of the public interest</td>
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...to promote and increase the knowledge, skill and proficiency of members of the Association, firms and students

That members of the Association, firms and students are knowledgeable, skilled, and proficient in the practice the profession of human resources management

...to promote and protect the welfare and interests of the Association and of the human resources profession

That the Association is a strong and effective professional regulatory body and that the profession of human resources management is well regarded as a profession

...to promote inter-professional collaboration with other professional bodies

That the Association develops and maintains collaborative relations with other professional bodies

...to address any other matter that relates to the regulation of its members that the Board considers appropriate

That the Association’s regulatory activities are comprehensive and address whatever other matters may not specifically covered elsewhere

This leads to a somewhat cumbersome definition of success, however. Just like a mission statement is a paraphrase of the objects of the Association, one could arrive at a success statement which would be a paraphrase of the fuller success definition. Of course, as with all paraphrases, some detail and nuances are missed, but as long as the gist of the fuller definition of success is maintained the success statement should work out.

In developing a success statement, we need to remember that in the same way the objects are to be given a harmonious interpretation, so should be the definitions of success. No aspect of success should be interpreted in such a way that it would detract from other aspects of success. The table below offers a suggestion as to a more succinct definition of success for HRPA which attempts to pull all the elements together.

<table>
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<td>Professional association</td>
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<td>Lots of members who are satisfied with the products and services offered by the association, who make use of the products and services offered by the association, who purchase additional products and services from the association, who intend to renew, and who would recommend membership in the association to others.</td>
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Professional regulatory body

That the profession and its members live up to the social contract the profession and its members have made with society, and that potential harms to the public and users of the professional service stemming from the practice of the profession have been reduced, suppressed, mitigated or eliminated.

Also, that government, the public, and other stakeholders perceive the professional regulatory body to be doing a good job of fulfilling its statutory mandate.

Having come up with a definition of success for HRPA based on its statutory objects, it is interesting to note how this definition of success (1) would apply to any and all professional regulatory bodies, and (2) is different from that which would be typical of professional associations. As noted at the outset, professional regulatory bodies such as HRPA and professional associations have different missions and mandates. It is not surprising, then, that they would have different definitions of success. This becomes quite clear when these definitions are placed side-by-side.

Of course, the work isn’t quite done. For a definition of success to be truly useful, measurable indicators for each of the elements of the definition of success would need to be developed. This is where things
can get tricky. Nonetheless, having a definition of success makes it clear what the organization is all about.