The term customer implies a transactional, purchase-of-service type relationship between professionals and their professional regulatory body. This is definitely not the right way of thinking about this relationship. The relationship between members and their professional regulatory body is multi-faceted. There are three key facets to this relationship:

1. Members are supporters of the corporation and its mission and mandate,
2. Members are participants in the governance of their professional regulatory body
3. Members are professionals subject to the authority of their professional regulatory body

A core feature of professional self-regulation is that members are both the regulators and the regulated.

**Supporters of the corporation and its mission and mandate**

Associations are a collective of individuals with a common purpose. As the Act puts it: “the Association is composed of its members.” The common purpose which binds HRPA members together is the fulfilment of the objects of the corporation which are set which are set out in section 4 of the Act. Individuals, in becoming members of the HRPA, agree to support the mission and mandate of the corporation, which is to manage the profession in the public interest. Members support the mission and mandate of the corporation in two ways: (1) by paying dues, and (2) by volunteering.
All this support must go towards, and only towards, the carrying out of the objects of the corporation. If for no other reason, members should understand the objects of the corporation. This is why, upon initial registration with HRPA, and upon annual renewal after that, members are required to attest to the fact that they have read and agree to abide by Act and the By-laws of the corporation. This binds all members to the objects of the corporation.

Customers, on the other hand, do not necessarily support the aims of the organizations from which they purchase products and services.

**Participants in the governance of the corporation**

Members participate in the governance of the corporation by (1) voting in a Board of Directors who will manage the affairs of the corporation on their behalf, and by (2) ratifying the By-laws passed by the Board.

“Not only is thinking of members as customers inaccurate, it understates and undervalues the true meaning of being a member of a professional regulatory body.”

Members elect individuals to the HRPA Board of Directors. Members should not elect Board members who they believe would best serve their interests, members should elect individuals who they believe will do the best job of guiding the corporation in carrying out its objects. Board members are like trustees. A trustee is "an individual person or member of a board given control or powers of administration of property in trust with a legal obligation to administer it solely for the purposes specified1." The Board of Directors of the Association manage and administer the Association’s affairs on behalf of the members in accordance with the Act and the by-laws.

The purpose of having members ratify the by-laws passed by the Board of Directors is to provide a check on the powers of the Board. The Board is acting on behalf of the membership. The by-laws passed by the Board should always be in furtherance of the objects of the corporation. In ratifying by-laws passed by the Board, members ensure that the Board has acted in furtherance of the objects of the corporation. Members should not ratify by-laws with the intent of furthering their own interests.

Customers, in their role as customers, do not participate in the governance of the organizations they purchase products and services from. Now some customers may also be shareholders, but that is another matter.

**Professionals subject to the authority of their professional regulatory body**

One aspect of support for one’s professional regulatory body is to agree to be governed by one’s professional regulatory body. Members have a duty of obedience to their professional regulatory body.

This means that members must be attentive to the guidance provided by their professional regulatory body and comply with all the requirements thereof.

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1 [https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trustee](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trustee)
Customers are not subject to the authority of the organizations they purchase products and services from.

**Members are both regulators and regulated**

A distinctive characteristic of self-regulation is that members have accepted to be both the regulators and the regulated. This unique arrangement requires professionals to set aside their self-interest and act in the public interest.

**All stakeholders should expect good service**

All stakeholders, including members, are entitled to expect a prompt and courteous response from their professional regulatory body—but this is not *customer service*, it is just good *service*. There is one big difference, however, between the service provided by professional regulatory bodies and the service provided by commercial entities. It is accepted that commercial entities will treat their best customers differently than others. Professional regulatory bodies cannot give preferential treatment to members. All stakeholders, including members, are entitled to transparent, objective, impartial, and fair treatment. No stakeholders, including members, are entitled to special or preferential treatment. Professional regulatory bodies cannot bend the rules just because an individual has been a member for a long time.

**Members are not customers**

It would be a mistake for a professional regulatory body to think of their members as *customers*, or for members to think of themselves as *customers*. The relationship members have with their professional regulatory body is entirely different. Not only is thinking of members as customers inaccurate, it understates and undervalues the true meaning of being a member of a professional regulatory body.