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The Most Important Relationship: Board Chair and CEO



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“A strong relationship between the chair and the CEO is critical to the health of the organization.”

Clark Baker
CEO, YMCA of Greater Houston
Chair, Ascension St Thomas Nashville

Keys of a successful relationship

Passion for the mission

Understanding of the roles

Understanding of the way of work

Preparing for the roles

Maximizing value



“The number one, most important attribute is the chair must understand the mission of the organization.”

Bill Hudson
Founder, Bill Hudson & Associates

Passion for the mission

Proper selection

Keeps organization mission-focused

Provides bond between chair and CEO



“The board chair should have a strong sense of boundaries, know roles of the CEO and board chair.”

Kay Sprinkel Grace
Founder, Transforming Philanthropy



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Understanding roles

Chair's role is governance

CEO's role is management



Governance functions

Strategic planning

Ensuring the organization fulfills legal and ethical obligations

Providing fiscal oversight

Hiring, supervising, evaluating the CEO

Monitoring program and mission/goal fulfillment



Management functions

Staffing

Implement the strategic plan

Achieving operational goal

Creating plans and budget

Implementing programs

Supervising constituent relationship



Joint functions

Focus the organization on the mission

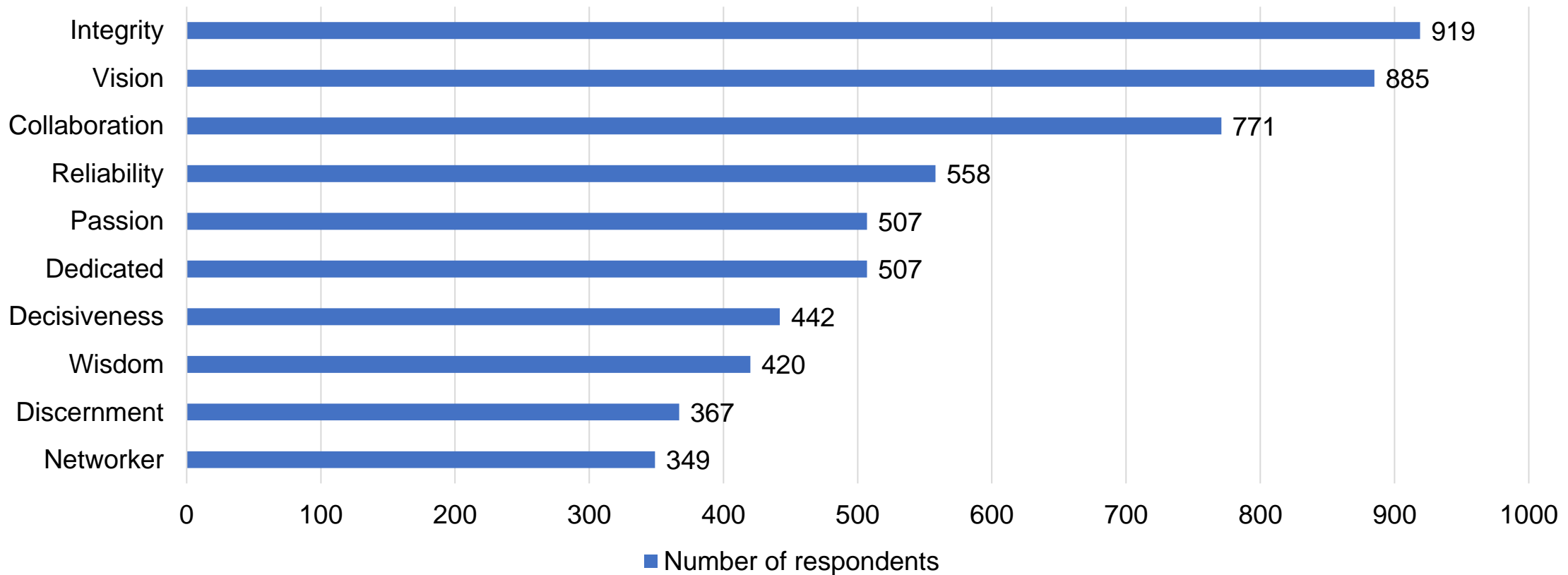
Ensure fiscal stewardship and stability

Safeguard assets

Ensure succession planning is ongoing for the board leadership and the CEO and staff

Provide ongoing education and coaching for both the board and the CEO

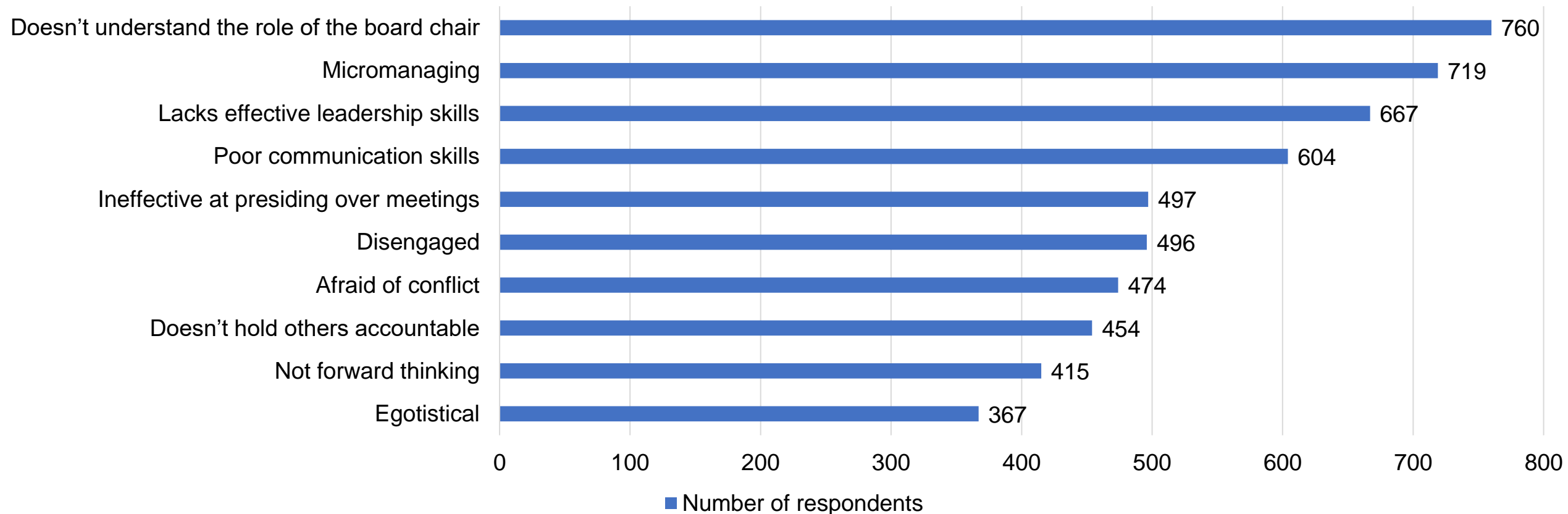
Thinking about the best nonprofit board chairs that you have worked with, what would you say are the five most important character traits for a board chair?



What are the five most important skill sets or abilities an excellent board chair must have/know how to do to perform their role and serve their organization?



When you think of some challenging board chairs or board circumstances, what would you say are the five characteristics of an under-performing board chair?



Understanding of the way of work

Conversation on the way of work

- Meetings
- Calls
- Reports

CEO needs to accommodate



Preparing for the role

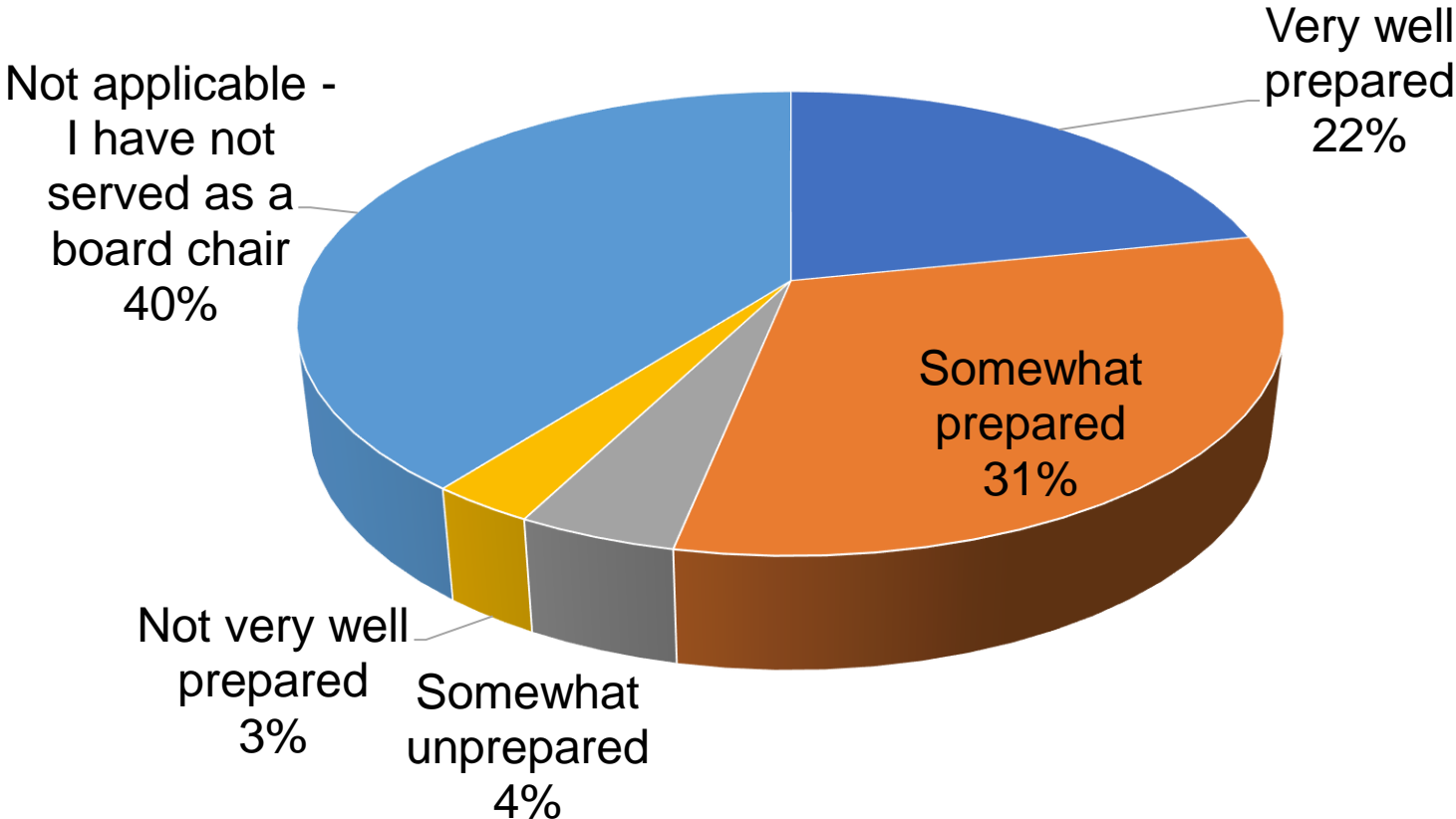
Succession plan

Consideration future needs

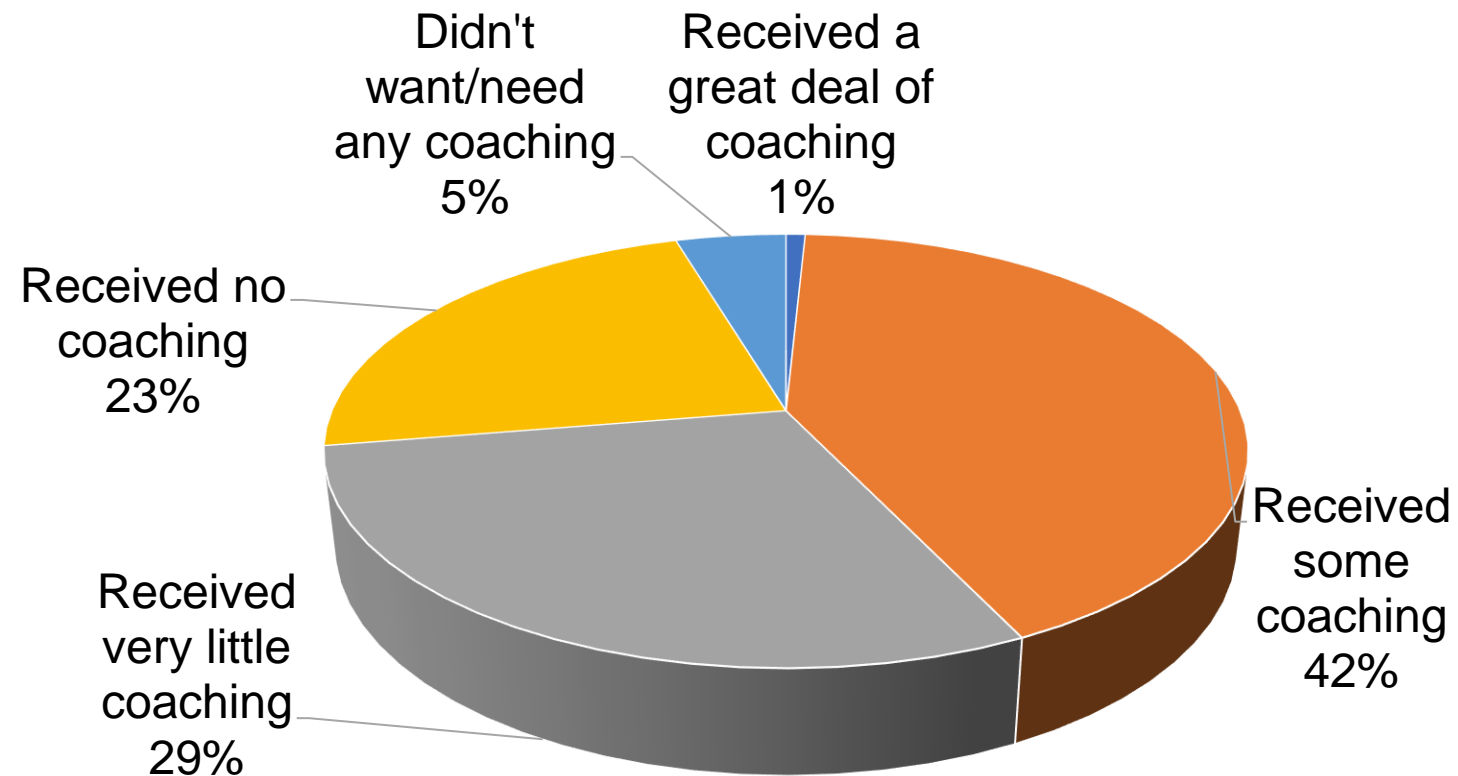
Provide coaching



If you have served as a nonprofit board chair, to what extent did you feel like you were prepared to excel in that role?



To what extent did you receive coaching in order to be prepared for this role?



In what areas do you wish you had received some or more coaching?



“After our city was ravaged by Hurricane Harvey, our YMCA faced numerous challenges,” he said. “Our board chair led with inspiration, building trust through humility and by valuing all input. He sought consensus on key decisions and allowed all to provide input in discussions. He modeled fairness to all ideas and was tactful in drawing out all opinions.”

Byrd Larberg

Principal, GMBL Consulting

Past board chair, YMCA of Greater Houston

Maximizing value

Incumbent on CEO and chair
Build and maintain a strong board
Will be there in time of crisis



The health of an organization is often a reflection of health of the relationship of the CEO and the board chair.

Bill Hudson
Bill Hudson & Associates



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Thank you!

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