

An Effective Board of Directors



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A few reminders

“You’re perfectly aligned for the results you’re getting.” Steven Covey

“Hope is not a method.” (At least not a reliable one.)

Responsibilities of the board

Think of the board as captains of a ship, whose job is to steer (not row).

- Establishes policies for the organization
- Approves the annual budget
- Oversees finances and fundraising
- Represents the organization before the public
- Participates in events which affect service areas
- Approves program initiatives and/or expansion
- Plans for the future of the organization (mission, vision, goals, strategic planning)
- Hires and evaluates President/CEO
- Approves measurement criteria and the evaluation process
- Monitors status reports
- Assesses services

Assessing your current board's strengths and weaknesses

Refer to your bylaws and or other governing documents

- How many members can serve vs. how many currently serve?
- What are the length of terms and options for renewal?
- Are spots for required members filled, i.e. an employee of another organization?
- Are committees adequately represented on the board?
- How well are key positions and organizational needs represented – finance, public relations, technology, fundraising, liaisons, communications, nonprofit experience, etc.
- Whose term is ending, who's stepping down prematurely, who's not doing their job?

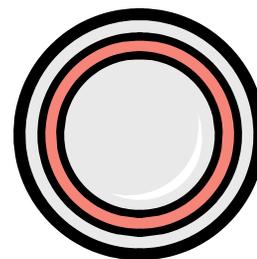
Refer to your executive director and administrators (they often know best).

Refer to committee chairs – what needs do they perceive?

Diversity – it comes in many forms: experience, profession, age, gender, geographic representation, race, economics, affiliations, relationships, etc.

Consider the capacity of each board member

- How full is their plate?
- What's the best situation and role for each member?



Cultivating and recruiting new board members

Rule #1 – Cultivate and recruit new members according to a plan and a needs assessment.

Rule #2 – As potential new members are identified, refer back to rule #1.

The big questions of those you approach, “Why me, and how can I help?”

The big picture

- Assess your board’s strengths, weaknesses, and critical needs.
- Openly brainstorm the skills and characteristics the board seeks. Avoid thinking of people you know – instead, think in terms of a “job” description.
- Assess, prioritize and clearly spell out the needs. Then, recruit or cultivate new members based on these priorities.
- Form a recruitment or nominating committee and designate a chairperson, or ask the entire board to serve this function and share in the work.
- Create a timetable and start recruiting well in advance of board elections.
- As potential members are identified, make sure they match pre-identified needs and priorities.

Recruitment ideas

- Look to your constituents, partners, organizational needs, and the opportunity to forge a new or needed relationship.
- Ask outgoing members if they know of a possible replacement, and if they will help recruit that person.
- Look to your volunteers.
- Look to your committees for at-large members who could serve on the board. Who’s doing a good job?
- If you approach someone for the board and they cannot make the commitment, ask if they can serve on a committee or serve as an advisor to the board.
- When seeking at-large committee members, seek those who could one day serve on the board.

Cultivating new board members – the forgotten step

- Treat potential members how you'd like to be treated.
- Approach with sincerity and honesty about what's expected of board members.
- Put the offer on the table for consideration. Recognize that it's an open ended offer – not a demand that they join. A person must choose to join.
- Approach in a professional manner – meet, educate, cultivate. This says a lot about how someone expects to be treated in the future.
- State why the organization wants or needs them. Everyone wants to feel needed and understand the rationale as to how they fit. Tell them what attracts you to them and how you think they can help.
- Describe the profile of other board members – middle managers, executives, community activists, etc. Is it an advisory board, or a “working” board? Try to show them how they “fit” with other members.
- If their answer is no, accept it graciously and thank them for considering the offer. You never know, they may reconsider at another time or recommend someone else.
- Give interested nominees a timeline of events so they know what to expect. Don't leave them hanging or wondering.

After members are elected

- Welcome new board and committee members in writing, restating terms and relevant expectations. Think of it as a job offer.
- Consider holding an orientation for new members, or a get together for new and old members (especially if there's a lot of recent turn over).
- Consider creating and distributing a board handbook/manual or packet of information – bylaws, organization chart, contact list of board members, committee assignments, minutes from recent board meetings, meeting dates, special event dates, most recent annual report and finance statement, operating budget, etc.
- Welcome new members at board meetings, and greet them with excitement and thanks. It's everyone's job to make new members feel comfortable, wanted and needed.

Structuring board and committee relationships

Think of your organization as one entire job description that consists of various parts – board, committees, staff, volunteers, etc.

Consider a job description and a list of expectations:

- Time commitment – how many meetings, how long, committee expectations
- Basic duties – advocacy, public relations, cultivate support, attend events, recruit board and committee members, etc.
- Giving expectations – is it an amount or commensurate with ability to give?

Boards and committees – what goes up must come down, and visa versa

