

BUILDING NONPROFIT BOARDS


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How Would You Rate Your Board?

- Great?
- Good?
- Average?
- Struggling?
- In Trouble?



“Good Governance is like dieting –
reality is at odds with expectations.”

Maureen K. Robinson
Nonprofit Boards That Work (2001)

Essential Elements

Board building is not just filling slots. It is strategic in terms of composition and operations.

Board building replenishes a board’s people power and strengthens its performance.

Board building is a cycle, not an annual event.

1. IDENTIFY Needs

Round out the board with the 5 W’s:

- Work
- Wealth
- Wisdom
- Wit
- Witness

- Use a board matrix to determine current strengths and weak areas.
- Strategic plan or annual goals may indicate need for special skills or resources.
- Add value with diversity.

2. CULTIVATE Sources

Look for and build:
Connection
Capacity
Commitment

- Create a pool of potential members.
- Cultivate relationships.
- Responsibility of all board members, not just nominating or board development committee.

3. RECRUIT Prospects

Nomination is done by the nominating committee.
Election is by the full board.

- Determine their interest and expectations.
- Clarify your expectations (job description).
- Explain why they are wanted and needed.

4. ORIENT New Members

Consider assigning a current board member as a mentor to new members for the first year.

- Orientation to both the organization and the board.
- Involve current members of the board.
- A Board Book is essential.

Board Book Contents

- Job Description
- 12-month calendar of meetings and events
- List of all board members with contact info
- Bylaws
- Policies
- Committees with job descriptions
- Latest annual report and current financial statements
- Minutes of previous year's meetings
- Strategic Plan
- Current year's budget
- Review of programs and activities

5. INVOLVE All Board Members

Avoid becoming a "Board Board"

- Provide opportunities to feel connected and engaged.
- Could this meeting have been mailed?
- Keep the board informed between meetings.
- Promote informal interaction through socials, retreats, etc.
- Build an inclusive team.

6. EDUCATE The Board

Continuous learning is the defining characteristic of boards that stand out from the crowd.

- Set aside time in meetings for information and education.
- Use field trips to see programs in action, meet with beneficiaries.
- Schedule retreats or workshops on topics like fundraising, planning or finances.
- Board meetings should always have time for discussion.

7. EVALUATE The Board

There is no such thing as a board that cannot continue to grow.

- Regular check-ups discover ways to strengthen performance.
- Determine time well spent through meeting evaluations.
- Individual assessments valuable at the end of a term.

8. ROTATE Board Members

Exceptional boards are their own source of renewable energy.

- Term limits ensure fresh insights and ideas and keep members from going stale.
- Re-election to the board should not be automatic.
- Leaving the board doesn't mean leaving the organization.

9. CELEBRATE Achievements

Great boards make room for humor and a good laugh along the way.

- Part of everything the board does to strengthen performance and add meaning.
- Recognize each member for their unique contributions.

Things to Remember

Governance is a team sport
Exceptional governance is an on-going process
There are no "perfect" boards

Thank You!

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