

# BUILDING BOARDS THAT WORK

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Alliance

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# Goals

Effective boards are those whose members are deeply committed to the organization's mission, bring expertise in key areas, and represent diverse points of view. Boards that meet these goals do not come into existence overnight, they evolve over time.

# The Magic Word

# PASSION!!

# Vision Statement

- A clear Vision Statement of where the organization is headed
  - Where do you want to go
  - Dare to Dream
  - Capture the passion of members
  - State desired future success of foundation

***Example: A foundation that promotes post-high school education***

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# Vision and Mission are Different

- Mission Statement is why organization exists
- What organization does to achieve Vision
- Purpose of organization

**Example: *To provide training and tools for post-high school education***

# Importance of Board

Unless foundations are well governed, they cannot fulfill their obligations as public stewards, achieve their important goals or have the long-term societal impact their donors envisioned. Given the impact of a board on the quality and performance of the foundation it governs, it is essential that members take the time to identify ways to become more effective – both individually and collectively.

# Challenges to Achieving Goal

- The board suffers from malaise
- Board has vague expectations
- There are few public penalties for failure or accountability
- Many board members not fully committed

# Necessary Steps to Achieve Goal

- A chair who involves all board members
- Members who are committed and willing to spend necessary time
- A general sense of “involvement” in being part of the organization
- Periodic evaluation process to assess achievements

# Solution to Challenges

Boards function best when they keep in mind members' hopes and aspirations and tap into members' enthusiasm.

Same as building commitment by donors – you must tap into their passion.

# Steps to Building Boards That Work

- Careful, dynamic member selection process
- Create atmosphere that motivates members to achieve

# BOARD MEMBER SELECTION PROCESS

# Governance Requirements

Articles of Incorporation and/or By-Laws establish the basics

- Number of board members (11 or 12)
- Term limits (5 to 6 years)
- Minimum standards for participation (meeting attendance and committee work)

# Governance Requirements

- Selection process
- Diversity of representation (geographic, stakeholders, etc.)
- Willingness to give
- Term limits on officers

# Practical Considerations

- Have a written statement of expectations for members – ask them to sign
- Mix of personalities (balance a compromising president with a strong Executive Committee)
- Willingness to develop needed skills
- Honesty, sensitivity, tolerance of diverse views, friendly personality

# Strategic Plan to Guide Board Member Selection

- Identify skills needed
- Identify personality traits needed
- Training program to build needed skill sets
- Mentoring of new board members
- Methodology to process out non-contributing members

# Personal Characteristics to Consider

- Ability to listen
- Ability to ask appropriate questions
- Ability to “think outside the box”
- Works well with others
- Willingness to prepare for and attend meetings
- Willingness to contribute time outside of meetings
- Why does person want to serve (fondness for objective, passion or ego)

# Characteristics to Avoid

- Over-committed
- Ill-motivated
- Non-close (starts things but doesn't finish them)
- Non-compromisers
- Lacks passion

# Steps of Selection

- Cast a wide net
- Identification of potential board members should be ongoing process
- Maintain written pool of potential members
- Use committee work to vet candidates
- Don't get a "pig in a poke"

# Identify the Needs of the Board

- Consider the following:
  - Skills
  - Knowledge
  - Perspectives
  - Connections
  - What resources does the board currently have
  - What is missing

# Cultivate Potential Board Members

- Find ways to connect with candidates
- Get candidates interested in organization
- Keep candidates informed of organization's activities
- Long-term process

# Recruit Prospects

- Describe why prospective member is wanted and needed
- Explain expectations and responsibilities of board members
- Invite questions and elicit interest

# Orient New Board Members

- Explain history of organization
- Explain programs
- Describe important issues
- Understand finances
- Understand governance issues
- Describe committees
- Detail board member responsibilities
- Introduce board members and staff

# Rotate Board Members

- Establish term limits
- Do not automatically re-elect for additional term
- Board chair “retires” members who are not contributing
- Rotate officers

# Playing the Hand Dealt

- Do not accept members as they are
- Build consensus to Vision Statement
- Find each member's area of passion
- Assign members to work on passion
- Educate to add needed skills

# MOTIVATING TO ACHIEVE

# Effective Board

- An effective board is one whose members possess a passion for the organization's success and see themselves as having a vital, participatory role in making success happen
- Achieving such a board requires close collaboration between the board chair and the organization's Executive Director/staff

# Necessary Steps to Motivate Board Members

- Get to know each member on a personal level
  - Likes
  - Strengths
  - Skills
  - Family
  - Dislikes
  - Weaknesses
  - Interests
  - Passion

# Necessary Steps to Motivate Board Members

- Build personal relationship with each board member
  - Spend time
  - Lunch/dinner
  - Social settings
  - Develop “friendly” relationship – they need to like you

# What to Ask

- What keeps you up at night?
- If could change one thing in world, what would it be?
- What is your dream avocation?

# Match Assignments with Interests, Passions, and Strengths

- Make assignments meaningful – no busy work
- Tap into members' passion, not yours, not the foundation's
- Members should be those whose passions compliment board's Vision Statement

# Determine Score Card Factors

- Score card factors are the basis on which members will evaluate their own success in contributing to board
- Score card factors are those “wins” that make you smile
- Score card factors track your passion

# Score Card Factors

- Examples of Factors
  - Endowment building
  - Special interest served
  - Outreaches created
  - Organizations involved
  - Kids who made it to college, made it through college
  - Best and brightest who remained at home

# Score Card Factors

Imperative to keep in mind: It is all about the members' passion and their score card factors

# Trial Close

- Establish with board member
  - What they will do
  - What board chair will do
  - What foundation staff will do
  - What results will be
  - Time lines

# Make Board Meetings Productive

- Avoid boring/scripted stuff
- Brief reports on routine matters
- Spend board time on challenges organization faces
- Have fun
- Include time for board chair to discuss his/her concerns

# Make Board Meetings Productive

- Do not allow few to dominate meeting
- Celebrate successes
- Identify and focus attention on issues that matter to life of organization
- Work should be results driven to reward passion

# Action Steps

- Include a short education segment at each board meeting
- At end of each meeting, have each board member anonymously write one positive and one negative thing that happened at meeting
- Board chair leads by example

# Action Steps

- Develop method for periodic evaluation of achievements and failures
- Ask donors how they view board as achieving vision
- Use ad hoc rather than standing committees

# Action Steps

- Board chair and Executive Director meet prior to meeting to set goals and agenda
- Use small groups for routine work
- Have specific themes at each meeting to identify issues and plan to meet needs
- Make certain that Executive Director has clear job description
- Exit interviews with former board members by outside consultant