

1. **Ensure the mission is still relevant.** What is the purpose of this organization...its reason for being?
2. **Set the Strategy.** How will this organization pursue the mission?
3. **Hire, Supervise and Fire the Executive Director**
4. **Monitor outcomes.** Is the organization effective?
5. **Secure resources.** Find the money, people and partners that allow the organization to pursue the mission.
6. **Financial oversight.** Ensure the resources are used efficiently.
7. **Ensure legality.** Conduct oversight so that the organization conducts its affairs in an ethical and legal manner.
8. **Enhance the Brand.** Network the organization to the outside community.
9. **Develop the Leadership.** Provide for the recruitment, orientation, mentoring and professional development of Board Members.

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- Advisory Board** A body of ‘wise men’ generally organized by the governing Board. Used by the nonprofit to garner ideas and recommendations on specific issues before the organization. This groups role is merely consultative. They have no authority to implement any recommendations.
Example: The Centre County Drug and Alcohol Planning Council evaluates drug and alcohol abuse needs, services, facilities and makes recommendation to the Commissioners
- Collaborative Board** A group composed of representatives from independent organizations which have agreed to join forces for a set number of objectives. Has full budget authority.
Example: The McKean County (PA) Collaborative Board is a group of 15 children welfare agencies which coordinate services and conduct joint projects related to early education, child safety and stable families
- Facility Board** Manages the affairs of a building which is part of a larger organization. It’s budget and governing authority is dictated by a governing Board.
Example: The YMCA of Centre County has separate facility boards for locations in Bellefonte and State College.
- Fundraising Board** Body organized for raising resources for a specific organization. Legal structure varies. May be organized as a separate corporation.
Example: Many public school districts have set up Foundation boards charged with developing local monies.
- Governing Board** Supreme authority of an organization. Legally defined as owners of the nonprofit corporation. Has total authority and total accountability for the actions of the organization.
Example: The Youth Service Bureau is governed by a 17 member Board of Directors who have ultimate authority over all budgeting, programming and staffing.
- Policy Board** Groups designed to research and examine a well defined issue then make recommendations on issues of public policy.
Example: Pennsylvania Health Policy Board reviews rules and regulations prepared by the Department of Health and advises the Secretary on proposed regulations.
- Program Board** Oversees the management of a specific program within a larger organization. Budget and governing authority dictated by governing Board.
Example: Catering on Parade is a workforce development program of St Martin’s Center in Erie, PA. The Board of Catering has full budget and governing authority subject to the review of the Board of St Martins.

1. Have a professional development plan for board members. Continually educate board members so they understand their legal and fiscal responsibilities.
2. Engage a coach to work with the Board Chair on meeting skills.
3. Develop clear roles and responsibilities for board members. You must have job descriptions for board members, especially for officer positions such as president, vice president, treasurer and secretary.
4. Establish a Nominating Committee and charge them with recruiting new members strategically to find the right people to meet your organization's needs. Remember, recruitment is an ongoing process, and not just something to think about when vacancies arise.
5. Determine the types of skills you need on your board. Consider members who have skills in accounting, legal matters, property management or policy areas.
6. Have a detailed and intense orientation process for new members. Prepare a board manual and initiate a board mentoring system – current board members can provide support and coaching to new members.
7. Engage outside assistance to periodically (at least once a year) self-assess your performance as a board to determine how well you're carrying out your responsibilities and identify challenges that require action.

1. **Why me?** They should be able to clearly articulate what they believe you will bring to the table. Then ask yourself if their perception of your strengths match your self-perception.
2. **What are responsibilities of the directors?** Do they have a job description? What are the expectations?
3. **How much time per month/per year am I expected to commit?** Would you take a paying job without know if it was full or part-time? Be sure to ask for a calendar of important dates (annual meeting, fundraising events, etc) and be sure you know which ones you are expected to attend
4. **Who is on the current board and how did they get there?** Find out, tactfully, about the skills and experience of current board members. This will give you an idea of where the board is strong or weak.
5. **Does 100% of the Board contribute financially to the organization?** If not, consider that the present Board may be less than committed to the mission.
6. **How will I be oriented to the organization?** Ideally, your first Board meeting should come at the end of the orientation process.
7. **What type/scope of professional development does the Board receive?** Board leadership matters....**a lot**. Does the organization invest time/money in developing its leadership? If not, how committed are they to growing their most important asset...their people.
8. **Can I see the books and records of the nonprofit?** A nonprofit's tax return is called the 990 and it has to be made available to the public. If an organization balks at your request to see financial information, consider that to be a **gigantic** red flag.
9. **Do you have Directors and Officers Insurance?** Many people fail to realize how they open themselves up personally to liability when joining the Board. Get a copy of their D&O policy and take it to your personal insurance agent for a quick look-over.
10. **Are the payroll taxes of the organization up-to-date and/or is it being sued?** If a nonprofit fails to pay its taxes, the IRS can impose harsh penalties on it. Furthermore, board members could be sued for allowing such penalties to accumulate. Many D&O insurance policies do not cover payroll tax liabilities.



Choosing Great Board Members

By Michael Brand, MNO

Too often our Board recruitment plans are based upon hard skills (accounting, law, program). This piece discusses how Soft Skills matter every bit as much

High performing Board members just don't happen. Truly transformative leaders just don't fall from the sky. Great Board members are identified, recruited and oriented. In this piece, let's discuss a basic question, "Who are you choosing to put on your Board?"

Sadly, haphazard Board recruitment is the rule rather than the exception. Selection is not totally random, but Boards tend not to think about who would be a good Director until an opening appears, with the result that slots are filled by the best candidate willing and available at that time.

Part of the failure to recruit solid members starts by failure to identify what type of person belongs on the Board. Many Boards do have a recruitment matrix to think through what type of technical skills (accounting, law, facility, etc). Much of this thinking is then mirrored in the basic job description.

However, we often fail to target soft skills. While everyone brings different strengths to the table, Great Board Members have at least one, if not several, of the following qualities. When thinking about building a Great Board, consider who you choose.

Choose Strategic Thinkers

Great Board members identify new opportunities or unsolved problems, and can ignite the

discussion about these issues. They understand *What Matters*, both externally and internally. They bring clarity to complex issues by presenting the issue so other Board members can grasp the issue and contribute to the solution. Strategic thinkers have a mental model that connects today's action with tomorrow's outcome, the organization's role within it, and an understanding of the competencies it requires.

Equally critical is that Strategic Thinkers do not wait for permission raise such issues. They take initiative to organize people and time to start the discussion and drive the agenda.

Early last decade a small nonprofit afterschool program in Pittsburgh positioned itself to secure numerous grants and contracts to provide tutoring services. They got ahead of the curve because several Board members, well versed in education policy, understood the opportunities of the federal No Child Left Behind. Within three years, the organization had tripled in size.

Choose Ambassadors

Ambassadors aren't born, they're groomed. It is not enough to recruit well connected people and hope they'll carry the message to their Rotary Club, Business Association or even their golfing buddies. Nonprofits must help their Board members articulate the mission, the issues and the trends

that affect the work. Being a good ambassador externally reverberates internally.

Junior Achievement of Western PA provides Board members with monthly policy updates and talking points printed on business card formats. This gives Board members simple things to share in their routine discussions during the month.

Choose Networkers

We have left the age of the Knowledge Worker and entered the age of the Networker. It is not enough for Board members to know a lot about their mission, outcomes or field. Great Board members know enough about their own organization and the external environment to recognize opportunities. They then open doors or make critical introductions.

As Malcolm Gladwell noted in *The Tipping Point*, networkers are the go-to people, the must-haves at meetings. The effects are viral. The more they connect the nonprofit to the external environment, the greater money, time and talent will flow into the nonprofit.

Choose Coaches

Great Board members know that pursuing the mission means accepting responsibility for results at all levels. This means helping the entire organization achieve results even when it is not a direct responsibility. This may involve

showing up at a special event that's not required, or pitching in with ideas and information on another committee's project. It also entails helping to build the skills of fellow Board members. This type of Board leadership is essential in a flat, decentralized organization.

Understanding the fiscal position of a nonprofit can be a challenge for Board members not in the financial industry. Therefore, the Board of one nonprofit food bank in Utah recruits fiscal talent not on professional knowledge alone, but also on the ability to teach financial literacy to lay members of the Board.

Choose Commitment

Commitment is about quality, not quantity. A passion for the mission is essential in order to be a Great Board member. Passion translates into a singular focus Board members exhibit when doing each piece of work for the nonprofit. The nonprofit becomes a major priority in their life, and it shows by the investment of time, energy, ideas. You can't fake commitment.

Many Boards incorporate the strategy of engaging people first as volunteers in events or on adhoc committees. If in time they display passion for the mission and enthusiasm for the organization they then are added to the pool of potential new Board members.

Great Boards are crafted. It takes effort and attention to detail. Recruitment is an ongoing process as potential new leaders are identified, nurtured and oriented. But the investment of time and energy is critical to building an effective and sustainable nonprofit.

The qualities outlined here serve as signs of whether a person can be entrusted with major decisions and will contribute to advancing the mission. They show that the leader

will take care of others and the organization

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