**Keys to Building an Effective Board**

**What Makes a Good Board?**

**Most great boards share some common traits and qualities that empower them to lead their groups creatively and effectively. Ideal members of board of directors:**

* Share a passion for and commitment to the nonprofit’s mission
* Are willing to roll up their sleeves when necessary to support the practical work
* Have strong ties to their communities
* Are diverse—in age, gender, race, religion, skills, and background, and
* Are willing to support efforts to raise money.

**Finding Effective Board Members**

Your Board should be viewed as the foundation of your organization. **Their primary task is serving as the** **governing and oversight body.** **Find the skills and expertise you need.** Individuals who understand the field or mission that you are involved in are key; find people who are familiar with your clients and their needs. **Effective boards have someone with finance skills.** It is helpful to have people who can assist with your fundraising plan. Include innovative people who have new ideas; **someone who understands technology is critical**. You want **people who can work as a team and are committed to the success of your organization**. The size of your board is determined by what needs to be accomplished. **Start small**; 6-10 members and less than 14 is typical of organizations with budgets less than $1million. **Term limits are recommended**. Three years is the average term length for board members. Bringing in new board members on a regular basis helps avoid stagnation and provides the board an opportunity for rejuvenation.

**Board recruitment should be viewed as an on-going process.** Ideally, the Board and Executive Director should maintain a list of prospective candidates that is updated on a regular basis. **Look for individuals who are passionate about your cause.** Their passion and energy will help you get others motivated.

1. **Consult Your Current Board and Staff: Their Circle of Friends, Neighbors & Their Sphere of Influence**
* Consider friends of Board and staff and their friends who have influence or can **influence others.**
1. **Consider Your Donors**
* These individuals have already made a commitment to your organization, and

 have an interest in seeing your organization’s success.

1. **Volunteers:**
* Consider dedicated program volunteers or individuals in your congregation that others look to for leadership; an active volunteer will become an active board member.
1. **Professional Associations and,**
2. **Major Corporations & their Community Outreach Programs**
* Look for network-oriented team players in the profession and business community.
* Diversify your board with the skills your organization needs.
1. **Include Youth on Your Board**
* The energy and a ‘can do’ attitude youth bring to your organization can be a invaluable asset, especially if your mission is to support or partner with youth and children.
1. **Use Board and Volunteer Recruitment Sites and Research**

Recommended sites include: boardnet.usa, Board Source, and Volunteer Match (see below for addt’l. resources).

1. **People who are featured in the news or local printed media.** Pay attention to features about individuals in your community, in particular advocates related to your organization's mission**.**

**Keeping a Good Board**

Effective Boards incorporate board recruitment as an ongoing process with a committee of members dedicated to finding the right board members.

* Board Development is an **ongoing process**
* Keep a year-round **nominating committee** to replenish the board
* Don’t assign people to jobs the **don’t want** to do
* Keep a **file of prospects** and update as you and your board network and brainstorm
* Bring new members on **all year**
* Create a **development plan** for each board member
* **Track performance and attendance** to detect burnout or “flameout”
* **Maintain a** succession plan

**Board Responsibilities**

* **The Duty of Care**
* Requires that a board member owes the duty of care that an ordinary prudent person  would exercise in a like position under similar circumstances. Uses reasonable good business  judgment.
* **The Duty of Loyalty**
* Upholds a standard of faithfulness to the organization. The fundamental duty of loyalty owed by a board is the duty to give undivided allegiance to the organization when making decisions affecting the organization.
* **Duty of Obedience**
* Responsible for acting in a way that is consistent with the organizations mission.

**Individual Board Responsibilities**

The role of the board in nonprofit organizations is similar to that of the legal guardian for a child; it oversees the organization on behalf of others, but is not the “owner” of the organization. Boards that are serious about their sustainability are also serious about their stewardship responsibilities.

The four primary areas of Board Stewardship are:

* **Stewardship of Assets and Resources**
* **Stewardship of Mission**
* **Stewardship of Community Trust**
* **Stewards of Reputation**

**Board Handbook or Manual: Board Orientation and Education**

Board education and orientation are the foundation to a committed, knowledgeable, and effective board. As a part of their orientation and education process, all organizations should have a “user-friendly” manual that board members can use and update throughout their terms. **Board Manuals are used as an orientation handbook, and a working tool and resource about the organization and the board.**

**Contents of a Board Manual** should be **concise and updated regularly**, including:

* + **Board:** Roster; bio, members terms, statements of responsibilities, committee and job descriptions.
	+ **Organization:** Brief written history and/or fact sheet, Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, IRS letter, list of past board members.
	+ **Strategic Framework**: Mission and vision statements, strategic plan, current annual operating plan.
	+ **Minutes** from several recent board meetings.
	+ **Policies** pertaining to board: Policy on potential conflicts of interest, insurance policy coverage.
	+ **Finance and Fundraising:** Prior year annual report, most recent audit report, current annual budget, Form 990, banking resolutions, investment policy, and current funder list.
	+ **Staff:** Staff roster, organization chart.
	+ **Annual Calendar**
	+ **Website Information:** Promotional information, brochures, etc.

**Board & Volunteer Resources:**

**volunteermatch.org**

**servenet.org**

**volunteercenters.org & volunteereastbay.org**

**idealist.org**

**techsoup.org (technology products & solutions)**

**serviceleader.org**

**volunteerinfo.org**

**cybervpm.com (networking for volunteer managers)**

**pflag.org (parents & friends of lesbians & gays)**

**volunteeronline.org**

**pointsoflight.org**

**boardmatchplus.org (program of volunteer ctr.)**

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