

# Developing a Powerful Board

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# Perspectives from the trenches

- Characteristics of an effective board
- Characteristics of individual board members
- Where to find them
- How to recruit them
- How to orient or train them
- How to nourish effective board participation

# What the “ideal” board does

- Fulfills its major roles
  - Governance and policy
  - Sponsorship and fiscal integrity/oversight
  - Ambassadorship in community at large
  - Consultancy with individual expertise
- Acts as a whole, not as individuals
- Fits strategy to mission of the organization

# What the “ideal” Board member has

- Professional expertise in a useful area
  - Needs can shift depending upon life stage of the organization
- Credibility in the community through action and service
- Power, political clout, influence
- Wealth
  - Personal or
  - Corporate

# What the “ideal” Board member has, cont.

- Willingness
  - To spend time
  - To spend money
  - To call in favors on your behalf
  - To spend not only dollars but personal capital on behalf of the organization
- Energy and motivation
  - For advancement of personal/business reputation
  - For the pure good of your cause

# Where to find them

- Identify the community's business sectors and seek representation from each one
- Academia – let your mission guide what's appropriate here
- Chambers, industrial development boards
- Social circles – those who volunteer elsewhere
- Donors to political campaigns

# Where to find them, cont.

- Network with your existing trustees for new contacts
- Seek representation from corporations who donate, starting at the top
- Business entrepreneurs who can call their own shots
- Diversity – ethnic, cultural
- Geographic reach

# How to recruit them

- Many different process models
- Important for Executive Director or staff head to participate in nominating process
- Give dignity and formality to the process
  - Meeting with staff head and board member
  - Provide materials for review that orient to organization and summarize expectations
  - Extend the offer through a peer
  - Follow up with letter, materials, meeting dates
- Try to hold elections just once a year



# How to Orient Them

- Hold a formal orientation meeting
- Share at least these materials:
  - Audit
  - Annual budget
  - By laws
  - Ethics policy
  - Organizational history
  - Expectations for attendance and support

# How to Nourish Effective Participation

- Establish meaningful committee structure geared to fulfillment of mission
  - Define committee roles in writing
  - Assign staff liaison to each committee
  - Take controversial issues or problems to committees first
  - Foster an atmosphere that supports committee recommendations
  - Thoroughly inform committee chairs of issues prior to meetings

# How to Nourish Effective Participation, cont.

- Insist on short board meetings with published agendas
  - Fully inform Board chair of rising issues
  - Provide concise, complete financial reports
  - Be ready to throw any divisive issues back to committee, or to form ad-hoc committees for special concerns
- Develop a concise strategic plan and stick to it

# How to Nourish Effective Participation, cont.

- Never sweep issues under the table
- Keep trustees well informed, at meetings and through updates, newsletters, calls
- Cultivate team spirit
  - Parties in private homes for special occasions
  - At least one annual event to which they can invite peers and show off the organization: (fundraising event, annual meeting – depending on your organizational style)

# How to Nourish Effective Participation, cont.

- Always take their phone calls
- Deliver personal thanks – notes, calls, in addition to formal appreciation
- Listen to them

Q & A