

BOARD RECRUITMENT, ORIENTATION AND TRAINING BOARD ENGAGEMENT AND EVALUATION*

Introduction

As we have seen, the matter of selection goes deeper than the choice of the 'right' people. There are indeed some men and women who, because of innate capacity or wealth or position in the community, would be welcome additions to almost any board. Most of the time, however, the selection of board members should be made by deciding who is 'right' for a particular board, who can strengthen it, and who can give it the distinctive qualities that it needs at the present moment. *-Cyril O. Houle*

The Board Building Cycle



Step 1: Identify the needs of the board; the skill, knowledge, perspectives, connections etc. needed to implement the strategic plan. What do you have? What is missing? Identify sources of board members with the desired characteristics.

Step 2: Cultivate potential board members. Ask current board members, senior staff, and others to suggest potential candidates. Find ways to connect with those candidates, get them interested in your organization, and keep them informed of your progress.

Step 3: Recruit prospects. Describe why a prospective member is wanted and needed. Explain expectations and responsibilities of board members, and don't minimize requirements. Invite questions, elicit their interest, and find out if they would be prepared to serve.

Step 4: Orient new board members both to the organization – explaining the history, programs, pressing issues, finances, bylaws, and organizational chart- and to the board- describing committees, board member responsibilities, and lists of board members and key staff members.

Step 5: Involve/Activate all board members. Discover their interests and availability. Involve them in committees or task forces. Assign them a board "buddy." Solicit feedback. Hold everyone accountable. Express appreciation for work well done.

Step 6: Educate the board. Provide information concerning your mission area. Promote exploration of issues facing the organization. Hold retreats and encourage board development activities by sending board members to seminars and workshops. Don't hide difficulties.

Step 7: Evaluate the board as a whole, as well as individual board members. Examine how the board and chief executive work as a team. Engage the board in assessing its own performance. Identify ways in which to improve. Encourage individual self-assessment.

Step 8: Rotate board members. Establish term limits. Do not automatically reelect for an additional term; consider the board's needs and the board member's performance. Explore the advisability of resigning with members who are not active. Develop new leadership.

Step 9: Celebrate! Recognize victories and progress, no matter how small. Appreciate individual contributions to the board, organization and community. Make room for humor and a good laugh.

Step 4 *Orient* Welcome to the Board

Orientation actually begins when someone is first approached about the possibility of serving; the formal orientations are a continuation of that process. It should be held at the camp or at a quiet comfortable location offsite before new board members attend their first board meeting and should be organized by the governance committee, the chief executive, and board chair (*see Appendix 4 for Board Orientation Chart*).

Each new board member should receive a board manual/board handbook (*see Appendix 5*) within two weeks of being elected to the board and before the formal orientation. Although some of this material may have been provided earlier, it is helpful to have it organized and in one place.

Some orientations may also include an official “swearing in” ceremony at which time new board members pledge their service to the organization and formally acknowledge their responsibilities as board members.

Orientation is not a one-time event. It might stretch out as long as a year. During that time, the governance committee might pair up a new board member with a more seasoned member as a mentor who can befriend the new member, make him or her feel welcome, and address questions that crop up from time to time.

New board members may present wonderful opportunities for rejuvenating the board as they often come asking new questions and bringing fresh ideas, which can give the board a fresh perspective on its work.

APPENDIX 4

Board Orientation Chart

The following is an overview of the information that needs to be conveyed to new members at their orientation in person and in writing.

Finances	Help new board members become informed about where money comes from and how it is spent, and the state of the organization's financial health, including their role in fundraising	Presentation by chief executive, chief financial officer, or treasurer -Background materials (most recent audit, budget, financials), graphically presented, if possible -Presentation of the fundraising strategy
History	Provide sufficient knowledge about the past so that the present makes sense. Also, help new board members see their own participation as part of the organization's ongoing story.	Stories told by old-timers -Pictures -Written materials
Strategic Direction	Present a framework for new members to participate effectively. Clarify the mission, vision, organizational values, and goal that inform organizational actions.	Presentation/discussion by the chief executive or board chair -Copy of strategic plan (or other documents, especially mission statement, if no plan is available
Organizational Structure	Help new board members understand who does what and lines of accountability	Copy of the bylaws, IRS determination letter -Organizational chart -Introductions to key staff members
Board Roles	Ensure that new members understand the roles of the board	Presentation/discussion preferably with the whole board involved -Written materials
Board member responsibilities	Ensure that new board members understand their own responsibilities as board members	Presentation/discussion -Signed agreement (job description), including conflict of interest and ethics statements
Board Operations	Help new board members understand how the board operates so that they may participate effectively.	Board Manual -Board mentors -Committee charges and member lists -Meeting schedule
Board Members	Facilitate new board member with the other members	List of board members and biographical data -Time set aside for social interaction
Skills	Instruct new members on how to read a financial statement	Written materials -Presentation by the treasurer or finance committee

Suggested Contents for Board of Directors Handbook

A. The board

1. Board member listing
2. Board member bios
3. Board member terms
4. Board statement of responsibilities
5. Board member responsibilities
6. Committee and task force job descriptions

B. Historical references for the organization

1. Brief written history and/or fact sheet
2. Articles of Incorporation
3. IRS determination letter
4. Listing of past board members

C. Bylaws

D. Strategic framework

1. Mission and vision statement
2. Strategic framework or plan
3. Current annual operating plan

E. Minutes from some recent board meetings

F. Finance

1. Prior year annual
2. Prior year audit report
3. Chart of financial growth (sales, membership, programs. Etc.- for the past 5 to 10 years)
4. Current annual budget
5. IRS form 990
6. Banking resolutions
7. Investment policy

G. Policies pertaining to the board

1. Policy on potential conflicts of interests
2. Insurance policy coverage
3. Legal liability policy
4. Travel/meeting expense reimbursements
5. Accreditation documents (if applicable)
6. Others

H. Staff

1. Staff listing
2. Organization/team chart

I. Resource development

1. Case statement
2. Current funder list
3. Sample grant proposal
4. Sponsorship policy

J. Information

1. Annual calendar
2. Programs list and overview
3. Current brochure(s)
4. Web site information

K. Procedures to update board handbook