

The Board Dance

Finding the Right
Rhythm for You and Your
Board of Directors

When it is the Perfect Balance



When it is not....



How is your Dance?

Daring to Lead 2011, a report produced by the Meyer Foundation and CompassPoint, also found that for those organizations run by staff, only 20% of the executive directors surveyed reported being “very satisfied” with their boards, with 48% being only “somewhat satisfied.”

Steps to Finding the Right Partners

- **Right Size**

- Bigger is not always Better

- Move towards smaller board sizes

- Ideal size 5 to 8

- Quality over Quantity

- If the Executive Director cannot engage with board members personally once each year – may be too big.

Right Structure

– **Role of Executive Committee**

- Large board, strong Executive Committee
- Small board, less emphasis on Executive Committee

– **Other Committees** – *Important to focus board meetings*

- Finance
- Governance
- Events
- Programs or Initiatives
- Legislative

– **Nominating Committee** – *Important for the next step...*

Right People

– Before you begin picking people, understand what you need for the organization to be successful.

- Determine major roles you need from your board

- Money

- Expertise

- Passion

- Time

- Influence

- Diverse Perspectives

- Ideas

- Governance

- Does your board reflect who you serve? Or are they at least in touch with those you serve?

- No one person can do it all....not even your Chairman

- “I know a great guy” – Research shows board engagement and conflict resolution is better when board members do not know one another.

Developing the Right Moves

Role of the Board of Directors

- Develop Performance Expectations
- Always have a board orientation
 - Board Notebook –
 - Bylaws and policies and procedures
 - Mission and Vision Statements
 - Organizational History
 - Strategic Plan
 - Financial Summaries
 - Board and Committee Information
 - Meeting Processes
- Regularly have board assess their performance based on their commitments (samples)

Top 10 Things Board Members Should Commit To

1. Believe in and be an active advocate and ambassador for the values, mission and vision of the organization.
2. Work with fellow board members to fulfill the obligations of board membership.
3. Regularly attend board and committee meetings.
4. Prepare for these meetings by reviewing materials and bringing the materials to meetings.
5. Keep informed about the organization, its issues, and its connection to the community.
6. If applicable, help support the charitable contributions operation of the organization (e.g., donations and/or fundraising).
7. As appropriate, use personal and professional contacts and expertise to benefit the organization.
8. Be available to serve as a committee chair or member.
9. Work in partnership with and respect the authority of the organization's leadership staff.
10. Agree to step down from board position if unable to fulfill these expectations.

Your Dance Partner – The Board Chair

Keys to a strong partnership:

- Set regular meetings
- Define roles and expectations between Executive Director and Chairman
- Never let them be surprised – overcommunicate...without annoyance
- Develop trust
- Give your Chairman a voice, without losing your own
- Take them to industry conferences

Developing the Right Moves

- **Role of the Executive Director**

- Ensure roles of authority are clearly defined in the Bylaws

- **Typical Responsibilities**

- Hiring and firing of employees

- Managing day to day activities

- Public Face of the organization

- Managing volunteers

- Implements strategic plan

- Reports back to Board on organizational performance

The Practice

Preparation to have a productive board meeting:

PLAN YOUR BOARD MEETING - Understand your board

- **Delegation:** Matching people and tasks is the key to delegation. Making sure that board members with the right skills are working together on appropriate reports, agendas, initiatives, or committees will tremendously increase productivity.
- **Motivation:** Understanding the interests and needs of your board members is key to motivation. Knowing what they expect and value can help you to keep them motivated and interested
- **Participation:** Group dynamics can impact the productivity and enjoyment of your board, so making sure that some members don't dominate conversation is key. Making board members feel involved and free to have their say can do wonders for morale and productivity.

The Performance – The Board Meeting

Steps for a Productive Board Meeting:

- **Have a clear and focused agenda:**
 - Consent Agenda
 - Focus meetings on strategy, not just administration – get new initiatives going!
- **Stick to the agenda:**
 - Make an effort to stick closely to the agenda so as to not waste the board's time.
 - Build in time for focused discussion to move the organization forward
 - Identify who is strong enough to keep the meeting moving forward productively
 - Detailed Directors Report – perfect if you don't get to everything
- **Homework:**
 - Send full Board Packet out at least 2 days before the board meeting
 - Send out articles and resources that add value to the discussion topic or issues at hand in advance.
- **Schedule time for committee check-ins:**
 - Build time into your schedule to hear updates from committees – talking points can be added for discussion into the next meeting's agenda

Board Performance: Questions to ask

Leadership

- Are the board members performing their roles and duties?
- Is the board and its members performing as expected?
- How successful is the current chair of the board in running the board and the organization?

Procedure and resources

- Are meetings organized and frequent?
- Do committees have appropriate resources? Are they effective?
- Are directors and board members being educated on rules and procedures?

Dynamics

- Do board members get along? Do their attributes and skills complement each other?
- Are meetings and discussions progressive and constructive?
- What are the dynamics at informal gatherings (dinners, parties, retreats, etc.)?

Relationships

- How does the staff view the board?
- What is the relationship between the board and members?
- Do the members and the staff trust the board to make the right decisions?
- If your organization is a chapter with regional or national boards, how is your board's interaction with these?

Other Recommendations

- Create a peer network – other Execs, industry associations, etc
- Find mentor
- Be a mentor
- Take time for trainings – for you and your staff
- Board engagement can be scary....Don't get defensive
- Serve on a board for another organization
- Always be thinking strategically for board makeup down the road
- If you need help from your board, don't be afraid to ask. You don't have to be Superhuman to be a good Executive Director.

Most importantly, relax and dance with the one who 'brung ya!

Questions:

Other Topics:

- Committees
- Millennials