

Board Recruitment and Orientation

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Characteristics of Effective Board Members

There are many qualities that the ideal trustee possesses, and chief among them are probably integrity and passion for the cause. Only those that truly care about the mission will invest themselves on behalf of the institution. The following is a summary of trustee qualities:

- Ethical
- Passion/Committed
- Professional
- Intelligent
- Generous
- Dependable
- Good tempered
- Disciplined team player (not the Lone Ranger)
- Realistic outlook

Nonprofits require many different types of professional skills, talents, and services to support and enrich the organization. Expertise is valuable in:

- Financial management/Accounting/Investments
- Banking/ Trusts/Estate Planning
- Fundraising/Philanthropy/Planned Giving
- Legal
- PR-Marketing/Advertising
- Business Administration
- Real Estate/Architecture/Engineering/Development
- Other specific skills as required

Expectations of Board Members

In addition to professional expertise, nonprofits also need trustees with a wide-variety of talents that they are willing to put to use in an organization. Some of these are talents that have been finely honed; others must be newly learned. Each nonprofit depends on members that are willing to offer assistance even when they venture into areas that may be beyond their individual comfort zone or current expertise. These are some of the most important functions in a nonprofit. Each board member can significantly advance the organization by participating in the activities most needed by the organization and those most critical to a healthy board.

- Public Trust
 - Governs responsibility
 - Works without self-interest
 - Protects the public trust.

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- Advocacy and Promotion
 - Advocate not only by lobbying political powerbrokers but also by actively promoting the organization.
 - Engage in public speaking on behalf of the nonprofit
 - Identify opportunities, plan and set goals, coordinate speaking and engagements
 - Be a host in your own organization.
 - Greet visitors and be outgoing
 - Talk about the organization like you talk about your kids.
 - Invite others to visit.
 - Lends their name and is engaged at activities and events.
- Become Knowledgeable
 - Stay informed about the organization's work/changes/aspirations.
 - Develop an elevator speech that reflects the Case for Support and your experience—tell your own story.
 - Understand the connection between the Mission and the Case for Support.
- Exercise Appropriate Roles/Responsibilities
 - Recognize appropriate roles
 - Follow the chain of command inside the board and in relation to the CEOs role of managing staff.
 - Respect the professional role of the staff as well as the limitations and challenges they face.
 - Collaborate and cooperate
 - Notifies staff in a timely manner of availability for meetings.
 - Attends all meetings, comes prepared, participates actively in group decisions
 - Takes responsibility for actions/fulfill assignments
 - Tackles the most important work of the board/not afraid to do what is needed
- Network and Influence
 - Engage your networks to open doors for the organization; introduce the CEO and others to important players; make connections.
 - Works beyond your sphere of comfort; uses personal and professional networks to uncover new contacts and prospects
 - Employ and create connections to recruit strong board members and build the board.
- Financial Commitment and Oversight
 - Accepts responsibility and remains focused on the financial health of the organization.
 - Places this organization in their top 3 philanthropic priorities

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- Develops strategies for the line-items the board can affect/improve.
- Raises funds for operating, special needs, the future.
- Expands the base of support
- Offers investment management and cost saving expertise
- Gets excited about inviting others to make a difference
- Gives generously and annually solicits gifts
 - Makes their own gift first.
 - Views the cause as more important than their fear of asking for support
 - Rejects the notion of begging

BOARD RECRUITMENT

Before you can decide where to look for board members, you have to decide who will be involved in this process. Is it the full board or its committees? A task force? The CEO? Since the board is responsible for hiring and evaluating the CEO, it is important that they be the ones engaged in selecting the CEO's next boss. Although the CEO should be fully engaged in this process, frequently the board's inactivity in the recruitment process forces the CEO to take on this responsibility; and in truth, someone has to do it. However, this should be a unified effort to find the best people for future service.

The board is central to the organizations ability to flourish and for this reason alone, recruitment of new trustees should become one of the highest priorities. The role of the Nominating Committee is too often restricted to a last ditch effort a few months before board terms end. Other task forces or committees may manage this function under a governance or board development committee. Still most do not report regularly report on activities related to an active search for prospective board members.

Recruitment of new trustees is an on-going process that should be part of the reporting at each board meeting. Identification of appropriate candidates is one of the most difficult aspects of board recruitment, but it can be made easier if a process is in place to network and strive to meet people who can offer advice and insights. As you educate yourself about new and emerging leaders, community advocates, and those who share your values and interests, you can expand your pool of candidates.

Recruitment and Community Networks

The way nonprofit institutions expand their reach is by developing networks that reach deep into the community. Museums need these networks to succeed in programming, fundraising, and to build public trust. One of the primary reasons institutions establish larger board than is legally required is because trustees bring their networks and contacts into the museum. When trustees take on the task of prospective trustee identification, new networks are among the things they seek. Often, however, the trustees turn to acquaintances within familiar circles--and they do so

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over and over again. That limits the search but that can be expanded by looking in new place and moving outside the comfortable circles of friends and colleagues. Others in the community can prove helpful when you seek their advice and guidance to identify talent and leadership in new circles of influence. It is that commitment to find networks that will bring future support to the museum that is most needed.

Identification – Where to seek advice

- Professional and Community Groups
- Established community and political leaders as well as those on the rise
- Corporate CEO's; Upper-level Executives; Mid-level professionals
- Business Owners
- Religious leaders
- Nonprofit associations and professional group affiliates
- Past board members
- Family members
- Chamber of Commerce and other business committees
- Local "Leadership" program participants and graduates.
- *Close to Home*
 - Those ALREADY invested in your cause: top donors
 - Consistent Givers
 - Legacy Society Members (Planned Gift Donors)
 - Donors who also volunteer.

Recruitment Process

1. The development process is repeated in every development program and in the recruitment of trustees. These simple steps are the foundation for development efforts.
 - a. Identification (Qualification/Research/Screening)
 - b. Cultivation (Education and learn)
 - c. Solicitation (The ask is only one small part of philanthropy in action)
 - d. Stewardship (Thanking/Recognition/Plans for continuing the relationship)
2. Create a comprehensive plan using the steps in the development process with each board candidate. Determine goals, recruitment assignment, and deadlines.

Prepare Materials

1. Summarize clear board expectations related to time, money, fundraising responsibilities, attendance requirements, important dates/activities, planned programs, etc.
2. Prepared Letter of Commitment – to be signed by prospective board member.
3. Recruitment Packet containing:
 - a. Internal: Mission, Vision, Case for Support, Opportunities for Support
 - b. Organizational charts - staff and board

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- c. Board: List of board members and assignments; List of board accomplishments; Strategic Plan; Scheduled board meetings.
- d. Staff roles and Board roles and responsibilities and limitations
- e. Program information
- f. Proposed dates for Board training and orientation
- g. Awards/Documents/Press Releases and other pieces that lend credibility and confidence in your organization.

Courtship and Cultivation

1. Steps for Approaching a Board Candidate:
 - Make initial contact
 - Organize the *right* team to approach this prospect
 - Use Research – Brief profile on the prospect
 - Review what is known and determine roles and talking points for all participants
 - Develop strategies for multiple engagements and forms of contact
2. Meet, Cultivate, Learn, Ask
 - If appropriate, ASK them to join the board. What else will you Ask for?
 - What if they say, “NO”? Create fall back positions.
 - Follow-up – thank you letter, respond with requested materials, etc.
 - Report – transfer what was learned into records/database

What Prospective Board Members Ask

- How does my vision as a (Managing Partner, CEO, Senior Manager) fit with this organization?
- Will the board and this organization help me achieve my personal and professional goals? How?
- Who else is on the board? What are their roles? And what do they actually do?
- What is expected of me?
 1. Money
 2. Time
 3. Committee Assignments (that match skills)
 4. Development Committee or Role
 5. Support – attend and act as “host” at events
 6. Advocacy – public speaking, lobbying, personal promotion.

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7. Networking – Links: Make phone calls, connect leaders, accompany on visits and solicitations. Bring your network into the museum to broaden the base of support and educate others about the value of the work

*Questions for the Board Recruitment Interview***Personal**

- Tell us about your work, what is your vision for your company, and what do you hope to accomplish?
- What are the things most important to you personally?
- How would being on our board fit with your values?
- What expertise and resources could you bring to the board?

Our Organization

- Why do you see this Museum as relevant/important?
- What do you see as our most important contributions to society?
- What do you enjoy most about the museum?
- If you were invited to serve on our board, would we be in your top three philanthropic priorities?
- Why should others care about our mission and our work?
- What do you see as our greatest value to the community?

Community Service

- From what you know today, how does our organization compare with other organizations you have served as a board member?
- What other boards have you served on?
 1. What were the biggest challenges?
 2. What were your personal contributions?
 3. What were the expectations?
 4. How long did you serve?
- What other organizations do you support and why?

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Welcoming New Members

Formal Board Approval

Just as all candidates should be approved by the board before any cultivation activity takes place, all nominees must be approved by the board and their intended role outlined. No one should assume that because a board member has extensive board experience that they do not require an orientation or even that they know the official role of the board. Board members pick up not only skills when they serve on various boards but also bad habits. Set your own standards for board engagement by starting out on the right foot. Nurture and guide new board members by finding ways to encourage and engage them within the first three months.

Strategies for Welcoming new members

- Welcome call from CEO/Board President, invitation to visit, confirm orientation
- Lunch with CEO/Development Director
- Explore assignments and needs
- Assign board mentor
- Other?

Orientation

Orientation of new trustees should not be a one-time event. Rather, it should be a months-long process, purposefully designed to enable the trustees to become familiar with the organization, what it does, and how it does it. Most important is to remember that the board orientation should be an orientation to the board and its work—not necessarily to the staff and their work. Learning about the organization need not be an overwhelming time commitment. It can be integrated into the normal work of a board member, at meetings and in communication between meetings, through events and programs, and at a monthly or quarterly lunch with the executive director and/or board president.

Components of an effective orientation process:

- As a matter of courtesy, use name tents and name tags for everyone including staff members who attend meetings. Often board members do not see each other regularly enough to remember everyone and call them by name, and for new members, it can be awkward to meet so many new people at once. Name tents enable members, new and old, to address each other by name, and over the course of the meeting to begin to remember names.

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- At the first meeting attended by new board members, ask all members to introduce themselves, stating why they decided to join the board, and what role they play (or hope to play) in helping the organization succeed.
- The greatest weakness of boards is the failure of members to challenge assumptions or proposals, or to challenge them in a way that does not create factions and animosity. It is particularly destructive when members fail to speak up in a meeting, and then do so afterwards. Hence, it is important to establish with new trustees the expectation that they will fully participate, not hold back, and ask the important questions that need to be asked. To reinforce this, the president can encourage the newcomers to speak up whenever they do not understand something, or when they have an opinion. Getting them to talk in the first meeting will reinforce a culture of open dialogue in board meetings.
- Provide new members with a board notebook with relevant information. This is for future reference as questions arise. Necessarily the notebook will contain lots of information, too much to be retained initially. At a minimum it should contain:
 - Mission, vision and values statements
 - Current strategic plan and other documents that present goals and aspirations
 - Current fundraising plan
 - Current operating budget
 - Names and contact information for all board members
 - Specific expectations of board members
 - Board structure: committees, task forces
 - Dates of board meetings
 - Minutes from the previous 3 or 4 board meetings
 - Organization chart
 - Description and dates of major activities and events
 - By-laws
- An Executive overview (of no more than five pages) covers the essential information every board member must know. It is the basis of the orientation and is intended to help the new board member understand the work ahead. It should contain:
 - Succinct information about bylaws and the structure of the organization;
 - An abstract of major policy decisions in recent years.
 - A summary of the strategic plan
 - An interpretation of the financial situation.
- Provide a Mentor by pairing each new member with a board veteran who is committed and positive. The mentor's job is to help the newcomer understand the culture of the board and the things that cannot easily be conveyed in writing. For example, over lunch the veteran could explain how a recent board decision was made.

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- What was the issue, what were the various points of view, the decision-making process, and how that decision reflects the values and culture of the organization?
- Within the first few weeks of service, each new member should meet with the board president and executive director. This meeting should cover
 - The evolution of the organization, its life cycle stage, where it has come from, where it is heading.
 - The major challenges going forward, and the differences surrounding them.
 - How the new member can specifically help with the challenges. This should be a dialogue, with the aim of having the member decide where he can make a real contribution.
 - Assign the new trustee to one or more committees where they can lend their expertise and where they will learn new skills.
 - Emphasize that all trustees have fundraising responsibilities and secure a gift if you have not done so to date.
 - The CEO should also invite new members to see the organization in action within the first few weeks of their tenure. This gives them an opportunity to engage firsthand with people in the organization.
 - Schedule a 3 and 6 month check in with the new trustee. Look for ways to engage the new member socially and professionally.
 - Be alert to opportunities to build the team and guide the board in learning the scope of their work and its value to the organization
 - Consider inviting spouses for a tour or lecture while the board meets and then have them join the board for a dinner or light refreshments after the meeting.
 - Celebrate successes in small and big ways and recognize the efforts of new board member promptly.