Essential Tenets of “Good Governance”: Strategies to Maximize Success

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Learning Objectives

• Understand the unique perspectives that leaders and staff bring to the Board room

• Develop strategies to forge a stronger Board-staff partnership

• Identify engagement methods to enhance the Board effectiveness
Today’s Agenda

• Understanding Roles and Responsibilities: Board vs. Staff

• Characteristics of High-Performing Boards

• Forging a Stronger Board-Staff Partnership

• Tips to Enhance the Effectiveness of Your Board Meetings
Understanding Roles and Responsibilities: Board vs. Staff
The Bicycle Analogy

**Front Wheel**

- Provides Direction
- Board
- Strategic
- Mission
- Vision
- Goals
- Fundraising

**Back Wheel**

- Propels Work
- Volunteers and Staff
- Tactical/Operational
- Plans
- Budget
- Implementation
- Performance Management
The Board’s Job: Steer, Not Row
Basic Responsibilities Of Association Boards
Basic Responsibilities Of Association Boards

- Monitor and strengthen programs and services
- Ensure legal and ethical integrity
- Determine mission and purpose
- Ensure effective planning
- Enhance the organization’s public standing
- Select the chief executive
- Support and evaluate the chief executive
- Build a competent Board
- Ensure adequate financial resources
- Protect assets and provide proper financial oversight
Basic Responsibilities Of Association Staff

• **Execute** strategy to achieve goals and objectives

• **Supervise** staff and **oversee** initiatives

• Serve as a **liaison** to volunteers on association initiatives (report progress, seek feedback and subject matter expertise)

• **Monitor** spending according to the organization’s budget (approved by the Board)

• **Track** progress and **report** outcomes to Board
Characteristics of High-Performing Boards
Characteristics Of High-performing Boards

Exemplary Boards . . .

• Engage in intentional practices
• Focus on outcomes, not process
• Have a constructive partnership with staff
• Dialogue, debate, decide
• Foster trust, transparency and continuity
• Balance risk and opportunity
• Evaluate and improve their own performance
Characteristics Of High-performing Boards

Values
- Are mission driven
- Engage in strategic thinking
- Have a constructive partnership with staff

Culture
- Promote a culture of inquiry
- Practice independent mindedness
- Promote an ethos of transparency

Rigor
- Are results oriented
- Comply with laws with high integrity
- Can steward and sustain resources

Continuity
- Engage in intentional board practices
- Engage in continuous learning
- Energize and revitalize themselves

Source: BoardSource
Five Minutes With Your Neighbor . . .

Quick Discussion:

• Where is your organization strongest?

• Where can your organization improve?
Forging a Stronger Board-Staff Partnership
If You’re A Staff Member . . .

**DO:**
- Set organizational goals and review them regularly with leaders
- Be transparent and accountable
- Inform Board discussions with knowledge and data
- Respect the Board’s knowledge and authority
- Assume the best intentions

**DON’T:**
- Withhold information
- Make decisions unilaterally if Board input is needed
- Engage in personnel conversations with volunteers
- Steer debates and discussions to suit a personal agenda
If You’re A Board Member . . .

**DO:**
- Stay in touch with your fellow members about their perceptions of your organization’s performance
- Debate issues as a Board to agree on the organization’s priorities
- Be clear about your expectations of staff and desired outcomes
- Respect lines of authority – bring your concerns to the CEO
- Assume the best intentions

**DON’T:**
- Openly debate personal opinions with staff
- Establish your own deadlines without consulting the CEO
- Forget the difference between “leadership” and “management” roles of directors
- Get directly involved with personnel issues or reprimand staff
Finding Overlap In Perspective

- Subject matter expertise
- Professional experience
- Strategic ideation
- Association knowledge
- Operational expertise
- Day-to-day business experience
- Belief in mission
- Understanding of goals
Enhancing the Effectiveness of Your Board Meetings
What Makes A Board Great?

“What distinguishes exemplary boards is that they are robust, effective social systems.”

What Makes Boards Great
Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld
Harvard Business Review
September 2002
Communication Is Key

- Use Roberts Rules as a guide
- Develop, share in advance and follow an agenda
- Establish ground rules (and remind meeting attendees of them)
- Set clear intended outcomes for each meeting
- Take the time to ensure everyone has been heard
- Use the ELMO principle (enough let’s move on) for time management
- Discuss, debate, decide, diffuse
- Use executive sessions as necessary
Think In All Three Modes

- Source: *Governance is Leadership* (published by BoardSource)
- Leadership should be more than simply reviewing committee reports
- Research shows when a Board thinks in all three modes, satisfaction and enthusiasm increase
The Three Modes Of Governance

- **Fiduciary**
  - “What’s wrong?”
  - Problems are to be **spotted**
  - Boards decide by reaching resolution

- **Strategic**
  - “What’s the plan”
  - Problems are to be **solved**
  - Boards decide by reaching consensus

- **Generative**
  - “What’s the question?”
  - Problems are to be **framed**
  - Boards decide by grappling and grasping
Examples Of The Three Modes Of Governance

**Fiduciary**
- Annual budget
- Immediate resolutions
- Prepare by reading Board book, knowing policies, etc.

**Strategic**
- New market opportunities
- Developing goals and objectives
- Consider scenarios and alternatives

**Generative**
- “Blue sky” thinking
- Tend to deal with high-stakes issues
- Requires time and reflection
Five Minutes With Your Neighbor . . .

Quick Discussion:

• What changes can you make to strengthen your Board-staff partnership and improve your meetings?

• What key issues could serve as generative topics for your organization in the future?
Discussion
Thank You!