

Governance From the Nonprofit Professional's Perspective

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"If all nonprofit Boards focused on the mission, did not allow individual agendas and personalities to overwhelm the collective needs of the organization, and worked in partnership to define the organization's future, a great deal of dysfunction would disappear from the nonprofit sector."

Deborah Linnell, Zora Radosevich and Jonathan Spack: *Executive Director's Guide*

The Board and Chief Executive Partnership

The communication link between the board and staff is through the chief executive therefore the following tips are directed toward these members of the leadership team.

- A well-defined partnership between the board and the chief executive is central to the organization's sustainability and effectiveness.
- Chief executives and board members benefit from getting to know each other outside the board room. Commit to meeting with one board member each month in a relaxed setting that allows you both to catch up and connect.
- Engage your board members in the good work of your organization. Include your mission statement on agendas to help keep people focussed on your organization's reason for being. Include a Mission Moment at the beginning of each board meeting.
- Clarify and document roles, responsibilities, authority and expectations of the board and chief executive and review annually.
- Nonprofits need to determine what governance model is most effective for its organizational culture and life cycle. These factors change as the organization evolves and will require different models according to the need.
- Board members need accurate and timely information in order to make informed decisions.
- Be the first person to bring the board bad news; don't risk them being ambushed by another source.

Board Members and Fundraisers

- Ensure the board, volunteers and all staff understand and embrace a "Culture of Philanthropy" which relies on a team effort for the best results.
- Help board members understand the important role they play as champions of the cause. Their leadership must go beyond their generous contribution of time and include a financial investment within their individual budgets.
- Build your case by telling compelling stories that are grounded in the organization's strategic plan.
- Provide training and support to board and other fundraising volunteers so their experience is a positive one.