

Building Great Boards

December 1, 2023



Third Plateau



BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Purpose & Expectations



Types of Boards

FOUNDING BOARD

- 1st degree network
- Sign the dotted line
- Follow the direction of the org leader

WORKING BOARD

- 1st and 2nd degree network
- Extension of staff
- Thought partners

GOVERNING BOARD

- 2nd and 3rd degree network
- Mission keepers
- Directors

← CRITICAL QUESTION: WHERE IS YOUR BOARD ON THIS SPECTRUM? WHERE SHOULD YOU BE? →

Roles & Responsibilities

THE MOST EFFECTIVE BOARDS HAVE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS OF THE GROUP AND EACH INDIVIDUAL

THE COLLECTIVE

- Compliance
- Financial oversight (including fundraising)
- CEO/ED oversight and evaluation
- Mission

INDIVIDUAL DIRECTORS

- Present and engaged
- Committee involvement
- Individual give/get level (with personally meaningful financial contribution)
- Open personal and professional networks

STANDARD COMMITTEES

- Executive
- Finance
- Program
- Development

Other Common Committees:

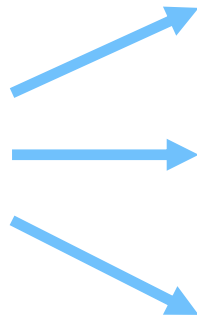
- Governance
- Talent / HR
- Facilities
- IT

**Only create the committees
you actually need!**



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Partnership between the Board and the Executive Director



Role Clarity

Performance Evaluation

Maximizing Impact

Role Clarity

The Board oversees and supports the Executive Director.



Board

- Hold Executive Director accountable for organization's overall performance
- Evaluate and support Executive Director's performance

The Executive Director oversees and supports all other staff.



Executive Director

- Evaluate and support staff performance
- Oversee day-to-day operations
- Report to board on organization's performance



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Performance Evaluation

Evaluate regularly and consistently.

- Either annually or semi-annually
- Protect the time and keep your cadence

Design a process that prioritizes learning.

- Self-assessments, peer assessments, board assessments
- Set and reflect on measurable goals

Make it a two-way conversation.

- The review is about the ED's performance *and* the working relationship with the board (and especially the chair)



Maximize Impact

Align ED goals to what the organization needs.

- Name what metrics needs to grow, change, maintain, or stabilize, *and quantify it*

Build positive momentum—as a team.

- Identify how the board's priorities and ED's priorities align and fuel one another

Balance aspiration and reality.

- Ensure meaningful goals that are set up for success
- Don't tolerate underperformance



Board and Staff Dynamics

BOARD AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT WILL LOOK DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF BOARD

FOUNDING BOARD

- Minimal engagement with staff at this phase
- Board focused on org compliance

WORKING BOARD

- Collaborate directly with staff on discrete projects
- Follow staff direction to contribute capacity to move work forward

GOVERNING BOARD

- ED/organizational leadership engage with the Board
- Other staff engagement is typically limited



BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

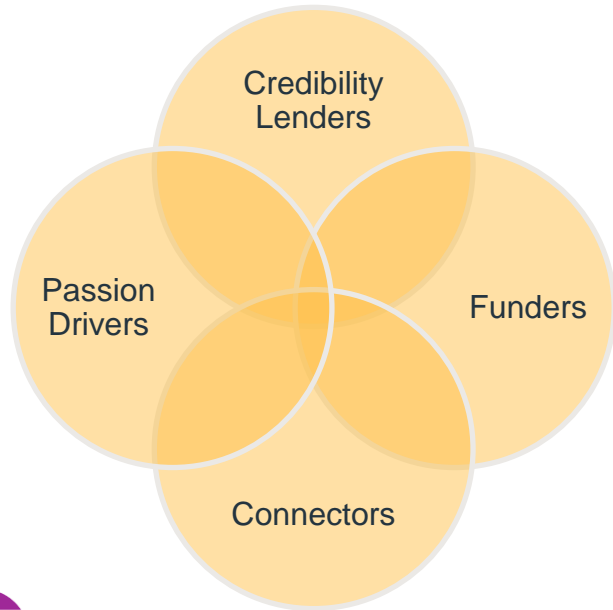
Putting it to Use



Board Composition

GREAT BOARDS HAVE THE RIGHT BLEND OF NETWORKS AND EXPERTISE

NETWORKS



EXPERTISE

Legal
Finance
Facilities
HR
Marketing
Industry knowledge
Org. Management
Fundraising
Lived Experience
Local Business
Government



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Board Recruitment

Recruit for what you need.

- Assess what your board needs in order to advance the org, and be focused in your search and recruitment

Date before you marry.

- Find ways for all parties to do lower-profile work before inviting someone to join the board; don't be lured by a flashy reputation or resume

Recruit in cohorts.

- Critical for DEI, general board engagement, and evolution



Running Great Board Meetings

Meet only as often as you need.

- Identify what you need for effective governance and relationship building; rewrite your bylaws accordingly

Prioritize discussion and exploration.

- 85-15 rule

Set everyone up for success.

- Prep needed materials
- Don't enable bad habits



Accountability

Board Contracts

Codify the specific expectations of the directors and have each individual sign a board contract at the beginning of each term.

Report Cards

Annually, have each director complete a self-assessment evaluating his/her/their ability to fulfil the board contract and anonymously complete peer assessments of other directors.

Code of Conduct

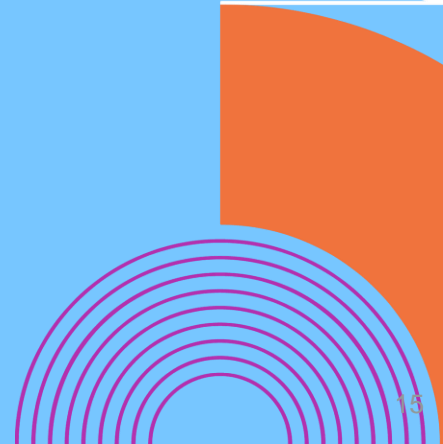
Create a set of defined meeting norms that govern all meetings.

Appoint a Sergeant at Arms to hold the group accountable.



Small Group Brainstorm

How can we better encourage positive board behaviors and hold directors accountable?



Guiding Questions



Assess

In what ways in my board currently embodying the practices we discussed today?



Dream

What are the major changes I want to see when it comes to my board?



Plan

What are two action steps I can take in the next 60 days to start the board evolution process?



WRAP UP

You. Got. This.



Key Takeaways



KNOW YOUR BOARD TYPE

It is absolutely critical to know whether you need a founding board, a working board, or a governing board. Embrace transition phases from one board type to the next.

BOARD AND STAFF DYNAMICS

Make sure there is clarity between board and staff on their roles and responsibilities. The organizational leader is the primary point of contact for board members.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Identify exactly what your board and ED need to be successful and what is expected of everyone.

HOLD EVERYONE ACCOUNTABLE

It's a slippery slope, so use tools like board contracts, report cards, and codes of conduct to keep everyone aligned and focused.

Contact



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