



# PERSPECTIVES

...on Building Better Non-profit Board Membership.

This month's *Perspectives* looks at ways to motivate your board – what do you do to invigorate a board that has lost its edge? Even better, how do you keep them from losing focus to begin with?

Board members are more than a group of people working together for the good of an organization; they are individuals who, like any of us, can occasionally lose their enthusiasm for the job. It is easy for a board to become overwhelmed with the oversight strategy of a non-profit and lose sight of all the good work that it is doing. It is always wise to pay attention to the “care” of your Board, but during difficult times, it is even more critical to attend to keeping your board motivated.

The following ideas may help motivate board members and keep them caring, involved, and interested in the organizations they serve.

### **Provide board members projects they care about.**

If a board member feels the work they are doing is significant, it will help motivate them to do the projects well. While the entire board needs to be accountable for the non-profit and members should be involved in varying aspects of governance, some board members can be asked to carry out specific tasks that they find themselves better suited for.

Some board members may enjoy special event planning, while others may be more interested in streamlining meetings or leading a capital campaign. Make the effort to identify your board members' interests and use those preferences to enrich their participation.

### **Tend to the Board's needs.**

Tending to the board members' needs and treating them with respect is key to making them feel appreciated and motivated to do their best work. Positioning them in leadership positions outside of board meetings, providing them with relevant information, and engaging them actively in strategic development is critical to board members' feelings of belonging and contributing.

### **Keep the board aware of the good work it is doing.**

Many of the people on the board probably agreed to join and serve because they appreciated the work of the organization. If a board member has worked tirelessly to help plan a huge event or has spent many hours cultivating relationships with potential donors, he or she should be commended in front of the entire board for their work. Never underestimate the value of positive feedback.

### **Help the board develop a sense of ownership.**

Board members who acquire the sense that the organization is theirs and that its welfare and effectiveness are their responsibility are usually motivated to find ways to enrich it, enlarge it, protect it, and preserve it. As board members act out the responsibilities of ownership, they are rewarded and motivated by the visible results of their labor.

None of these suggestions requires extraordinary effort to put into effect; yet a little time and attention to detail can be the difference between an energized board and one simply going through the motions.

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