The boards duty of foresight

Aside from the three critical duties—the duty of care (exercising prudence in decision making); the duty of loyalty (giving allegiance to the organization); the duty of obedience (acting in a manner consistent with the organization’s mission)—that board of non-profit organizations and associations must perform, Jeff De Cagna, FASAE, chief strategist and founder of Principled Innovation LLC, added the duty of foresight, a higher standard of responsible board conduct grounded in the affirmative choice to look continuously toward the future. Boards need to understand as much as possible about the plausible impact of the forces of societal transformation and learn how to harness them for the benefit of their organizations and stakeholders. While the duty of foresight may never become a recognized legal duty of nonprofit boards, it is clearly an essential strategic duty and, arguably, a moral obligation to both association stakeholders and society.

To read the whole story please follow this link: http://associationsnow.com/2016/02/boards-duty-foresight/

Finding the “right” board member

Start with asking what does your nonprofit need to advance its mission right now and in the future? A board member with financial expertise? Connections in the community? Someone familiar with the individuals served by the nonprofit? Once you have identified the skills and experience your nonprofit needs, you’re ready to identify and recruit new board members. The recruitment process requires both “vetting” a candidate and “cultivating” the interest of a potential future board member until he or she is ready to accept an invitation to become an ambassador and advocate for the nonprofit. Some nonprofits find that asking potential board candidates to first serve on a committee or task force, or volunteer for the nonprofit in another way, is a good way for both nonprofit and potential board member to find a good fit.

Source: https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/finding-the-right-board-members-your-nonprofit

Increasing transparency

Today, more than ever, the public and government agencies are demanding nonprofits to be transparent. But concerns about having a realistic picture of internal operations, where money is going, and the effectiveness of the programs are countered by concerns of overburdened staff, increased administrative costs, and an invitation to singled-out and damaging criticism. Transparency is not a matter of two extremes—of all or nothing—and as a result, many nonprofits continue to struggle in addressing these concerns.

“The State of Nonprofit Transparency, 2008: Voluntary Disclosure Practices” in 2009, it suggested five simple steps for increasing transparency:

- Regularly update the organization’s website with current, detailed program and evaluation information, including information regarding strategy, evidence-based evaluation metrics, and the underlying theory of change;
- Post board and key staff members’ names, titles, and bios that highlight each person’s skills and contributions;
- Post the organization’s annual report on its website;
- Post any audited financial statements on its website;

Source: http://www.nonprofitlawblog.com/
How to be a better nonprofit board member

Boards of directors help organizations to head down the right strategic path — to make good choices about program areas and geographic locations, and recruit skilled executive directors and get rid of bad ones. Weak board governance, on the other hand, keeps nonprofits from reaching their full potential and ultimately may even cause a nonprofit to struggle and die. Good directors need do only a few things to help a nonprofit become

Ensure the mission is focused and well understood. Too often, a nonprofit’s mission is too broad and/or unachievable, like “ending world hunger” or “breaking the cycle of poverty.” Narrow your mission’s focus to fit the skills and resources you have or might have.

Ask stupid questions, until you figure out the smart ones. It’s shocking how difficult this one is for many people, because it goes against human nature. We don’t like to look stupid in front of our peers, and for many people, serving on nonprofit boards is a way of networking with peers. If board members don’t engage directly and deeply in the substantive work of an organization, then board meetings degenerate into staff-driven, pre-baked exercises. Most board members, of course, are bright people with a wealth of experience. But they often lack expertise in the day-to-day work of the organization on whose board they sit.

Make field visits. To be truly effective, members of a nonprofit board must engage directly and deeply, and this often includes traveling to the field.

Insist on impact evaluations. Boards must insist on impact evaluations (and funders, by the way, must be more willing to pay for them). If a nonprofit can’t demonstrate that programs work, why should anyone provide funding? Complaints by executive directors about an excessive focus on evaluation are largely a smoke screen, and board members should recognize them as such. Too often, a nonprofit’s mission is too broad and/or unachievable, like ‘ending world hunger’ or ‘breaking the cycle of poverty.’

Develop a succession plan
Part of your job as board member is also to ensure a succession plan. Start early; even 10 years or more is not too long when it comes to a leadership transition.

Source: by Bill Meehan Kim Starkey Jonker

Roles and Responsibilities of nonprofit board

The following descriptions are provided by Richard T. Ingram’s Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards. Members of the board of directors are trustees who act on behalf of an organization’s constituents, including service recipients, funders, members, the government and taxpayers. The basic responsibilities of the board of directors include, but are not limited to:

- Determining the organization’s mission and purpose.
- Supporting and evaluating the chief executive with the goals of the organization in mind.
- Ensuring effective organizational planning.
- Determining which of the organization’s programs are consistent with its mission and monitoring the effectiveness of these programs.
- Securing adequate financial resources for the organization to fulfill its mission.
- Assisting in the development of the organization’s annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.
- Defining prerequisites for potential new board members, orienting these new members, and periodically evaluating performance.
- Adhering to legal and ethical standards and norms.
- Clearly defining and articulating the organization’s mission, accomplishments and goals to gain support from the community and enhancing the organization’s public image.
- Overall, board members have a duty of loyalty to the organization, its staff and other board members. While differences of opinion will likely arise, board members should keep disagreements impersonal. By practicing discretion and accepting decisions made on a majority basis, the board can accomplish unity and confidence in its decisions.

Individual Board Member responsibilities

Individual members of the board are required to:

- Attend all board and committee meetings and functions, such as special events.
- Stay informed about the organization’s mission, services, policies and programs.
- Review agenda and supporting materials prior to board and committee meetings.
- Serve on committees or task forces and offer to take on special assignments.
- Make a personal financial contribution to the organization.
- Inform others about the organization.
- Suggest possible nominees to the board who can make significant contributions to the work of the board and the organization.
- Keep up-to-date on developments in the organization’s field.
- Follow conflict of interest and confidentiality policies.
- Refrain from making special requests of the staff.
- Assist the board in carrying out its fiduciary responsibilities, such as reviewing the organization’s annual financial statement.


The board of directors should be open to self-evaluation and regularly review their own composition to ensure constituent representation, board expertise and commitment. Boards also are responsible for evaluating and determining compensation for the executive director. Board members perform their responsibilities through regular meetings and a committee structure that is appropriate for the size of the board and organization. Board members are responsible for arriving at meetings well-prepared and ready to engage in thoughtful dialogue.

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