



Working More Effectively With Your Board

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2012 MOWAA Annual Conference
Gaylord National Harbor Hotel

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session you will understand:

- Governance and Organizational Support
- Organizational Life Cycle
- Setting Objectives with Diagnostic Tools
- Characteristics of healthy board/staff relationships

Governance and Operational Support

Governance (Oversight/Leadership)	Operational Support (Lending a Hand)
1. Mission	1. Fundraising
2. Strategy	2. Marketing
3. Finance	3. Volunteer Mgmt
4. Policies	4. Bookkeeping
5. Executive Director	5. Web Site Mgmt
6. Board	6. Etc

A Board's Role Changes Over Time

	Start-up Org.	Young Organization	Mature Organization
Org.	Building Capacity	Strengthening Capacity	Fine Tuning Adapting
Board	Working Board	Moving from Hands On to Oversight	Governing Board

Common Problems Created by the Board

- Board Members not knowledgeable
 - Vision, mission, objectives, process, details
- Creates additional work for staff
 - New projects, micro-manages
 - Small staff overwhelmed by large board
- Focus on details, not big picture
- Does not trust staff, or each other

Valuable Tools For the Board

- New Board Member Solicitation and Orientations
- Annual Board Self-Assessment
- Annual Revisit of Organization's Mission, Vision, and Objectives
- 3-year Outlook
- Board Committee Descriptions and Objectives
- Annual Executive Director appraisal

Working Boards.... A Trap Some Fall into

- Often support Young and Mature Organization
- Offer volunteer support for small, under-funded organizations
- Create problems
 - Is the board the boss or the volunteer?
 - Can you execute programs and perform oversight?
- Hinder the growth and independence of the organization
- May have outlived their usefulness

Common Problems Created by the Staff

- Doesn't share information with the board
 - Doesn't know what to share, doesn't want to
- Lacks skills needed to do the job
- Can't explain how staff time is spent
- No specific objectives, implementation plan
- No time to spend with board members
- Doesn't manage the budget well

Valuable Tools for the Staff

- Staff Job Descriptions and appraisals
- Objectives for the year (org. and individ.)
 - Including Project Plans, Communication, Fund-raising, Personnel, Volunteer/Member, Other?
- Annual and Monthly budget
 - Balance Sheet, Income Statement, Cash Flow
- Strategic Plan (5 years ahead, 3-4 pages)
- All must be understood by the board

Three Diagnostic Tools

- Board/Staff “Check-Up”
- Board/Staff/Volunteer Responsibilities
- A Look at the Short-Term Future

Critical Tools for Success

- Board Committees
 - Responsibilities and Annual Objectives
- Staff
 - Job Descriptions, Objectives, Appraisals
- Expectations of Board members
- New Board Member Orientation Outline
- Board Committee Recommendation Form
- Executive Director Board Report

Characteristics of a Strong Board/Staff Relationship

- Trust, Respect, and Professionalism
- On-going Communication – no surprises
- Agreement on these items:
 - Vision and Mission
 - Annual and L.T. Priorities
 - Division of Labor
 - Decision-Making Process

Joint Board/Staff Healthy Habits

- “Are we on track?” meetings
 - One-on-one (Board Pres and ED)
 - All concerns and issues can be raised
 - Preview of ED’s board report
- Board Committees and Staff Members discussions between board meetings
- Don’t let all communication occur during the board meetings

Learning Outcomes (revisited)

At the end of this session you will understand:

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- Setting Objectives with Diagnostic Tools
- Characteristics of healthy board/staff relationships

Valuable Resources

- National Council of Nonprofits
(www.ncna.org) – find your state association
- www.boardsource.org
- www.managementhelp.org (free library)
- www.suite101.com
- www.idealists.org
- www.ezinearticles.com (business/nonprofit – search for articles by Alyson Ball)

Wrap-Up

Questions? Comments?

DIAGNOSTIC – BOARD, STAFF and VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

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	BOARD	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	STAFF	VOLUNTEERS OR MEMBERS
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OPERATIONS (list all major programs and include program planning, budgeting, execution and evaluation. Gain agreement on the goals of each program – how will you know you are successful?)				
FUND-RAISING (include the development of the fund-raising plan, and each fund-raising element including grant-writing, membership drives, major donors, capital campaigns, etc)				
BUDGETING (include budget development, approvals, and maintenance for one-year and longer-term (3-5 year) budgets)				

	BOARD	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	STAFF	VOLUNTEERS OR MEMBERS
FINANCIAL PLANNING (include audits and risk assessment here)				
ORGANIZATIONAL PLANS (include salary and recognition plans, hiring, job description writing, employee appraisals, succession planning, organizational changes.)				
MEMBERSHIP OR VOLUNTEER INTERFACE (include recruitment of new members or volunteers, benefits, retention of existing members or volunteers and key activities)				

	BOARD	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	STAFF	VOLUNTEERS OR MEMBERS
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<p>MARKETING Include messages, media (brochures, web site, media/PR, etc), and target audiences (community, staff, members, volunteers, clients, board, etc). Who determines and approves key messages? Who ensures board, staff and volunteers are marketing the same message?</p>				
<p>STRATEGY and POLICY (include the development and approval of the 3-5year strategic plan, key partnerships custodians, and who surfaces and determines policy decisions.</p>				

	BOARD	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	STAFF	VOLUNTEERS OR MEMBERS
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BOARD ISSUES (include board recruitment, orientation, communication with staff, board meeting management, committee success, assessment of the board)				
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DIRECTIONS: Start with the Executive Director and the Board President. Have them each fill out this chart – which will reflect their opinions. Compare notes about what’s important and who’s responsible for what. Once there is agreement between these the Executive Director and the Board President, share this with the rest of the staff, volunteers, and the board. Make sure that everyone understands their role in the overall plan.

A LOOK AT THE SHORT-TERM FUTURE

A Diagnostic for Non-profit Boards and their Staffs

Alyson Ball – BoardsThatExcel.com

These questions can be used as a starting point for discussions among board members – or with staffs and boards. Simply ask the parties to answer these questions to the best of their abilities. Compare notes. Ideally, there is strong agreement among all parties in the areas listed below. If not, more time can be spent making sure that all parties are in agreement about these key areas of the non-profit organization's current and future operations.

1. Write the organization's vision here:
2. Write the organization's mission here:
3. Write the organization's top 3-5 objective for the year here:
4. How will the organization be different in 3 years? (In particular, how will the programs (including client base) expand or change? How will this affect the organization's budget, staff, volunteers, technology, and board over time?)
5. What are the major steps that we have to take to get there?

Board President/Executive Director Discussion Questions

Source: Alyson Ball, BoardsThatExcel.com

1. What are you hoping to get out of this session today?

2. What are your biggest concerns about your role going forward?

3. List the three primary responsibilities of the Exec Director.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

4. List the three primary responsibilities of the Board.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

5. What are the three most important things that need to be done by the **organization** this year?
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

6. What are the three most important things that need to be done by the **board** this year?
 - a.

 - b.

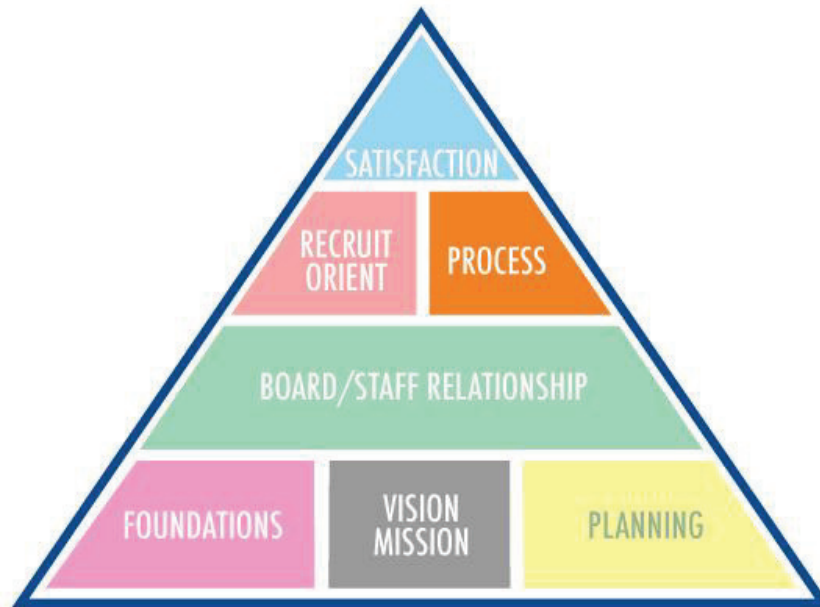
 - c.

STRATEGIC VIEW – A 3-YEAR OUTLOOK

Source: Alyson Ball, www.BoardsThatExcel.com

	TODAY	3 Years Out
Operations/Services (inc. clients served (#,Type), services offered (% mix), new services		
Personnel/Physical Space and Technology Staff (full and part time) Volunteers Office space/equipment Data Bases and Systems		
Annual Budget (Expenses) List major budget areas		
FundRaising Amount by Sources		
Board – How will the board need to change? Skills, Committees, Fund- raising, Working vs. Governing, Term?		
What other aspects of the organization will change over this period of time?		

BOARD MEETINGS, CALENDARS, AND RETREATS



www.BoardsThatExcel.com

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Greetings –

This best practice booklet focuses on board meetings (where board decision-making takes place), the annual board calendar (so you can plan your work), and board retreats.

One of the hallmarks of a mature board is its ability to plan its work in advance. This is easier than it sounds because the fiscal year of the organization creates a natural, annual cycle around which many board and organizational decisions, reviews, and evaluations can be made. You can add a great deal of value to your organization by standardizing your board processes. Your current board will feel secure (because it knows what it needs to do) and future boards will love you because they will not have to rethink and reinvent everything from scratch.

Additional advice about your organization or board is available in two ways:

1. **By email.** If you have a brief question, please don't hesitate to email me at Alyson@BoardsThatExcel.com. In your email, let me know which booklet you've bought and pose your question. I answer all emails.
2. **By conference call.** Many boards and staffs have teleconsulted with me. Your CEO/ED and Board Chair, the executive committee, or a single committee of the board might benefit from some specific advice about a particular problem or situation. Take a quick look at www.BoardsThatExcel.com/ask-alyson/ and see how easy it is to set up a conference call and receive cost-effective consulting directly from me.

When you're ready, there are other booklets available at www.BoardsThatExcel.com/the-market/:

For your staff and board: "Vision, Mission, and Values Statements", "Strategic Planning Template and Directions", "Quality Checklist and Action Plan"

For your board: "Purposeful Board Recruitment", and "Inspiring Board Orientations"

For your board committees: "Productive Committees", "Board Development Committee", "Finance Committee", "Fundraising Committee", and "Personnel Committee"

And here's my last piece of advice. Even if you aren't successful the first time you try to implement some of these tools, keep trying. It takes persistence to create new habits and standards. Keep at it – don't wilt - and good luck.

Warmly,

Alyson

BOARD MEETINGS, CALENDARS, AND RETREATS

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BEST PRACTICES FOR BOARD MEETINGS

1. Set up your **board meetings a year in advance**. Provide your board members with dates, times, and locations of all meetings at the beginning of each year.
2. Well-run boards focus their decision-making (and therefore their discussions at meetings) on five key areas of governance: (1) the organization's **finances**, (2) the **strategy** of the organization, and (3) the **policies** that define the standards by which the organization will do business, (4) the CEO (or Executive Director), and (5) the board's own sustainability.
3. The Board Chairperson develops the **board meeting agenda** in concert with the Board Committee Chairs and the Executive Director.
4. **Board meeting agendas** allocate time to important issues that need to be discussed prior to board-required decisions.
5. Board meetings should focus on the decisions that need to be made by the entire board. **Avoid discussing details that can be discussed and acted upon by board committees. Avoid discussing details that can be discussed and implemented by the staff.**
6. If board members spend your board meetings passively listening to updates from board committees and staff, their time is not well-spent. Get staff and committee members to **send out reports and updates in writing a week in advance**. Expect your board members to read this material and be ready for a discussion at the board meeting.
7. Make it a habit to have the board secretary **send out the minutes** of the meeting within a week after the meeting.
8. **Solicit changes to the minutes** and amend the minutes right away. (Do not waste your board member's time at your board meetings discussing the last meeting's minutes and how they need to be updated – that should have been done **before** the board meeting.)

Mature Board Agenda Example

NOTE : A Mature Board Agenda is comprised of a series of holistic discussions for the board with decision-making as its purpose. In preparation for the board meeting, ask board committees and staff personnel to work together prior to the meeting to prepare complete recommendations for the board discussions **in advance**. Ask them to address all aspects of a single decision and send it to all board members a week before the meeting. Expect your board member to read these reports prior to the meeting. Be sure that the board makes a decision to either (1) approve the recommendation, (2) turn down the recommendation, or (3) to turn the question back to the committee for more review.

Mature Board Agenda Example

XYZ Organization, Board Meeting

Date

XYZ Nonprofit Organization's Mission Statement – printed here.

1. **Recommendation to expand Program "X"** (Executive Director), Impact to Program "X" (Operations Committee), Costs (Finance Committee), Staff and Volunteer Support Requirements (Personnel Committee)
2. **Recommendation for new Donor Database** (Executive Director), Benefits to the Fundraising Efforts (Fundraising Committee), Impact on budget (Finance Committee)

BOARD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION Example

Date of the Board Meeting: 8.12.05

Committee Name: Marketing Committee

Committee Members: Marabella, Victor, Sally, and John

Other staff and board members who have approved this recommendation: Nick, Francis

Background

Since our organization's inception, we have been keeping track of our donations on a spreadsheet. To date, this has been sufficient.

Issue Requiring Board Action

The current Donor Database (simple spreadsheet) does not have enough functionality to support the future growth in Individual and Major Donors that we expect in the coming years. At a minimum, we need to have a donor database that includes the following: (1) History of Giving, (2) Salutations (Mr and Mrs. John Doe, vs. Martha and Sam, vs. Buffy and Butch), and (3) Giving Reports (current and historic).

We have explored a range of Donor Databases with the following costs and pros and cons:

Database X – Excellent reporting, High end functions , Future Development will cost more (\$7 K)

Database Y – No local users, Tech Support comes from Cincinnati, Limited Reporting (\$2 K)

Database Z –Good comments and Reporting, Used by the hospital, Excellent tech support package (\$5 K)

Recommendation to the Board:

We recommend that we purchase the Donor Database Z, which will cost \$5000 over and above this year's approved expense budget.

(NOTE: The Committee is submitting a grant proposal to the Q Foundation to support this purchase, but we recommend the purchase of this new database regardless of whether we are the recipients of this grant or not.)

DIRECTIONS : Recommendations come in the form of this one-page summary (longer reports may be attached, if necessary). Board members receive by e-mail and read all recommendations one week prior to the meeting. During the meeting (after 5-7 minutes of question and answer) a decision is made (approved, back to committee - need more research or analysis, or denied)

XYZ Nonprofit Organization - Meeting Minutes

XYZ Nonprofit Organization Mission Statement : Print here.

Meeting Location, Date and Time:

Members in attendance:

Guests in attendance:

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION/ FOLLOW-UP	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE
I. Call to order	N/A	N/A		N/A
II. Approve Minutes from last meeting	N/A	N/A		N/A
III. Old Business				
IV. New Business				
V. Other and Adjournment				

Best Practices for Nonprofit Board Calendars

1. Start by looking at your organization's **fiscal year** and the financial, personnel, fundraising and operational cycles that exist already. Start thinking about how to align your board's calendar with the cycles of the organization.
2. Create a list of the **board decisions** that are related to finance (reviewing and approving the next year's budget, for example).
3. Another important decision that board members make is the **approval of new board members**. Usually, new members join boards at the same time every year – so creating a cycle for recruitment activities and orientation will help standardize this process.
4. The annual establishment of objectives and **management review of the Executive Director** are essential responsibilities of your board. While this oversight is handled by the Personnel Committee and executed by the Board Chair, it is also part of your board's annual cycle and should appear on your calendar.
5. **Fundraising Activities** should be listed on your calendar.
6. Your annual calendar should include all **fundraising events, board meetings, board orientations, and board retreats**.

NONPROFIT BOARD CALENDAR Example

	QUARTER 1	QUARTER 2	QUARTER 3	QUARTER 4
Org's Annual Operations Plan	Board reviews progress	Board reviews progress	Next Year's Draft Plan to Board Pres Next Year's Draft presented to board	Board Approves the Org's Annual Operations Plan for next year.
Org's Expense and Fundraising Budgets	Board reviews progress	Board reviews progress	Next Year's Draft Plan to Board Pres and Treasurer Draft presented to Board	Board Approves the org's expense and fundraising budgets for next year.
ED's annual Objectives and Review of ED	Board Pres reviews progress with ED	Board Pres reviews Progress with ED	ED drafts his/her Objectives for next year and reviews with the Board Pres	Annual Personnel Review of the ED by the Board Pres. Finalize next yr's objectives for the ED.
Fundraising	9.15.05 - Event	12.1.05 – Appeal Letter Signing	2.14.06 - Event	5.3.06 – Donor Appreciation
Long Term Planning Process	Board and Staff look at the 3-year view or the Longer-Term view	Board Approves the 3-yr view or the long-term view		
Board Officer and Committee Plans	Annual Board Retreat – (new) Committees develop and present their Annual Objectives to the board	Review status/progress of Board Committee Objectives	Review status/progress of Committee Obj. Board Approves next yr's Board Officers	Board Officers each present their objectives for next year Board Self-Evaluation
Board Mtgs and Retreats	9.21.05 - Mtg	12.3.05 – Mtg 10.15.05 - Retreat	3.11.05 - Mtg	6.6.06 – Mtg 6.21.06 - Orient
New Board Members	Welcome Cocktail Party Recruiting for next year	Board Holiday Social Recruiting for next year	Board Dev Committee presents likely new board members	Board Approves new board members Orientation Session for new board members

Best Practices for Board Retreats

1. Board Retreats should always have a **specific business purpose**. Effective board retreats focus on one aspect of the organization or board – like these:
 - a. Planning (can be for the next fiscal year – or the longer term)
 - b. A make improvements to a Specific Operational Program or Partnership
 - c. To evaluate a potential Strategic Partnership Opportunity
2. Any board retreat will also provide an opportunity for “**team building**” for the board as a whole. Don’t underestimate the benefit of this activity – even though it may not be the focus of your discussions.
3. Another secondary benefit of a board retreat is that ability to weave “**board training**” into the day. This could include finance, fundraising, operations, personnel issues, or training about board roles and responsibilities.
4. Decide if you should include all or some of the staff or volunteers in the retreat. The benefit of including more people in your discussions are these:
 - a. The board, staff and volunteers get to know each other – creating better working relationships throughout the year
 - b. The more minds and perspectives, the better
 - c. Any decisions or changes that are made as the result of the retreat already have some buy-in from the retreat participants.
5. If, on the other hand, your board needs to wrestle with serious operational situations or needs to speak freely about the future of the organization, conducting a “board only” retreat might be a better approach for you.
6. The next page shows an afternoon retreat agenda for a nonprofit that is planning for the next fiscal year. After a summary of the organization’s objectives, board committee objectives for the next year are developed and presented by each board committee.

Board Retreat Agenda Example

XYZ Organization's Mission Statement : Print here.

PURPOSE: Planning for Fiscal Year 2006 (January '06 thru December '06)

Working Lunch – 12:30 - Welcome and brief introductions

Budget overview

Staff Presentation – (1:00 – 1:20)

- a. Employees overview (reminder)
 - a. Hours worked
 - b. Job Responsibilities
- b. Program Objectives (September 2005 – December 2006) – Key Metrics for success
- c. Fundraising Summary – recap this year, a look at next year, improvements to strategy
- d. Budget requirements (September 2005 – December 2006)

Staff, Board and Volunteer Chart – (1:20 – 1:40) – Who's responsible for what?

Introduction to Committee Work – (1:40-1:50)

Committee work – Meet in Committees (except Exec Committee) (1:50 – 2:50)

- a. Make any changes to the Committee Responsibilities
- b. Outline Objectives (September 2005 – December 2006)
- c. Staff, volunteer and board member support requirements
- d. Estimated budget requirements
- e. Committee meeting schedule (if necessary)

Committee Feedback (2:50-4:20) – 15 minutes per committee

- a. Programs
- b. Budget and Finance
- c. Membership
- d. Marketing
- e. Development
- f. Long-range planning
- g. Finance
 - summary of 2006 budget estimates from other committee reports

Identifying Gaps, Discussion and Wrap-Up – (4:20-5:00)