

# Finding Effective Board Members

## 1. Start with Your Volunteers

Look for dedicated program volunteers that other volunteers look to for leadership.

Invite potential board members to become active in some aspect of your organization as a volunteer so you can grow together. If the individual is excited and participates, you have created a stepping stone for your newest board member. An active volunteer will become an active board member.

## 2. Consider Your Donors

Look through your donor base. These individuals have already made a commitment to your organization. They have an interest in seeing your organization's success.

## 3. Consult Your Current Board and Staff

Ask the most effective present Board members to nominate candidates. Ask staff for suggestions of friends, donors, or others who have a vested interest in the organization. If you know someone who seems to know exactly the right person to refer to when there's some issue to solve, then recruit that person. They won't know the answers but they'll know who might.

## 4. Reach Out to People Beyond Your Organization

**Business.** Look for people who are involved in the business community and are network-oriented team players. They will be more aware of current trends and governance requirements, and more concerned with what the organization needs. And because they are busy people, they will appreciate good time management, budgets, etc.

**Youth.** Do not automatically discount a person's value to the board because of his/her youth. The energy and 'can do' attitude they bring to the organization can be an invaluable asset. Today's young people are tomorrow's community leaders.

**Other Organizations.** Go to your local PTA. The people who run PTAs have terrific CEO experience as well as a social conscience." Check with past leaders, sister organizations, funding entity representatives. Board members who have stepped down from boards of organizational allies may be willing to join yours."

**The General Public.** Let people know you're looking. As appropriate get word out that the organization is seeking board members. Use various channels—the organization's newsletter, a news release for the media, word of mouth.

### **Before You Start Recruiting**

Have the board do a self-analysis before recruiting new members. The process should be driven first by the organization's vision, mission and strategic plan. Then, an analysis should be conducted to determine what skills, talents and interests current board members have and what is needed to move the organization forward.

### **After You've Identified Your Candidates**

Let potential board members know what will be expected of them. Be sure to be specific about what the position will entail,. There should be no surprises on either side. Don't downplay the work that's needed to guide the organization to meet its mission.

If fundraising will be a responsibility of the position, say so. It is MUCH harder to implement a board giving program after the person is on board as opposed to making it 'part of the job' before they start..

Make a job description or board handbook available to your candidate(s). Consultant Cathy C. Lee stated, No volunteer should be asked to serve in any capacity without a 'job description' or at least a written summary of their expected time/talent/treasure investment. Schedule a lunch meeting, bring the board handbook and be completely honest.

### **An Ongoing Process**

Make board recruitment an on-going process with a committee dedicated to. Be patient until you identify the right board members.

The most important qualification for an effective NPO board member is that they have a passion for the mission of the organization they will represent. You can overlook current position, education, experience, religion, political affiliation and every other status both personal and professional. Everything an effective board member needs to know can be taught to a willing mind and heart, but ... you can not teach passion.

Recruit volunteers for committees and that way we and they can see if they are a fit with the organization. Then invite some of the best committee members who already know the organization and who are willing to work to help you fulfill your mission..

Ask major donors or a recipient of one of your program that has turned into an active supporter/volunteer.

Hold a dinner and invite an interesting local personality who can speak to our mission, values, or issues. They sometimes become excellent candidates for our board.

Children's teachers, coaches, mentors, counselors, and instructors may be candidates for the board.

University professors in fields related to your mission and maybe even graduating students (bringing fresh blood, youth, and new ideas.

Board members who have stepped down from boards of organizational allies may be willing to join yours.

Never assume that someone is "too busy," "won't be interested," or "can't afford it." They will be flattered you asked and even if they turn you down now, they may be able to come on your board in a couple of years.

Ask that same person for recommendations.

It's never too early to start grooming someone to grow into a great board member. Start by taking them to a board training or conference where they get to see and learn new ideas and meet interesting people.

**NOTE:**

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