

Locating Board Members

Review Your Nonprofit's Mission and Strategic Plan and be prepared to give a five minute description of current goals and recent accomplishments. This makes it possible for you to “sow a seed” about your organization in many places and makes effective use of your time, as well as respecting the time of the prospective board member.

Become familiar with the background of the prospective board member. It's not enough to say: “Joe Smith is important-Let's ask him!” It is more effective to say: “Our board member, Jane Doe, said that she served with you on the XYZ board and you were very helpful with human resource questions. As our organization is growing, we would benefit from a board member with similar knowledge. I wonder if you would be interested in learning more about your organization.” This opens the door for the person to be helpful, even if they do not have time to become a board member at the present time.

Have a Board with a Broad spectrum of talents. Boards are charged with the governance of the nonprofit organization, making sure that it abides by ethical and legal standards in making its vision a reality. Here are some common questions to ask in developing a well-rounded board: Does the board reflect the community with respect to age, gender, and ethnicity? Does it board reflect a knowledge of and experience in financial, business and legal professions? Does the board contain members who have personal influence and financial resources to help attract support to the organization? Does the board contain representation from those whom it serves?

Look at Current Board Strengths. A good rule of thumb in conducting board member searches is “Don't look for people who are like you.” While a wide variety of board members may need more time to get “up to speed,” the broader viewpoints expressed can strengthen the board when differences are managed and not allowed to bog down the agenda.

Keep on the lookout for board members. You cannot expect to find the best individual or individuals if you are rushing at the end of the year to select who you would like to ask to serve on your board. Also, do some preplanning, and talk to the individual ahead of time to make sure what your organization does is of some interest or passion of the prospective board member. A good tip is to also look in your newspaper for the people who are in the news and successful in their profession.

Don't limit your search by assuming that certain people would not be interested in your type of organization. Many people like to volunteer outside the scope of their profession and use their talents in a capacity that fulfills a personal or family interest. For example, an accountant may be invited to join a board because of

his or her professional expertise, yet, what the individual may really want is an opportunity to do something hands-on, such as cook for a fund raiser. Remember that you are inviting a person to join the board, not just a skill base.

Inviting Someone to Serve on Your Board. It helps if you first talk to someone informally, maybe over lunch, about serving on your nonprofit board. If the person shows interest the formal invitation usually is made by a member of the board's nomination committee or board president. If a person is too busy but you really need them to help your organization it is good not to pressure someone to join the board; rather, ask if it would be okay to only to bring them in on short term projects to help as an advisor to the board.

NOTE:

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