

echoing Green

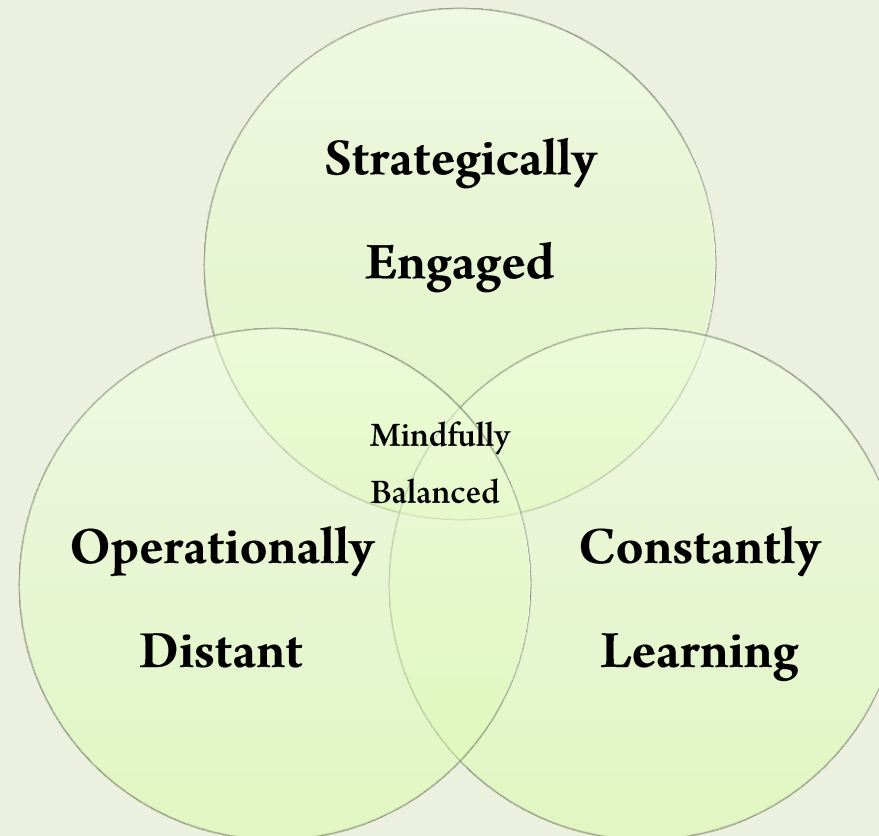
Direct Impact

How To Build Better Boards



What is Nonprofit Board Leadership Really About?

eCHOING
GREEN



Build a Great Board

WHO do we want on our board?

*Expertise/Professional Background; Diversity; Personal Attributes;
Network*

HOW do we find new and prepare board members?

- Cultivation
- Recruitment
- Onboarding/Orientation
- Term-Limits/Evaluation

Board Questions

Does the size/composition of our board reflect our needs?

Do we have a process for recruiting and onboarding new board members?

Do we have the right people on board?

Do we have a process for recruiting and onboarding new board members?

Ground Rules For Every Board Meeting



Respect Time

Be Present

Use “I” Statements / Embrace Board As “We”

No Judgment: Self Or Others

Raggedy Thoughts Welcome / Okay To Change Mind

Listen, Listen, Clarify, Listen

Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable

Silence Welcome And Expected

What Does A Great Board Meeting Include?



Welcome & Introductions (15 minutes): Begin with a personal check-in. Peak/Valley/Thought

BIG think (30-45 minutes): What is the BIG strategic topic you want to get your board's insight on?

General Updates/Review Board Book/Pre-Reading Materials (15-20 minutes):
Sense making and decision making.

Mission Moment (5 minutes): A story of a recent success at the organization.

Fundraising Talk (10 minutes): Actionable idea generation on fundraising.

Approve minutes and any other approval items (5 minutes)

Meeting Feedback (5 minutes): What went well? What could go better next time?

Executive Session (15-25 minutes): Always.

Nonprofit Board Must-Do's



Give money to the organization early and often—board participation should always be at 100%. As a board member, you do not want the CEO to spend their time reminding board members to give their annual donation. Instead, spend time making connections—every person you introduce to the organization has the potential to make an impact.

Prepare for board meetings and come with great questions. Block out an hour to prep for each board meeting—if you have basic questions, ask the CEO in advance. Come ready to engage in a meaningful, strategic, and generative discussion.

Support the CEO. This person is dedicating their life to a mission—one that you are also passionate about. Make sure they are being properly compensated, feel supported, and have someone to talk to about the challenges they face, without penalty or stress. Make yourself known and trusted by all staff so when there are problems, you can provide support.

Be an ambassador. Talk about the organization with everyone you meet. You're excited about the mission, right? Tell the world! Use social media, make phone calls, and invite friends to your home to learn more. As a board member, you are the organization's biggest advocate—show it.

Nonprofit Board Must-Do's



Follow through. If you're at work, you do what is asked of you. Do the same with your nonprofit board. Better yet, go above and beyond, because you love the mission. Don't say yes to anything unless you can follow through. Get excited about board evaluation because it is absolutely critical for success.

Be strategic. Keep your head out of the weeds. It is not your job to know every single thing about the organization—nonprofits are complicated, and you must trust staff to do their job well. Be strategically engaged and operationally distant. Operate with oversight and foresight, but spend most of your time focusing on making sense of the organization and its potential for impact, through insight.

Be empathetic. Don't be afraid to ask tough questions, but do it in the way you might ask a loved one. It might be very exciting to court The Gates Foundation, or to develop an Ice Bucket Challenge, but the CEO has probably already thought about doing this (it is *really* hard to do either one). It's important to have big ideas, but remember what is realistic given many competing priorities. Constructive partnership is everything.

Nonprofit Board Must-Do's



Keep learning about how to be an exceptional board member. Take this responsibility as seriously as you would any other work or familial obligation. Are you not good at fundraising? Ask for resources on how to get better. Not sure what best practice bylaws look like? Find out! Always keep learning and getting better at what you're doing.

Build a diverse board. Traditional board rooms must evolve. We can no longer accept that most boards do not have a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and cultural lenses. Be intentional about finding and engaging members from a variety of backgrounds—consider gender, racial, socioeconomic, and all other types of diversity. Boards are more effective with diversity at the table, so make this a priority for your board.

Know when it's time to go. If you can no longer fully commit your time, energy, and money to an organization for whatever reason, step down. Don't stick around longer than you should, because you think you have to. Engagement doesn't need to end—there might be a better use of your time for the organization. Finally—don't forget to do succession planning *all the time*. You never know what will happen, and it's best to be thoroughly prepared for any change the organization might face.