

# Trends in Board Management



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# 6 WAYS

## to Turn Your Board Members Into Engaged Fundraisers

BY BOARDABLE CEO, JEB BANNER

What makes a nonprofit board excel at fundraising? If a nonprofit can create powerful initiatives that outlast board terms, the organization is set up for long-term success. The bottom line is: an active, engaged board is a fundraising machine. Here are some tips for increasing board engagement:

### 1. Recruit board members carefully.

To increase engagement and boost board fundraising, embrace and strive for diversity by putting people on the board of different ages, from different backgrounds (professional and personal), and with different types of expertise. Engagement is all about incorporating the voices of everyone on the board. Diversity is crucial to engaged board fundraising, as it gives the organization more skills, connections, and perspectives to draw upon.

### 2. Set the expectation of board fundraising early.

Often, board members fail at development efforts simply because they didn't understand it was expected of them. As part of new board member orientation, set explicit fundraising expectations. This step serves two purposes. It makes clear to everyone what they will be doing during their board service. Just as importantly, it also weeds out board member candidates who are not ready for that level of engagement.

### 3. Get and stay connected.

If board members only see each other during board meetings, they are unlikely to stay engaged as a group and do their best work. Be sure to invite board members to any community events or workshops the nonprofit

hosts. Not only will it help them feel more connected to the organization, it will provide them with stories they can use for outreach.

While not every member of your board will be willing or able to take advantage of every invitation, many will. Help them track tasks between meetings, so they maintain momentum and follow up with each other on collaboration.

### 4. Boost your board's fundraising skills.

The board selects members for their knowledge, acumen, and abilities, but fundraising is a skill that can be built on. Try this fun engagement and development activity: Have board members practice elevator pitches with each other. Ask for a volunteer to share theirs with the group or vote on the best one and watch everyone feel more connected to each other and the mission.

### 5. Provide roles other than asking for funds.

Some board members are far better at asking for donations or gifts than others. Not everyone on the board has the same skill sets (that's a good thing), and board members who are reluctant to solicit others for donations or gifts can contribute in other ways. Being able to identify



and cultivate potential patrons and supporters, thank current donors, and involve all donors more deeply in the work are all key to successful board fundraising.

## 6. Make it easy.

If the organization needs the board's help on a specific campaign or for a specific event, let them know well in

advance. If asking for board assistance is left to the last minute, board members are unlikely to have enough time to help. If the "ask" is tied to a specific need, project, or time of year, write up the main talking points for board members to refer to when they are talking with potential donors or supporters. Make sure all these materials are easily accessible, without sifting through a ton of emails.

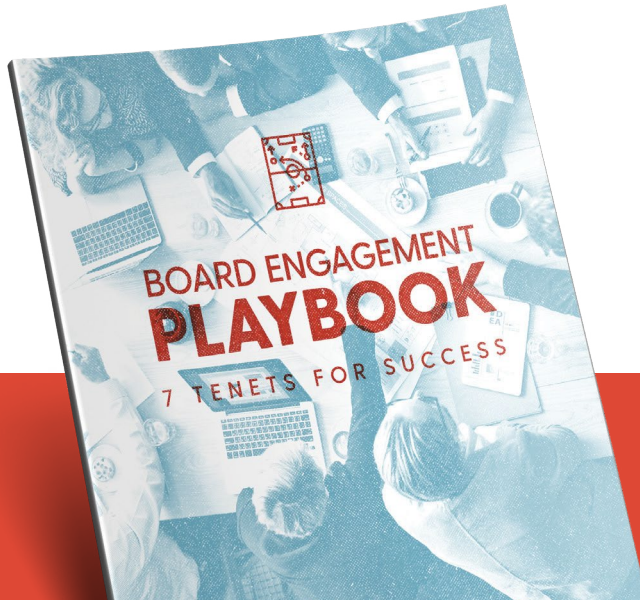
Keep engagement in mind during the entire journey from board member selection through term of service. Expect a huge improvement in both development and the board member experience!



*Jeb Banner is the founder and CEO of Boardable, a nonprofit board management software provider, as well as two nonprofits, The Speak Easy and Musical Family Tree. He also serves as a board member of United Way of Central Indiana and ProAct Indy.*

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"If you take care of the birds, you take care of most of the big problems in the world."



Dr. Thomas Lovejoy,  
Global biodiversity Genius, professor, US envoy



CAMILLA CERE/AUDUBON

# A 10-Point Guide for Improving Your Board Meeting Through Excellent Presentations

By DAVID YARNOLD

Volunteer board members spend their own time and money — and often travel long distances — to participate in board meetings. We owe our trustees rich conversations, a flawless meeting with materials that are current and crisply edited, sessions that start on time, speakers who are compelling, and food that is at least okay.

The Audubon board meets three times a year. Our

36 directors are science, policy, legal, marketing and business experts; they advise us on the work we do with a \$123 million annual budget. These busy people expect us to seek their advice and tap their expertise. They don't come to board meetings to listen to lectures or monologues. At Audubon, we work hard to achieve a balance: presenters only talk a third of the time; board discussion and Q&A fill the remainder of the time. This may be the single most import-



ant thing that sets our board meetings apart.

Board members should leave feeling terrific about their commitment to your charity. You want them to know that you respect their time and appreciate their contributions — financial and otherwise. At Audubon, to optimize each presentation, the speaker rehearses at least twice for each session and gets feedback from a handful of senior staff members. Practice and constructive criticism help even seasoned speakers polish their remarks. Even if this approach is too time-consuming for your nonprofit, there's a right-sized way for every organization to prepare for these occasions.

Here are 10 ways to ensure your next board presentation hits the mark.

**1. Most of these folks engage with our organization episodically, so put your remarks in context.** Think about a good TV series: the first minute often includes a super-tight reminder of what came before. It's helpful to ground board members in the conversation: Are we reporting on progress, introducing a new idea or wrapping up a topic we've addressed before? Let them know before you dive in.

**2. Explain why this topic matters.** Elevate. Stay out of the weeds (except when weeds are part of a real-life example of how things are working). When you're talking about a demonstration project, many board members are asking themselves: Will this scale? Can it really make a difference? Help them understand how your data points connect to a greater goal.

**3. Assume the board is impressed with your knowledge, expertise and taste.** Don't use your time to demonstrate your facility with lexicon, policy-speak, or anything too granular. Your goal is to connect, not impress. If your presentation is met with silence rather than eager questions, then you've talked past the trustees, conveyed the idea that you don't need their help or, worse, bored them.

**4. Be candid about potential obstacles.** Many board members work in the business world and often spend three-quarters of any meeting analyzing ideas to understand how they might fail. Nonprofits tend to do the opposite: we spend all our time talking about why our plan is going to change the world. But when you're waxing optimistic, the veteran donors and business people on the board are thinking about obstacles and why your great idea might not work. By raising questions and concerns yourself, you become more credible and open up what may be the most important avenue for board queries and advice. It's worth rereading the previous sentence.

**5. Don't try to cover everything in your presentation.** You can keep a side list and make additional points during the Q&A or in a hallway. I know this isn't easy; you have lots of important work to share. But when you do that at the cost of robust Q&A, you diminish your work and that of your colleagues.

**6. Remember: presentations always grow when you're in front of an audience; they never shrink.** If you're going to depart from your rehearsed talking points, it's your responsibility to find a way to stick to your allotted time. Nobody ever has been criticized for wrapping up on time or a little early.

**7. Show enthusiasm.** It can be hard to generate energy and enthusiasm for topics you've covered before — but if you're not excited about your work, why should the board be? Summoning freshness is tough when you present frequently. But just as a Broadway actor will tell you, every night is different; and every audience deserves your best.

**8. Ask questions.** If you're asked a question, answer it briefly. And then ask, "Did I answer your question?" And maybe even, "What's behind your question?" Board members usually have a reason for asking; you will get to a more meaningful exchange if you probe for that.

**9. Don't read your presentation.** If you're going to do that, just put it in the board book; trustees can read, too. Feel free to work from notes or let your slides be your prompts. Be in the room, looking board members in the eye — not reading from a computer or paper notes.

**10. Connect with trustees' work, funding, or history on the board. If they contribute to your work, they appreciate being acknowledged.** If they are experts in a field, they like their colleagues on the board to know it. If they have been extremely helpful in developing an approach or solving a problem, they will appreciate a shout-out.

A final thought: Board members enjoy meeting talented staff members. They want to get to know you and your work. Make the most of that opportunity — share your hopes and concerns. And most of all, show them your passion.

*David Yarnold (@david\_yarnold) is CEO of the National Audubon Society. The group's board includes major philanthropists, leaders in a variety of fields, and elected chapter leaders.*



ISTOCK

# Why and How to Build a Diverse Nonprofit Board

By REBECCA KOENIG

**T**he call for nonprofits to embrace diversity and reflect the communities they serve is growing louder. To accomplish those goals, charities and foundations need diverse board members, says Danielle Johnson-Vermonton, principal consultant at Blackbaud.

“It has to start at the leadership level,” she says.

That’s because boards make and enforce the policies that govern charitable organizations. Only a board whose members have diverse experiences and

perspectives will be able to effectively run a nonprofit that hires, serves, and raises money from diverse people, experts say.

Philanthropy leaders point out there is both a “business imperative as well as a moral imperative” to make boards at charities and foundations diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

“People who have a different way of looking at problems and solving them” strengthen an organization, says Virgil Roberts, co-founder and chairman of the board of the African American Board

Leadership Institute.

In contrast, nonprofits with homogenous boards may lack leaders with the ability to see — and the courage to declare — when “the emperor has no clothes,” Mr. Roberts says.

To encourage nonprofits to step up their efforts to diversify, some grant makers, like the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, require grantees to provide information about how they are building diversity into their boards. And organizations that gather data on charities, such as Guidestar, have begun asking nonprofits for that information, too.

Yet in 2014, only 20 percent of nonprofit board members were people of color, and a full quarter of boards are staffed exclusively by white people, according to BoardSource, a nonprofit that conducts research and offers programs to strengthen boards. That means charities have a long way to go before their governing bodies are meaningfully diverse.

Here’s guidance on how to start making your board more diverse.

## **DIVERSITY IN CONTEXT**

It’s important for nonprofits to understand that appropriate board diversity depends on context. It doesn’t mean simply balancing the gender or race ratio of members; it requires thoughtfully assembling a team that reflects the community you serve. A human services organization in Miami — which has a majority Hispanic population — should have a different board makeup than one in the middle of Utah, Ms. Johnson-Vermenton says.

For example, most of the board members of the Consumer Health Foundation, based in Washington, D.C., are people of color. That’s because the leadership reflects the demographics of the region and the diverse communities the institution tries to serve, says its president, Yanique Redwood.

One way to determine what kind of diversity is appropriate for your board is to analyze demographic information using websites like those for the U.S. Census ([census.gov](http://census.gov)) and Data USA ([datausa.io](http://datausa.io)). Another is to seek training from an external consultant. Or draw on a community member who can facilitate conversations among board members about issues related to diversity.

## **IT’S NOT ALL ABOUT MONEY**

Some charity leaders may worry that courting diverse board members will reduce the board’s fundraising capacity. That line of thinking is a “convenient excuse” to avoid seeking different kinds of people “based on a stereotypical view” of the financial capacity of minority groups, Mr. Roberts says.

He points out that African Americans, whom his institute works to place on nonprofit boards, have a

long history of giving generously to churches and to their family members.

Indeed, nonprofits that overlook minority candidates for the board do so to their financial detriment, Ms. Johnson-Vermenton says. She tells a story about an African American fundraiser who secured big gifts for a nonprofit from new African American donors. When the fundraiser asked why the donors had never given before, they responded, “No one’s ever asked.”

But nonprofits should not recruit board members based only on their ability to give or raise money, Mr. Roberts says: “There are ways in which people can be of great value to an organization” that go well beyond their checkbooks.

At Cornerstone Theater Company in Los Angeles, 20 percent of board seats go to “community board members” who are there to keep decision making grounded in the realities of the community, board member Paula Ely told the James Irvine Foundation.

The board of the Consumer Health Foundation decided to recruit members from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in order to find people “who are working very directly with people who are suffering the most in our community,” Ms. Redwood says.

It now has a member who works for the National Institutes of Health and lives in an apartment building with many immigrant families.

“Her perspective on the board is vital because she’s living and working in a very grassroots way with communities,” Ms. Redwood says. “She has direct living experience with people who are trying to find housing in a city where the cost of living is rising.”

To balance the need to raise money and the need to find board members who are in touch with the community, Mr. Roberts recommends instituting a policy that simply asks members to donate an amount that is personally significant.

## **RECRUITING WIDELY**

Making a board more diverse may require members to change their typical recruiting practices. Without purposeful intervention, boards tend to “regenerate,” in that members often are replaced with people just like them, Mr. Roberts says.

“People aren’t necessarily willing to go way outside of their comfort zone to find people they don’t know in places they don’t live,” he says.

His institute aims to help boards find African American members whose skills and interests match their needs. Other good ways to recruit diverse members include posting board openings online and in community spaces, contacting professional associations, and searching via networks like LinkedIn.



## CODIFYING, EVALUATING, REPORTING

Experts recommend codifying diversity policies into nonprofit and foundation bylaws to ensure they remain priorities regardless of who sits on the board at any given time.

For example, the Consumer Health Foundation created a list of diversity goals that its leaders use during annual planning meetings. It also uses a matrix (available for download below) to measure whether its board meets its diversity standards.

Some recommended policies to include:

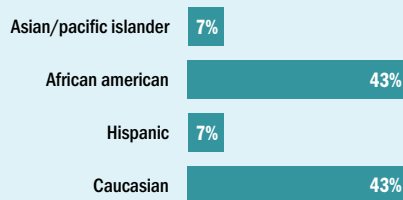
- Report on the makeup of the board while considering new members and during annual meetings to measure progress toward increasing diversity.

- Require all board members to serve on at least one committee, to ensure that all members get to participate meaningfully in governing.
- Conduct regular self-evaluations that ask board members for feedback about how inclusive the board is.

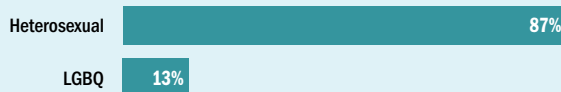
These recommendations come from Mr. Roberts, nonprofit researcher Christopher Corbett, and a report by the James Irvin Foundation.

Nonprofits and foundations may also want to hold themselves publicly accountable for increasing the diversity of their boards. The Consumer Health Foundation posts its board composition information on its website:

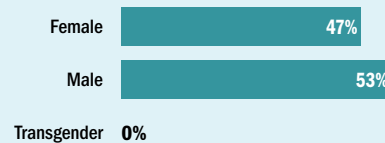
### CHF Board Race and Ethnicity Composition



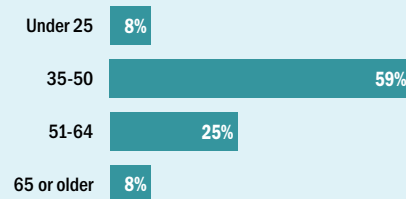
### CHF Board Sexual Orientation Composition



### CHF Board Gender/Gender Identity Composition



### CHF Board Age Range Composition



## BEING OPEN TO CHANGE

It's important to remember that the point of diversifying a board is to cultivate positive change that can help a nonprofit or foundation better accomplish its mission.

After recruiting diverse members, boards must be prepared to listen and incorporate new ideas into their work, rather than expecting

new members to “assimilate into what you already have,” Mildred García, board member at the Pacific Symphony, told the James Irvin Foundation.

It may be uncomfortable at first, but boards must be open to critiques, Mr. Roberts says: “In order to change the culture of an organization, you almost need to have somebody highlight what the board is doing wrong.”

# Coaching Board Members for Advocacy Pays Big Dividends

By MARIA DI MENTO

A study released last year showed that only one-third of nonprofit board members engage in basic advocacy: working with the charity's leaders to educate policy makers about the organization's mission and services.

That's a big problem, experts say. Board members often have connections that make them more likely to come into contact with elected officials at social or other events, as well as the kind of community clout that makes lawmakers more likely to listen to them.

"To me board members are really the secret sauce that make things happen," says Tim Delaney, president of the National Council of Nonprofits. "They have the added juice that paid [nonprofit] staffers don't, not because they're slick, but because they care, they're influential, and they're constituents."

Some trustees may be reluctant to pitch their organization's work to lawmakers because they believe nonprofit boards are not allowed to advocate. That isn't true, says Anne Wallestad, chief executive of BoardSource, an organization that seeks to improve nonprofit governance.

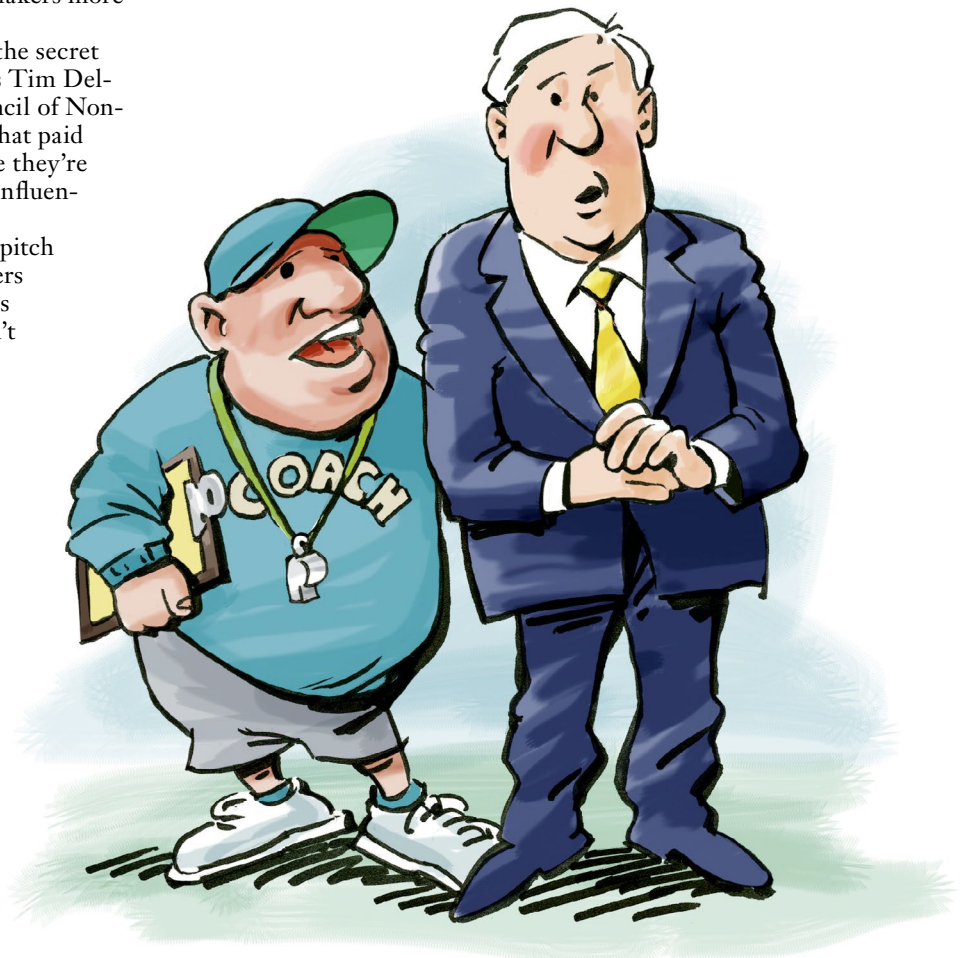
One way to bust that myth is to help your trustees understand the distinctions between lobbying and advocacy, said Mr. Delaney. Another is to give nonprofits the tools to know what their trustees can and cannot do.

Charities should create formal policies on advocacy to "clearly define the levels of engagement that are appropriate and what are not," says Ms. Wallestad.

There are a num-

ber of free resources to help board members and nonprofit executives understand advocacy, including one recently launched by BoardSource called Stand for Your Mission, which provides tools and guidelines to help charities make the pro-advocacy case to board members.

"Sometimes organizations and trustees fall victim to waiting until they feel 100 percent



BOB MCGRATH FOR THE CHRONICLE

comfortable to dip a toe in advocacy,” Ms. Wallestad says. “But there’s no time like the present to make sure lawmakers understand the work your organization does.”

## PREPPING FOR SUCCESS

Trustee-led advocacy “should be expected because everything today is so interconnected,” said Margaret Ferguson, a board member at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore since 1999. “If your institution is going to be strong and grow, it’s going to need broad connections in the community.”

Of course, you can’t just tell trustees that advocacy is legal, hand them copies of your policy, and expect them to be engaged and effective advocates. Nonprofit leaders need to set their trustees up for success.

A good way to start is to make sure board members understand which public-policy decisions might help or hinder the organization’s work.

Ms. Wallestad says it is also important to educate trustees about any public agencies the nonprofit has partnered with and how much government support the charity has received or gets now.

“Trustees should also know where the organization is stuck or being held back and where it could take a leap forward through advocacy efforts,” she says.

## BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Next, Ms. Ferguson says, nonprofit leaders should help board members think about how to leverage their networks by asking them questions about:

- their business connections and relationships.
- their involvement in community groups.
- other charities they work with.
- events they attend where they might run across a lawmaker.
- political campaigns have they contributed to.

Then, have a conversation with trustees about what actions to take. These can be as simple and natural as remembering to talk about their involvement with the charity when they run into a lawmaker at an event, Ms. Wallestad says.

“That’s a time when, if the opportunity arises in a conversation, they can articulate to the person in an informal way the organization’s mission,” she says. For just such occasions, she adds, trustees should have at the ready a short, compelling statement about why they care about the nonprofit’s mission and why they got involved. They need not be experts on the organization’s

issues of focus, but they should be well informed about its work and overall priorities.

“Remind them they’re there to open the door to a relationship with the lawmaker,” Ms. Wallestad says. And if the trustee lives in that legislator’s district, she adds, it’s important to make sure the lawmaker knows he or she is talking to a constituent.

## STAYING THE COURSE

Making your nonprofit’s case to lawmakers bears similarities to fundraising, Ms. Ferguson says. Just as “you don’t approach a wealthy donor by cold-calling them and expect a big donation,” advocacy involves “a long period of contact and cultivation.”

**“Trustees should also know where the organization is stuck or being held back and where it could take a leap forward through advocacy efforts.”**

She and Ms. Wallestad recommend coaching board members not just on opening a conduit to public officials but on how to elevate advocacy conversations the next time their paths cross:

- If the public official has been a supporter of the charity in the past, be sure to thank them.
- Don’t lecture lawmakers about the mission, just tell them the charity’s work.
- Invite the lawmaker to one of your charity’s upcoming events, or schedule a visit where he or she can learn more about your group’s programs or the concerns of those it serves.
- Find areas that are relevant to the official’s interests and build on those.
- Read lawmakers’ campaign literature to learn what issues they care about. Are they worried about jobs? Do they promote science, technology, engineering, and math education? If your organization has programs that address a favorite area, point that out.
- If lawmakers agree to attend an event, try to get them involved in a way that will make them feel good about participating.
- Use the visit to have a deeper conversation about what the organization has accomplished for those it serves.





ISTOCK

# 10 Ways Nonprofit Boards Can Keep Regulators at Bay

By ALEX DANIELS

**W**ith only a few lawyers dedicated to charity oversight in each state, it is difficult for state regulators to police the hundreds of thousands of registered nonprofits in the United States. That's why charity enforcers look for outliers. If they spot an organization that seems sloppy in one area of its work — if, for example, its board of directors is having a messy public squabble — regulators are likely to take a closer look at the entire enterprise.

**If they spot an organization that seems sloppy in one area of its work, regulators are likely to take a closer look at the entire enterprise.**

After canvassing her peers throughout the country, Janet Kleinfelter, a deputy attorney general in Tennessee, came up with a list of 10 practices that nonprofit boards should follow if they want to remain on the good side of charity regulators.

Following the advice, she told attendees at a recent meeting of the National Association of State Charity Officials, can also help nonprofits be sustainable and effective.

Ms. Kleinfelter, along with Vernetta Walker, chief governance officer at Boardsource, and James Joseph, a private lawyer and governance expert, offer these tips.

### **1. Make sure your board is active and informed.**

Too often nonprofit board members ask their friends to fill vacant board seats, even if they're not qualified. That sets low expectations for how much work will be required, says Ms. Walker. Board members who aren't plugged in and engaged in the nonprofit's work often fail to notice when an organization's efforts start to slip.

To make sure you can find trustees who will be active, don't talk about filling board vacancies only when they arise. "Talk about it year-round, and build a pipeline" of prospective board members who know about the group's cause and can dedicate the time needed to do the job, she says.

### **2. Guard your organization's assets and data.**

Make sure you set policies for prudently investing your nonprofit's assets and have a data-security plan in place so your donor information is safe.

### **3. Don't just avoid conflicts of interest — avoid the appearance of a conflict.**

Each state has its own rules governing nonprofit conflict-of-interest policies, says Ms. Walker, but even if you follow them to the letter, something may seem inappropriate to outsiders.

A good rule of thumb for knowing if something will have the appearance of a conflict, she says, is to subject it to the "smell test." "How would you feel if you read about it in tomorrow's Washington Post?" she asks. "Would you come out smelling like a rose?"

You don't need to be too rigid, though, she adds. If a trustee has a financial interest in a group with which the nonprofit does business, the board does not necessarily have to scrap the contract. "You can say yes occasionally," says Ms. Walker, such as when a vendor with a relationship to a trustee provides a valuable service for

a reasonable fee. Remember to disclose all potential conflicts and check with the laws of your state for what is allowed.

### **4. Don't just act as a rubber stamp for a powerful executive director.**

At board meetings, don't let the executive director run the show. Set aside some time to talk when she is out of the room, says Mr. Joseph. "I'm shocked by the number of boards that don't kick the CEO out of the meeting," he says.

It's important to keep this in mind throughout an executive's tenure. Often, Mr. Joseph says, a nonprofit leader will work to gain the board's trust early on but later slip into bad habits if the board doesn't exert its authority.

Especially when a foundation leader has a lot of pull, he says, be sure the salary is on par with what other executives in your region are paid for doing similar work. And make sure you have documentation that shows compensation levels at other nonprofits in case regulators question the pay level.

**"How would you feel if you read about it in tomorrow's Washington Post? Would you come out smelling like a rose?"**

### **5. Stay true to the nonprofit's legal charter and by-laws.**

Just as they have a fiduciary duty to make sure the nonprofit is fiscally sound, board members have a duty to ensure the organization is true to its founder's intent. Too often, nonprofits go after grants that are only tangentially related to the group's work. To avoid mission drift, board members should be intimately familiar with the group's by-laws, Ms. Kleinfelter says. Board members shouldn't just be able to recite a mission statement posted to the nonprofit's website. "Ask your board when they last read the charter," she says.

### **6. Squash infighting among board members.**

It's natural for a board to squabble, but keep what happens in the boardroom inside the boardroom, says Ms. Kleinfelter. Arguments that get personal have a tendency to leak out, sometimes into the press, and that can be a sign the nonprofit is off track. "If you don't resolve

the conflicts, we will,” says the Tennessee deputy attorney general.

**7. Respect a donor’s intent: Don’t misuse restricted gifts or the nonprofit’s endowment.**

To respect donor intent, it is first necessary to assiduously track where the money goes. If making a grant or supporting a program seems to stray from the donor’s intent, and the donor is no longer living, check with the state charity office first to make sure it isn’t at odds with donor restrictions.

“Ask permission beforehand, because you’re not going to get forgiveness afterwards,” says Ms. Kleinfelter.

**8. Stay on top of fundraising contracts.**

Third-party fundraising contracts are often the first place regulators look to uncover board malfeasance. It is a good idea to take a periodic look at the vendors being used to solicit contributions, Mr. Joseph says. “Make sure you

are paying a market rate and that there are no conflicts [of interest],” he says.

**“I’m shocked by the number of boards that don’t kick the CEO out of the meeting.”**

**9. Keep adequate and timely records.**

If a nonprofit isn’t able to provide an accounting of its activities when asked by state regulators, law-enforcement officials are likely to dig in. Keep all of your bookkeeping and governance documents current.

**10. If you get a call from a state or federal official, be prompt in your response.**

Don’t keep law-enforcement officials waiting.





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# Beyond the Traditional Junior Board: Ways to Turn Millennials Into Leaders

By REBECCA KOENIG

**J**unior boards at nonprofits like the Lee Park & Arlington Hall Conservancy are made up of young professionals who help raise funds and plan events for nonprofits.

Engaging millennials is a high priority for many nonprofits. These 20- and 30-somethings know how to use social media and care about doing

good. And, of course, they will become the donors of the future. In order to capitalize on this potential, some nonprofits recruit young adults to join “junior boards.”

Traditionally, junior board members are young professionals who help raise funds and plan events for nonprofits. Young people like the opportunities

these groups provide to network, socialize, and contribute to a cause. At the same time, companies appreciate having their young employees serve as visible community leaders.

A traditional junior board can serve as a pipeline — or a “farm team,” as Carol Weisman, president of Board Builders, puts it — to the real governing board.

For example, since 2007, when the Lee Park & Arlington Hall Conservancy in Dallas started a junior board, at least six members ultimately joined the board of directors, and one became its chairman, says Gay Donnell, conservancy president. “It’s the most fun, serious way to move on to the board,” she says.

But Ms. Weisman says she has mixed feelings about junior boards. To begin with, she explains, relegating millennials to a “kids’ table” apart from full board service can create resentment and distance them from the organization.

While some nonprofit leaders are thinking about placing millennials directly on governing boards, others are not ready to ditch junior boards altogether. Rather, they’re reconsidering the purpose of such a group and the way to choose participants.

Regardless of how they do it, nonprofits should make sure to incorporate millennials’ ideas, Ms. Weisman says.

“I think it’s to the peril of nonprofits not to have a place, either junior board or big board, for people in that under-30 group,” she says. “If you don’t listen to the younger people and bring them on the board or junior board, they will start their own organization.”

Here are some ideas from experts about how to incorporate young leaders in your organization.

## PLAY UP CORPORATE APPEAL

There are three legs to the traditional junior board system: young people, the nonprofits for which they volunteer, and the companies for which they work.

The combination works well to serve the needs of many millennials, Ms. Weisman says.

“The types of people I find who have really enjoyed junior boards are out of college. They may have a new profession, and they want to meet people similar to themselves,” she says. “It’s a wonderful opportunity outside of the bar scene to connect with a values-based group.”

It also fits neatly into many employers’ corporate culture. Companies know millennials want jobs that appeal to their sense of purpose, and they sometimes use the promise of placing young employees on nonprofits’ junior boards as a job recruitment strategy.

“That’s a powerful marketing tool for them to attract talent,” says C.J. Orr, senior associate director at Orr Associates, a consulting firm.

That concept inspired Mr. Orr to co-found Car-iClub, a website that charges companies to match

their young employees in New York City with junior board openings at nonprofits. During the site’s pilot stage, it matched 25 Citibank employees with junior board positions, and when the site went live in July, more than 100 employees from the investment firm KKR signed up.

## LEAP INTO LEADERSHIP

To some people, a junior board seems like an unnecessary holding pen.

After a 29-year-old friend of Ms. Weisman’s son complained that he wasn’t learning anything from the junior board he had joined, she placed him on the governing board of a senior services organization. It was a perfect fit.

“He left a message on the answering machine, and it was so ebullient that I saved it,” Ms. Weisman says. “I played it for the CEO of the organization, and he said, ‘I can’t thank you enough.’”

She hypothesizes that older board members today are more open to respecting young people’s ideas than they were in the past because they respect millennials’ technology skills.

“When I joined my first board at 23, there was nothing that people in the room who were 50 didn’t know. That’s not true today,” Ms. Weisman says. “Boards today ... they want people under 30. They have a whole different view of how to get messaging out.”

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There’s some evidence that governing boards are indeed skewing slightly younger: According to BoardSource’s 2015 Leading With Intent survey, board members under age 40 increased from 14 percent in 2010 to 17 percent in 2014.

Heading straight to the top is the idea behind Direct Impact, a new leadership training program developed by Echoing Green, a nonprofit that provides fellowships to individuals with innovative ideas for social change and creates leadership workshop curricula. Direct Impact participants — New York City residents in their late 20s and early 30s — will take part in four months of workshops, site visits, and retreats designed to prepare them to serve on nonprofit

it governing boards. The first cohort of 13 people will meet for the first time in September.

“Junior boards are not really boards; they’re really a fundraising vehicle,” says Lara Galinsky, senior vice president at Echoing Green. She hopes that Direct Impact will be a “win-win-win”: for participants, for Echoing Green, and for “corporations that need to show they’re investing in an incredibly talented population.”

## **PUT ADVOCACY BEFORE FUNDRAISING**

Rather than discard the junior board model entirely, in 2014 the Greater Chicago Food Depository created an associate board whose work focuses not simply on raising money, but rather on advocating on behalf of the nonprofit’s clients.

After a young man proposed the food bank start a group for people his age, the nonprofit invited him to research how other local junior boards work. He found that they mostly provided fundraising services. But the nonprofits he approached also said it was important to find meaningful work for young volunteers.

“It really solidified our thought that we were going to do this a little bit differently,” says Kate Maehr, the group’s executive director. “We have so much meaningful work we have to have help with. It underscored the importance of defining the organization around advocacy and education as opposed to fundraising.”

The other reason for avoiding a fundraising focus, Ms. Maehr says, is that “we don’t want to create a sense that certain associate board members are more valued than others based on their capacity to give.”

The food bank made it a goal to recruit people with diverse jobs, including teachers, government employees, and religious leaders. And she believes that’s also part of the group’s appeal.

“To be able to meet people from a different walk of life or who have a different perspective on Chicago is exciting,” she says.

During the associate board’s short existence, members have staffed the advocacy tent at the food bank’s annual hunger walk, participated in the “SNAP

Challenge” to shop and eat on a food-stamp budget, called members of Congress, lobbied state legislators, volunteered at the food warehouse, and developed social media strategies to connect low-income kids with summer meals.

Fundraising is not forbidden, of course.

“If an associate board member wants to have an event and raise money, we’re not going to say no. But that’s not the greatest need that we have,” Ms. Maehr says. “We don’t exist to raise money. We exist to feed hungry people and strive to end hunger in our community.”

**“I have donors who have given us significant gifts who really love to see that this organization has the vision to educate at a younger age about conservation, preservation, and history.”**

Ms. Maehr notes that the energy young people bring to the associate board is infectious.

“I sense something in the generation of young professionals coming up today. There is a substance — they want to be a part of solutions in their community, and they are actively searching for that,” she says. “It does more than advance our work. For a lot of us, it fills us with incredible optimism.”

Ms. Donnell agrees. “I have donors who have given us significant gifts who really love to see that this organization has the vision to educate at a younger age about conservation, preservation, and history,” she says. “They love seeing that there is someone coming up behind them that also has the interest.”



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