

AUGUST 2009

Roll Up Your Sleeves:
Working With Your Board
During Tough Times

Tips from the "Nevo Trio"

Make sure that the board is accountable for developing a multi-year strategic plan for the organization. Once the plan is in place, revisit the goals and objectives quarterly or at monthly meetings to ensure that board & staff are tracking to the plan. Remember that strategic plan objectives need to be SMART [Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound]. Ensure that someone or some committee is ultimately accountable for accomplishing the objective.

CHALLENGE #2

Achieving Sustained Follow-Through

The Top best ways to address this challenge:

1. Match a members' areas of expertise with the jobs you are asking them to perform.
2. Express gratitude and acknowledge their contributions regularly.
3. Keep in touch via email to track progress on important tasks.
4. Clearly define accountability – Identify who's doing what, by when at each board meeting and then review those assignments and action items at the beginning of the next board meeting.
5. Assigned work needs to be meaningful and connected to the mission.
6. Provide necessary resources and authority for board members to do their jobs.
7. Open and consistent communication between the board and Executive Director.
8. Know each board member and how they are motivated.

TOP 3 CHALLENGES:

1. Board members who may lack board experience
2. Achieving Sustained Follow-Through
3. Keeping it Fresh to Maintain Interest

CHALLENGE #1

Board members who may lack board experience

The Top best ways to address this challenge:

1. Conduct thorough training and orientation at the beginning and at regular intervals throughout the year.
2. Identify and recruit members who are already passionate supporters with ties to the cause.
3. Establish mentoring relationships between new board members and more experienced members.
4. Set clear expectations through a Memorandum of Understanding and have well-written job descriptions.
5. Give members the authority and resources to do what they need to do.
6. Have people serve in an advisory board capacity before inviting them to serve on the board of directors.



Tips from the "Nevo Trio"

We agree that making time for the board to gather outside of meetings is helpful to the overall bonding success of the board. In our experience, board members who are friendly with one another work well together and are more likely to accomplish tasks they take on.

As a group you tapped into a critical area for creating an environment in which a board member [or staff member, for that matter] can be successful. We refer to it as RAA: Responsibility, Accountability and Authority. Unless a person attempting to accomplish a job has or has been given all three, s/he cannot be successful at that job. S/he will likely end up a bit demoralized as well.

Many of your board members hold significant positions in larger corporations. However, there is often a dynamic in nonprofit organizations that discourages business-savvy board members from bringing that corporate experience into the board room of a nonprofit organization. Encourage board members to apply their business expertise to challenges being faced by your nonprofit.

Don't be afraid to shake up the board a bit; one of the best ways to "keep it fresh" is to make sure you have fresh faces on your board. Term limits and staggered terms are essential to encourage new talent, new ideas and to keep a nonprofit moving forward.

THE NEVO TRIO

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CHALLENGE #3

Keeping It Fresh to Maintain Interest

The Top best ways to address this challenge:

1. Host social activities for the board; camaraderie and relationships among board members is important.
2. Engage members in their expertise areas and provide feedback and results from the work they have done.
3. Keep discussions at meetings focused on strategy and assign out to committees so that more work is being done at the committee level.
4. Meetings need to have defined start and end times with an agenda and expectations spelled out.
5. Provide food and comfortable surroundings!
6. Use more multimedia at meetings or guest speakers to break up the routine.
7. Make sure you include "mission moments" – inspirational stories about the people your nonprofit has helped.
8. Use tools and activities to encourage creative thinking and new ideas.
9. Create opportunities for small victories that will help create the drive for more victories.



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