DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF THE BOARD CHAIR:

Board Meetings

Jan. 22, 2013
Key Topics of Discussion

- Developing an effective agenda
- Facilitating discussion and participation
- Guiding the Board in decision-making
- Engaging Directors between meetings
Memo to Self: Why Are We Meeting?

To do something together that we can’t do better alone

The purpose of meetings is Action!

- Analyze situations
- Develop solutions
- Find innovations
- Reach consensus
Effective Board Meetings

- Focus on Board business
- Chair provides leadership
- Structured agenda
- Reports circulated with agenda
- Clear decision-making process
- Teambuilding
- Accurate minutes
Typical Board Agenda

- Executive Committee Report
- Finance Committee Report
- Fund Development Report
- Executive Director Report, etc.
Strategic Board Agenda

- Majority of items focus on: major issues facing organization; long-term planning; strategic priorities
- Strategic framework is used as basis for discussion and decision-making
- A guiding question is: How are we making a difference? (the So What? question)
Moving to a Strategic Agenda

• Create a dynamic agenda that responds to current issues; **avoid the “standard agenda” template**

• Free up time for strategic discussion; don’t let **operational items dominate**

• Limit discussion on reports to **action items**; ensure reports align with strategic priorities and goals
## Sample Items on a Structured Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imagine Canada Standards Program</td>
<td>Board Chair</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent Agenda</td>
<td>Board Chair</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Decision (Motion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Approval of Agenda</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Approval of Minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Committee Reports</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2013 Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Chair, Board Development Committee</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite Office in East Village</td>
<td>ED</td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Decision (Motion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Fundraising Strategies</td>
<td>Chair, Fund Development Committee</td>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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The Empowered Chair

- Takes charge of the meeting
- *Facilitates*, not dominates
- Stays focused
- Encourages participation
- Summarizes actions
- Develops their skills
Guiding the Board in Decision-Making

• Provide **background** on new agenda items e.g. *New Fundraising Strategies* (no *cold* items on the agenda)

• Use the framework of **mission-centred**: *How does a satellite office in East Village help us achieve our mission?*

• Use **strategic questions** to guide discussion and decision-making
Strategic Questions

• Keep the Board focused on its major role of planning for the future
• Offer a proactive response to change
• Consider the competition e.g. How are we unique? different?
• Provide an ongoing assessment of the organization’s impact on community
Strategic Questions

• How does this initiative align with our vision and mission?
• Do we have the skills to take this on?
• What are the true costs and benefits?
• Who are our competitors?
Board Engagement Between Meetings

Governance is an ongoing process, not a monthly event

• Make decisions electronically (follow proper format for motions; must be in Bylaws)
• Encourage **concise** emails re: news items, events attended, innovative techniques used by other non-profits, etc.
• Send tweets (Twitter account)
• Create Board forum on website
• Stalk (respectfully) related websites
Meeting Evaluation

• What’s working well?
• What could be improved?
• Customize meetings
• Evaluate at:
  ➢ meetings
  ➢ after meetings (email)
  ➢ Board retreats, etc.
Why is it?
At a time when work environments, employee relations and work styles have shifted dramatically to respond to organizational and individual needs, we’re still running Board meetings based on a model developed 30 years ago!