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Leadership in non-profit organizations

Leaders must be eager to make choices. Organisations, whether they are for-profit or non-profit, determine strategies and are shaped in accordance with these strategies. Leaders play a crucial role in designating the strategies of organisations. For this reason, it is important that they, leaders, do not hesitate while making decisions and that they use initiatives. Most of the organisations charge leaders only with keeping up with the recent developments and monitoring the process. However, one of the important responsibilities of leaders is to teach the organisational strategies to their staff and to make them embrace these strategies.

The absence of leaders could result in dramatic consequences. To illustrate, organisations might lose their ability to keep pace with the changes in their environment fast and consequently, they might lose their sustainability.

It would be wrong to consider leaders as officials working in senior manager positions. Leaders could be in any status of an organisation. On the contrary, most of the organisations today prefer that their middle-ranking staff take on a leadership role. The very reason for this preference is that the staff is supposed to compete with the rapidly changing circumstances in the sector.

Leaders of an organisation are able to cope with difficulties and come up with solutions against them. However, managers may not know what to do when they face changes. Contrary to them, leaders set a course for the future predicting any possible change to come. Apart from the rapid change in the environment, technological developments and the increase in specialisation also threaten the sustainability of organisations. Managerial skills on their own are not enough to lead groups. Therefore, organisations need leaders who would evoke groups. Some organisations, on the other hand, choose to work with lead managers.

Leaders of organisations are not only important for sustainability but also for the employees. Influencing the employees and leading them towards the target through motivation are amongst the responsibilities of leaders who also play an important

role in arranging the internal and external environment of organisations. What is more, leaders are needed to benefit from the employees on an optimum level and to give organisations the success they need.

The related literature presents us different forms of leadership, which brings a question to mind: Is leadership in non-profit organisations different from leadership in for-profit ones? At the first glance, 'profit' seems to be the sole element distinguishing them from each other. However, there are several other differences in administrative terms. It would also be wrong to claim that only one type of leadership is suitable for non-profit organisations. Leaders of non-profit organisations are supposed to have different features. Therefore, one could observe that the recent form of visionary leadership is more integrative.

When museums are concerned within the scope of non-profit organisations in Turkey, the job adverts and one-to-one interviews reveal—especially using popular term 'vision holder'—that potential administrators are expected to have visionary leadership qualities.

The exact date when the concept of 'vision' got involved in the leadership literature for the first time is unknown, but it came into use after 1990s. Together with the works by Burns, Bennis, Bass and Tichy & Devanna, the outputs of related publications and studies grew in number; thus, subjects like 'the new century's approach to leadership', 'fundamentals of success', standpoints, components and definitions started to be revised with the contributions of different disciplines. There are various interpretations of vision and visionary leadership produced by several authors. To Conger, vision stands for means providing success for future. His definition is supported by Yukl. Boal and Bryson suggest that vision is the picture of the future that clearly displays the values and goals. Using similar definitions, Snyder and Graves define vision as the energy of the leader and the employees, directing resources towards a specific target and an outstanding way of making, discussing and presenting the image completely.

The sustainability of organisations is in relation to vision carrying the future to the present. On the other hand, vision—in organisational terms—is designing, developing and sharing the future of the organisation together with picturing the organisational future. Senge backs up this description by saying that vision shapes and directs the future of an organisation and it is a means through which an organisation identifies its objectives. A visionary statement shows the destination and it certifies what happens when the destination is reached.

Leaders are pioneers. They are the ones taking firms to new horizons, taking elusive opportunities and guiding the employees. What guides leaders is the vision. In this respect, vision is significant for leaders and visionary leadership is crucial for organisations. If the leader and his followers do not know where they are heading to, leadership does not mean anything. According to Taylor, however, a leader not only establishes the vision but also shares it with the employees . Leadership is the ability to design a common pursuit and a process in which the vision and objectives of people, groups or organisations are influenced in their way to reaching targets. Visionary leadership is the ability to establish a vision that is realistic, trustworthy and interesting for a whole organisation or for a part of it and to express it. If this vision is chosen and applied properly, it strengthens all the sources together with the skills and abilities of the employees. A vision holder leader is the person who not only forms a vision but also possesses the ability to explain it to the employees. Accordingly, the employees should be informed about the way they will follow and their targets by means of clear, oral and written communication. Last of all, activities should be identified first and be classified according to their priorities in order to make vision applicable under different circumstances.

A visionary leader not only conveys the vision orally but also demonstrates it to the employees through his behaviours. As visionary leaders, business administrators of today should establish a vision that could bring success to their organisation and to the employees by foreseeing the future and through participative understanding of management. They need to develop strategies and make progress fast with a proactive approach that changes threats into opportunities. Being aware of the benefits constant learning provides visionary leaders must build up organisations that always learn and they need to believe in the necessity of training while catching up with the novelties and changes. They should inspire the employees and integrate them into the process by giving them authorities. Visionary leaders motivate employees with the help of the vision. The master of the organisation is the leader and he ensures that the employees focus on the future aims of the firm. Visionary leaders always pay attention to what the employees say and they respect the values while doing that which strengthens their position. When the employees feel that their views are appreciated, they embrace the vision appointed by the leader and sincerely make an effort to realise it.

A visionary leader gives the employees responsibility by assigning authority to subordinates; however, he holds the utmost power to establish a vision and to plan it. Nonetheless, the vision should not be taken over by the senior ranks. It should be claimed by the whole organisation and checked regularly to make sure that its

values are transmitted to each employee and the leader needs to evaluate the performance within the organisation according to competitors. Innovations and changes should be followed closely.

In sum, visionary leaders are people who draw the picture of the future together with the employees in organisation's way to success by taking the performance of employees to the peak point with high levels of motivation and collaboration. Being aware how essential change and development are, they build up a strong organisational culture and spread it within the organisation.

The foregoing description of leadership could be deemed as a synthesis of many others and it draws attention to the leader's capability of motivating and establishing a vision. Leader's power is attributed to the level at which his employees want and accept the vision he establishes. According to this approach, the leader symbolises the source of reason and authority. The employees hope to be attached to the leader and to his vision. As a result, visionary leadership today means a common understanding of management that is active and dependent on a team.

It gets more and more difficult for organisations to be sustainable within the third sector, which includes non-profit organisations. The competition environment is not as complicated as the private sector. Nevertheless, third sector organisations have difficulty in gaining income and the reason is that most of the non-profit organisations survive with the aid of external donations. Visionary leaders motivate and organise their employees well so that they can persuade them to make strategic moves in line with the vision of the organisation. To illustrate, when the histories of art organisations are investigated, it could be observed that they were state organisations exhibiting art only. The first step—taken in the USA—of transferring art organisations to foundations or the establishment of new art organisations by foundations got serious reactions. As it was all about art, art historians protested when some specific parts of museums started to be rented to restaurants or cafés or even to special occasions like fashion premiere nights and when they multiplied as branches with museum shops in them. Despite all these, the leaders of such organisations were able to suppress the critiques with the vision they had, and although they could not do away with them, they managed to tone them down.

It is very challenging for museums to survive nowadays. The most distinguished and contradictive example for this is the Guggenheim Museums. The Guggenheim Foundation sets up branches similar to those of a fast food chain. For this reason,

many people renamed it as 'McGuggenheim'. There are failures amongst the branches as well as those that achieved successful business.

It would be narrow-mindedness to think that tickets are the only income source for museums. Museums cannot afford their expense items such as administrative or personnel costs solely through visitors. The preliminary aim of museums is to make art works accessible to as many people as possible. Therefore, they provide service free of charge once a week. Museum leaders rent some spots to food or retail sector for extra income. What is more, they make deals with other brands of private sector and organise award ceremonies, special exhibitions and fashion shows (for example, Guggenheim-BMW collaboration). They offer workshops, in addition to online and onsite seminars. They put the works of the artists on the market at premiere nights. Museum cards provide them with membership income. They also accept sponsors and donations as works or cash.

Leaders use different methods each year to generate an income. There is no doubt that while visionary leaders soften the criticism they face with the help of those methods, some of them make strategic mistakes. For instance, renting a museum for wedding ceremonies is a wrong strategy and the leader who allows that has to face the results. Only highly qualified works of art can get into a museum collection and insuring such works is considerably expensive. When the value of art works and the organisational prestige is taken into consideration, letting museums used as wedding venues is unacceptable. Once an organisation is discredited, sustainability becomes impossible. This is the reason why decisions taken by the leader are vital and as mentioned before, the job adverts look for the quality 'vision holder' as a prerequisite.

Museum leadership became a subject matter in the last decades of 1990s. There are several universities around the world offering postgraduate programmes on museum leadership. In addition, certain institutions open up certificate programmes. Symposiums and conferences are arranged each year to host studies of museum leadership. When Turkey is concerned however, it has not become a topic to be researched yet since art organisations are still not popular study objects. It could be assumed that museum leadership will become a specific topic to work on only after a few years.

Leadership can make or break an **organization**. **Leadership in nonprofit organizations** presents a specific set of challenges and therefore requires a unique

set of skills. Executive mentoring and **leadership** development training can be key to growing **nonprofit** core competencies among board members and volunteers alike.

Leadership and management of NPOs

The importance of NPOs is remarkable because they contribute to compensate the needs of society in different areas such as poverty, health, and human rights, among others. The leadership of those who run an NPO is reflected in its formation, growth, sustainability, and ultimately their permanence, as well as the leader's influence on their subordinates and their environment. Therefore, leadership plays an important role, especially in organizations that rely heavily on volunteer work. Although there are many approaches to leadership, according to Black (2015), these theories have changed from the position of 'command and control' for example, in the nineteenth century where the influence of 'scientific management' was appreciated, towards models such as behavior that emerged in the fifties. Transformational leadership models became the dominant paradigm over the last 20 years (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Recently, Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden, and Hu (2014) conducted a study of leadership theories, taking into account the articles published between 2000 and 2010. In the 10 most outstanding journal publications, the authors found that the most cited theories are transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, and transactional leadership. These theories have been widely studied by Avolio and Bass (1995), Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) and by many followers (Avolio & Gardner 2005; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013, among others).

Among the concepts of leadership reviewed, we find Northouse (2013), who explains it as a process where an individual influences a group to attain a common goal. Leadership is also seen as the ability that some people possess to influence others, encourage them, motivate them, or lead them to act in certain ways. For this reason, leaders contribute to achieve the goals within organizations or possibly promote and implement both economic and social actions. In this sense, Kaplan (2001), mentions the need for leaders of organizations who have revised performance measures and explains that donors, foundations, or other actors who provide their support expect transparency in accountability. According to Zahara, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, and Shulman (2009), and taking Kirsner (1973) into consideration, the leaders of social organizations have the following characteristics. Leaders build and operate alternative structures to provide goods and services that meet the social needs governments,

agencies, and businesses fail to meet. The scope of non-profit work can be local or international, and is believed to be institutionalized. Leaders help maintain social harmony and create new social balances, they function as a 'social valve' in preventing social problems that affect government and private organizations, and funding and volunteers are needed to run this type of institution. Therefore, a leader capable of handling and controlling and sustaining such institutions is needed. One approach that covers the characteristics described by Zahara et al. (2009) is proposed by Bass (1977), which is consistent with Avolio and Bass (1995).

The paradigm of 'transformational' and transactional leadership may be used to describe groups of people or organizations. According to the studies presented by Bass (1977), there is a wide range of application of 'transformational' leadership, which can arise in various fields such as the military, society, and politics, not only in the field of business. In 1978, Burns brings into play the idea that the leader, while influencing their followers, perceives approval or disapproval of them while modifying their own behavior, so talk of a transaction between the leader and follower, giving rise to transactional leadership, in which followers are motivated by personal interests rather than being influenced by leaders for the benefit of the organization.

Bass (1997) states that the authority of the transformational leader is spontaneous, provides security, and successfully confronts conflict situations. This is useful in cases of organizational change. It also indicates that this authority can lead to achieving standards of excellence, both individual and collective; through the establishment of a vision and a mission shared with the followers; encouraging individuals to achieve their personal interests through the objectives of the organization. The transformational leader succeeds in changing the motivational basis of the individual from a regular motivation to a commitment. Transformational leader's behaviors often present consideration and concern for the subordinate, seeks innovative ways to solve problems, and also present values of self-transcendence and openness to change (Nader and Castro, 2007). It is said that transformational leaders are charismatic in the eyes of his followers and are a source of inspiration for them, and they may try to meet the needs of each of their subordinates individually (Avolio, Bass, Jung, 1999 and Berson, 2003), while stimulating them intellectually.

The four fundamental factors or components of transformational leadership are:
Charisma: the behavior of the leaders tends to be imitated by his followers

because they are admired, respected, and inspire confidence as they demonstrate high levels of ethical and moral behavior.

Inspiration: motivating and inspiring their followers fosters team spirit, generating future expectations, and correlating strongly with the additional effort by followers in most organizations (Bass 1997).

Intellectual stimulation: they encourage their followers to generate new ideas to be innovative, to not criticize errors or ideas that differ from their own. The role of the transformational leader is also to raise the motivation of followers, understanding, maturity, and a sense of self-worth (Bass 1997).

Individualized consideration: these leaders pay attention to the specific development needs of each of its followers, give personalized monitoring without meaning control, rather fulfill a guiding function (Nader and Castro, 2007).

We found that the subject of leadership, especially transformational leadership has been scarcely researched, especially in nonprofit organizations. This is understandable because, in these organizations, the issue of civil society organizations has not been investigated in depth. In the work of Ortega, Serna, and Atehortua (2015) the issue of leadership is addressed in non-governmental organizations, with the development of a system based on the theories of Bass (1995), Bass & Stogill (1990), Burns (1978), Kouzes & Posner (1997), and Nichols (1998).

Describing three dimensions (action, motivation, and power) to test transformational leadership, this study confirms the hypothesis that the followers identify traits of transformational leadership in their leaders. For this work, we applied a qualitative and quantitative survey, which was subjected to validation tests, without prior proof.

In other works, as in the case of Mendoza and Ortiz (2006), transformational leadership was found to have a relationship with the efficacy of enterprises; this paper also identifies some characteristics of transformational leadership. It is important to say that the studies reviewed are related to the topic of transactional leadership.

However, we only found one study on transactional leadership in NPOs (or non-governmental organizations). The studies reviewed used various methodologies to investigate transformational leadership, we chose to apply the

same method as Ling, Simsek, Lubatkin, and Veiga (2008) 'Promoting Transformational leadership's role in corporate entrepreneurship: Examining the CEO-TMT interface', which is important given that the questionnaire used by Bass and Avolio that was created in 1995 serves as a reference for research. For this research, we translated and put into context the published survey in an effort to review the theory of transformational leadership among the leaders of nonprofit organizations participating in this study, the viewpoints of the creators of this theory are put into context.

Every organization, regardless of industry, needs a strong leadership team to succeed. This is especially true for nonprofits, where executives, founders and managers need to rally staff, volunteers and donors around a common cause.

But it's not just the C-suite who can provide this type of inspiration and motivation -- leadership can happen at any level of an organization, so it's important to make sure you have a well-rounded team that feels empowered to take charge from wherever they are.

1. Individual, Organizational and External Leadership

Our culture at Water for People promotes leaders at all levels. We have developed profiles for individual leaders, organizational leaders and external leaders. In developing individual development plans, we help our employees develop their leadership skills in one or all three areas. We also have a formal Global Leadership Journey program for mid-level leaders who work across all three areas.

2. Community Leadership

In our organization, we recently escalated a valuable member of our staff into the role of chief community officer. This role serves as a hybrid operations officer and programs officer with an emphasis on people and human touch. Given the need of charitable organizations to sustain what is often a philosophical movement, our CCO bridges the conversation between executive strategy and community tactics.

3. Stakeholder and Sponsor Leadership

Organizational leadership can raise an organization, but I would argue that third-party validation and sponsor support becomes the catalyst to the

greatest accomplishments. Testimony from recognized stakeholders and sponsors answer the key questions, "So what?" and "According to whom?" Big brands can validate big ideas for nonprofits.

4. Problem-Solving Leadership

Our culture sends confusing messages about leadership, making it seem as though leaders are those with a certain title or a fancy corner office. Real leaders are those who run to problems, challenge the status quo and unlock the potential of those around them. Those things happen at every level of an organization; the reality is that anyone, with any title, can lead.

5. Strengths-Based Leadership

The unique leadership position that every nonprofit can take is to teach their staff to lead from their strengths, as opposed to their weaknesses. Instead of focusing on deficits, have staff "brag" about their strengths and accomplishments. This approach improves morale and demonstrates to fellow staff the bench strength that is held collectively by the organization.

6. Next-Generation Leadership

There should always be a way to tap into the experience, preferences, insight and impressions of younger members. Our organization identifies rising leaders and contributes young professional perspectives to our online community through articles and at conferences. Knowing what future generations of members want and need informs our strategic planning -- and shapes the future of our organization.

7. Marketing and Communications Leadership

Communicating with donors and potential donors is vital, so an in-house communications and marketing professional is an important leadership role every nonprofit should have. These individuals help steer fundraising campaigns in ways that are meaningful for donors by ensuring that messages across all channels and locations are strategic, cohesive and impactful.....

1.The basic **skills** include problem solving and decision making, planning, meeting **management**, delegation, communications and **managing** yourself. Those basics are also the foundation from which to develop more advanced practices in **management** and **leadership**.

2.What Is **Nonprofit Leadership**? The idea of “**leadership**” is the same across the private, public, and **nonprofit** sectors. Good **leadership** is rooted in the ability to achieve growing and sustaining the engagement of people to accomplish something extraordinary together.

3.The **organizational** structure is the core of every **nonprofit organization**. **Nonprofits** consist of a board of directors and executive, managerial and administrative positions.

Setting Board Expectations

Most boards of directors of associations, clubs and nonprofits are comprised of individuals from different walks of life and varied professions. They have joined the board because they want to contribute in a meaningful way to their profession, industry or society in general. Some folks are also looking for networking opportunities, leadership experience, or simply for social interaction.

We have to recognize that board members are volunteers, many of whom may have little experience with this type of position. For many board members, being in a leadership or management role may not come naturally.

Since your board is full of different people, all wanting different things, setting up and communicating clear expectations is a good idea for all involved. Your board members should be aware of their roles and responsibilities towards each other as well as to the organization.

It's important to note as well that the expectations will vary from organization to organization. For example, the board members of a nonprofit organization are expected to be major donors and fundraisers for the nonprofit, as well as understanding the additional legal expectations and standards.

Nonprofit and NGO consultant [Simone Joyaux](#) (Joyaux & Associates) says all boards should develop [performance expectations policies](#) as a way of laying out what is expected from each board member.

Expectations from boards will vary depending on the type and nature of the organization. For example, the boards of charities and organizations with nonprofit status can have additional [legal expectations and standards](#). But the overarching role of the board of a membership organization is to establish the direction and policies to serve the needs of its members.

High level board expectations

Based on the expectations suggested by Joyaux, here are our top 10 things your board members should commit to in their role:

1. Believe in and be an active advocate and ambassador for the values, mission and vision of the organization.
2. Work with fellow board members to fulfill the obligations of board membership.
3. Regularly attend board and committee meetings.
4. Prepare for these meetings by reviewing materials and bringing the materials to meetings.
5. Keep informed about the organization, its issues, and its connection to the community.
6. If applicable, help support the charitable contributions operation of the organization (e.g., donations and/or fundraising).
7. As appropriate, use personal and professional contacts and expertise to benefit the organization.
8. Be available to serve as a committee chair or member.
9. Work in partnership with and respect the authority of the organization's leadership staff.
10. Agree to step down from board position if unable to fulfill these expectations.

When and how to set expectations

It is important to communicate these basic expectations to all current and aspiring board members as they start their term. By doing so, you remove any ambiguity

within the organization. Roles are defined and responsibilities are assumed. Real work can be done and progress can be made.

But if your board is already mid-term and functioning without clear roles and expectations, you might want to introduce them at your annual strategic planning meeting. Since this is a time when you are planning for the coming year, establishing priorities and setting goals, it's important to let the board know what is expected of them. Having a quarterly or biannual reminder can also be useful, especially if there are changes to board personnel.

Now that you have established expectations, let's look at various ways to improve your current board's effectiveness.

“It's never too late to improve board performance with training”

“The good news,” Trish suggests, “is that any organization that is still afloat can improve its performance with training. You may have to bail hard, but you won't sink. If well-planned and executed (with a more concentrated focus) the results can offer dramatic changes allowing the organization to achieve the significant advancements outlined in your strategic plan. If you're going to dedicate precious resources to establishing a planning process, be sure to include opportunities to cultivate the potential within your membership that will be necessary for its implementation.”

If you believe, as Trish Hudson does, that “leaders are not born but are trained,” you are on the road to managing your own expectations and can develop training plans to ensure your board members are on the same track. That way, everyone understands their role, knows what is expected of them, and has the necessary skills to function at peak performance – both individually and as a group.

Board Orientation

A board orientation can be the first step in training leaders and setting expectations. Having responsibilities, time commitments, procedures and decorum laid out and agreed upon can mitigate potential conflict and help the board team start off in a cohesive manner. Developing a simple board orientation manual can be a great way of introducing new members to the system or even as a refresher course for long-standing board members. These manuals can be as complex or as simple as you see fit. Large organizations with big budgets spend considerable money putting together lengthy and long lasting physical manuals. Many smaller organizations prefer a simple document outlining the essentials.

Either way, here are some things to consider including in your board orientation:

- Mission and vision statements
- Organizational history
- Bylaws and policies
- Strategic plan
- Financial summaries
- Board information
- Committee information
- Meeting processes

This is just an outline or starting point. Organizations such as nonprofits or charities will also need to orient the board as to their specific legal and financial duties based on government regulations. The manual can also be turned into a presentation which will make it easier to share the information with the entire board. You may choose to present the manual at the start of the year, in your strategic planning session, or go through it with each new board member individually as they join your team.

Managing Your Board

Before we delve into some areas of improvement, let's talk about managing your board.

In his book, [On Becoming A Leader](#), Warren G. Bennis wrote: “Leaders are people who do the right things; managers are people who do things right.”

Thinking like a business manager might be helpful when trying to set expectations and manage a team. Managers work to ensure that the vision and goals of the organization are being met using practical techniques.

Here are some team management techniques that board leaders might want to apply:

- **Delegation:** Matching people and tasks is the key to delegation. Making sure that board members with the right skills are working together on appropriate reports, agendas, initiatives, or committees will tremendously increase productivity.

- **Motivation:** Understanding the interests and needs of your board members is key to motivation. Knowing what they expect and value can help you to keep them motivated and interested
- **Participation:** Group dynamics can impact the productivity and enjoyment of your board, so making sure that some members don't dominate conversation is key. Making board members feel involved and free to have their say can do wonders for morale and productivity.

Keeping those management techniques in mind, let's look at some areas that might be improved.

Effective Communication is Key

Improving communication – among board members, with staff and other volunteers, and also with the membership at large – can be a critical factor in improving the board's effectiveness. After all, in order to fulfill its mandate to serve the interests of its members, your board needs to be well connected to one another and have its collective finger on the pulse of the organization as a whole.

Relationships and communication among board members crucial for success

Research has confirmed what we all suspected – that board members' relationships with one another have an impact on the group's overall abilities and success. In the Harvard Business Review article, [The Key to a Better Board: Team Dynamics](#), Solange Charas tells us:

...the quality of board members' interactions are crucial to board success. In an earlier study [described on hbr.org](#), I found that board members who didn't know each other before joining the board were more likely to engage in productive cognitive conflict. This finding helped craft my subsequent research inquiry: What impact does board dynamics have on financial outcomes? My research provides strong evidence supporting three findings:

- “Cultural intelligence” of individual directors, or their predisposition to working well in teams, is critical in generating high-quality team dynamics (more below);
- The quality of board-level team dynamics is highly correlated with firm profitability; and
- Boards that are able to function effectively as a team have an 800% greater impact on firm profitability than any one well-qualified board director – in other words,

and consistent with Aristotle's observation, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

When the board is able to work together and community in a cohesive fashion, they will be more successful in driving the organization as a whole in a productive direction.

Communication tips to consider:

To keep the board communicating – with one another and with the rest of the organization – consider making these practices routine:

- Focus meetings on strategy, not just administration – get new initiatives going!
- Invite candid discussion
- Break up into smaller groups to discuss
- Make it easy for the board to understand by using visual aids and handouts
- Invite members and benefactors to have their say
- Engage volunteers and members

Implementing these communication strategies can help your board solve problems more quickly, use their limited time together more effectively, and think outside the box to promote growth and engagement for the organization in general.

Listening to and communicating with members also important

In his book, *Boards that Work*, David Fishel suggests that boards need to:

“...get a close-up understanding of the operation in order to be able to stand back and play a productive role at a higher level. Without some organisation and sector knowledge, the board's decisions will lack context and could be misguided.”

It's important for the board to listen to members and volunteers who are on the ground in order to gain context. This means setting up channels to make sure that the board is connected with the organization's members, volunteers and staff.

Think about whether your board is getting the information it needs by asking questions such as:

- Do we receive information that helps us understand whether we are achieving our mission?

- How useful are reports? Do they help the board to focus on key issues?
- What discussions have we had with members that have resulted in meaningful progress?
- How do we encourage members to share bad news as well as good?
- Are we receiving information we do not use or need?
- Is the board easily accessible by everyone?

Once you have answers to these questions, make an effort to investigate the causes of any communication breakdowns that are occurring. Committees can be a great tool here to figure out unique problems in your organization and suggest solutions.

An Effective Nonprofit Board:

In order to bring about meaningful changes to how your board works, it's important to start by understanding what the board is made of. Most volunteer boards have a unique set of skills and therefore unique expectations. Understanding the individual members and team dynamic will help you devise some tactics to kick-start your board.

Since your volunteers are from different walks of life with different skills and expectations, start off by clearly setting board expectations. Each member should be aware of what their role is on the board and how they are expected to fill that role.

After setting expectations, there are some key areas to target when trying to improve board effectiveness:

- **Clear Communication:** Aim to have clear communication between all parts of the organization.
- **Planning:** Plan using agendas and scheduling tools to make sure everyone is on the same page.
- **Effective Meetings:** Every second counts – make the most of the board's time together.
- **Use of Committees:** Committees can start the conversation and digest big issues quickly – a great asset.

- **Implementation of Evaluations:** Make sure the board is introspective and keeping track of the progress they are making.

We hope you use this guide as a starting point to make some meaningful changes to energize and engage your board.
