



United Way
Calgary and Area

DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF THE BOARD CHAIR:

Board Meetings

Jan. 22, 2013





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Key Topics of Discussion



- Developing an effective agenda
- Facilitating discussion and participation
- Guiding the Board in decision-making
- Engaging Directors between meetings



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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



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Effective Board Meetings



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



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Typical Board Agenda



- Executive Committee Report
- Finance Committee Report
- Fund Development Report
- Executive Director Report, etc.



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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



Agenda Item	Lead	Time	Category
Imagine Canada Standards Program	Board Chair		Information
Consent Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of Agenda • Approval of Minutes • Committee Reports 	Board Chair	5 min	Decision (Motion)
2013 Strategic Planning	Chair, Board Development Committee	10 min	Discussion
Satellite Office in East Village	ED	15 min	Decision (Motion)
New Fundraising Strategies	Chair, Fund Development Committee	30 min	Discussion



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The Empowered Chair



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



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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



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Meeting Evaluation



- *What's working well?*
- *What could be improved?*
- Customize meetings
- Evaluate at:
 - meetings
 - after meetings (email)
 - Board retreats, etc.



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Food for Thought



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!