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Calgary and Area

DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF THE BOARD CHAIR:

Chair's Role in Board-ED Relations

Feb.7, 2013





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Key Topics of Discussion



- Hiring, supporting and evaluating the Executive Director (ED)
- Developing the Board – ED partnership
- Acting as primary liaison for the ED



Complexity of ED Role



Point of contact for 3 stakeholder groups with diverse demands & expectations:

- 1. For staff and volunteers** = leadership; implements mission through programs and services
- 2. For Board** = implements strategic plan; provides operational reports
- 3. For community** = fundraises; is public face



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Stakeholder Relations = more *out* than *in* office



- Builds alliances and coalitions
- Mobilizes diverse constituencies
- Networks
- Creates mutual commitments to goals
- Negotiates and bargains for resources
- Advocates for change; influences public policy



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Increasing Expectations of ED Competencies



- social media
- competition
- public policy
- culture of learning
- creativity and innovation
- adaptability
- application of research
- media relations
- political savvy



ED Challenges



- **Isolation** ... uniqueness of ED role
- **Powerlessness to effect change** ... ultimate authority rests with Board
- **Lack of a clear role** ... Bd. vs. ED expectations
- **Tunnel vision** ... mired in day-to-day

From:

The Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada, Vic Murray



More Challenges



- **Everybody's counsellor/confidant ...**
where does the ED go for support?
- **Compensation ...** not #1 but may be final straw
- **Unreasonable expectations from stakeholders ...** ED burnout



Board – ED Relations



- Board sets prudent/ethical limits on the means available to the ED to achieve the mission
- ED is empowered to make decisions
- ED is accountable for organizational performance
- ED is accountable to Board as a whole, not to individual members



Keys to Success



- Board + ED = leadership team: governance and management
- Board supports ED's work at **appropriate** level. E.g. fund development; external relations; advocacy.
- Board avoids micromanagement or rubber stamp



What Causes Negative ED Turnover?



Boards/funders contribute to ED burnout

- lack of strategic partnership
- Boards don't challenge ED to grow
- lack of funder support for operations

Financial sacrifices too high

- compensation too low
- compensation based on budget, not market
- can't afford to retire



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Chair as Primary Liaison with ED



- **Frequent contact:** phone; email; coffee =
↑ understanding of complexity of ED role
- **Sounding board** for professional challenges
- **Strategist** for ED discussions with Board



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Chair as Primary Liaison



- **Ongoing feedback** on performance: performance appraisal is a dialogue, not an annual event
- **Shared** public face (mutual attendance at funder meetings; meetings with politicians; social functions)