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Brain Teaser

What Does Your Board Need to Know?

by Hildy Gottlieb

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Excerpted from
Board Recruitment & Orientation: A Step-by-Step, Common Sense Guide, by
Hildy Gottlieb

Q: When new board members join your board, how do you teach them everything they need to know to govern?

A: There is so much for a new board member to learn, to come up to speed and be a fully participating member of the board. There is mission and programs and key players. There is finance and revenue sources.

And then there is all the intangible “stuff” that is often just as important for getting things done. What is the board’s culture? What are unwritten parameters? Who hasn’t spoken to whom in twelve years?

You recruited that board member because you thought he/she would be an asset to the board. Once he/she is on the board, are you providing every opportunity to hit the ground running?

Or, do you do what most boards do: Tell them when the first board meeting is, have the ED / staff provide some orientation, and hope they will catch on quickly?

Most of the boards we encounter do not have a formal orientation program. Admittedly, most of the boards we encounter do not even have an informal orientation program! And most of the boards we encounter do not routinely re-educate more seasoned board members, to ensure they know everything they need to know to govern.

Orientation and Ongoing Education: The Quick Route

If you think it is ok for the people at the top of your organizational chart - the accountable leaders of the organization - to have neither initial nor ongoing education to do that job, then you can stop reading right now.

If, however, you know this is something you need, but do not know where to start, allow 20 minutes at your next board meeting to answer these thought-starter questions:

- What do you wish you had known when you first started on this board?
- What would have saved you time and frustration had you been told from the start?
- What still confuses you?

Does your board believe it does NOT need education re: being a board?
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From there, it will be easy to design your orientation (and ongoing education) programs around those topics.

It is downright sinful to squander the energy and passion of a brand new board member by not providing him/her with the tools to do the job.

And that leads to the brain teaser part of this question:

If you wouldn't ignore training when hiring a janitor, why do you think it's ok to ignore training for the people who are accountable for everything your organization is about?

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Is your board even ready to recruit? Find out here
www.help4nonprofits.com/NP_Bd_10StopSigns_Art.htm



Hildy Gottlieb has been called "the most innovative and practical thinker in our sector." As President of Help 4 NonProfits and its Community-Driven Institute, her ground-breaking work aims the Nonprofit / Community Benefit Sector at its highest potential - creating the future of our world. Having co-founded 2 community organizations, Hildy's teaching, writing and consulting are grounded in that in-the-trenches reality. Hildy's numerous awards include the inaugural Charity Channel Founders Award and a Points of Light Citation from President Bill Clinton.

