

NOIABTIBWITB!

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When you consider 2016, consider this: **NOIABTIBWITB!**

This is a message we try to get every nonprofit board to recognize and accept. It is about the four responsibilities every board member has:

Ambassador – being an advocate and a promoter of the nonprofit you have chosen to serve. Each board member is a symbol of the organization and your participation should generate trust in the organization.

Builder - insures the organization has solid plans to accomplish its goals. The board member should participate in goals setting and in achieving the goals. The entire board should have goals that support the activities of the organization.

Steward - should insist on sound programs within its mission and based on sound business management principles for the protection of the funds and properties of organization. The board review and adopt an annual budget that insures operational success and the appropriate conservation of organizational assets.

Policy Maker – strong clear policies provide the road map for success. Board members have the responsibility to define the mission of the organization, to set goals, and approve plans for reaching those goals. Each Board member insure that the Board focuses on issues not on reports; the member needs to be familiar with issues related to the field in which the organization operates.

NOIABTIBWITB translation: No Organization Is Any Better Than Its Board Wants It To Be!

As Nonprofit Executives and Boards of Directors are considering 2016. It is an appropriate time to think about the current Board makeup and how it will change in the coming year. Most Boards have annual elections in June based on a fiscal year, or the end of the calendar. The election process retains some members and due to bylaws must replace others. Too often, the talent search happens close to the actual election which strains the ability of the organization's leadership to devote the time needed identify and qualify candidates. These candidates will bring critical talent to replace those leaving, or may be individuals who will enhance the talent level and enable the board and organization to accomplish even more in the future.

Step One:

Whether there is six months or twelve months until the next election, this is an opportune time to begin the process to enhance the board talent and skill level. First, the board needs to conduct a self-evaluation. This is a formal process where each member completes an evaluation form where he/she rates the processes to the board and assesses how successful the board is in accomplishing its own goals. This provides feedback to the nonprofit executive and the board leadership. The consolidated feedback should be shared with the board and be followed by a discussion and decisions about possible changes that should be undertaken.

Step Two:

When the self-evaluation process is completed, the second step is in order. This step involves the development of, or reordering, of the Board Talent Grid. This tool is important because it allows the board to identify its strengths and its weaknesses related to its talent base. The major feature of this tool is that it provides information to the Board Committee on Governance. The Committee will have a snapshot of where vacancies will occur and where additional talents are needed.

Step Three:

Once the Committee has evaluated the information it should be shared with the full board. This document helps each board member understand and appreciate the skills and backgrounds of other board members. In addition, board members are one of the best sources for strong board renewal. The third step is to ask each member to consider carefully those people in the community, or region, who should be considered as possible new candidates for board service. Each member should be asked to nominate two to three individuals who fit the criteria provided by the Board Talent Grid.

The board member should use a standard nomination form which will be used by the members of the Governance Committee to evaluate the possible candidates. Board members should provide contact information and be willing to serve as a contact for the person nominated through any cultivation process. The person being suggested as a candidate should not be contacted at this point.

Step Four:

The names of all nominees should be circulated among the members of the board to obtain any additional information members may have to provide the strongest picture possible of those being considered. Staff may be asked to conduct additional research to assist the Committee. The Governance Committee should evaluate all nominations and decide which candidates are best suited for the next election cycle. If possible, two candidates should be selected to fill each anticipated vacancy, it is not likely that the organization will be able to attract all of its first choice candidates.

Step Five:

Here is where the detailed work begins. At least two people, including the person making the nomination, from the organization should be assigned to the team to cultivate and engage the potential candidate. The team should meet and develop a strategy for the engagement and set a time line for completing the various steps selected. If the nonprofit executive or the board Chair are not a part of the initial contact team these individuals should be informed about the strategy and when that individual will be brought into the engagement and cultivation process. The executive and the board chair are important parts of the process to demonstrate the organization's commitment at the highest level to recruiting superior new board members.

Keys to Success:

1. The recruiting of new board members is an educational process both for the candidate and the organization.
2. The first meeting with the candidate is critical. Explain that the person has been recommended as a possible board member for your organization and that your purpose to explore the possibility and discover mutual interests and goals.
3. Follow the strategy. Suggest that the board is seeking information and not asking the person to join immediately, that reduces the pressure on both sides
4. Explain in clear terms the mission and goals of the organization.
5. Explain that board service is an obligation and a privilege
6. Evaluate each contact with the candidate to insure your strategy is on track. Make adjustments based on the responses from the candidate. There should be at least three meetings with the candidate before he/she is asked to consider board membership.
7. Be sure to engage all of your priority candidates during the same time period. The Governance Committee should continually evaluate the progress of the teams and support the team as needed.
8. Keep the full board informed about the process and the progress, seek their input.
9. Remember you can say "no" as well. The contact team should constantly evaluate the candidate's responses. If you are not comfortable with the progress, thank the candidate and move on.
10. It is better to leave a board position open for a time than to just fill a slot.
11. You will establish a better more talented and committed Board

If you would like access to some of our standard forms for making this process smooth, please contact us at: www.dewittandassociates.com