

Nonprofit News

Positioning Your Board for Successful Engagement

By Teri Bordenave, The Thalia Group

For a few months this fall, I participated in an online conversation about the need to keep Board members engaged in their role, and an exploration about some of the methods used to do this. This exchange started with the post; *"Does anyone have an example of a board agenda that helps steer the conversation towards strategy and away from operations?"*

Contributors to this dialog were particularly interested in a Board meeting agenda format that would successfully round everyone up and move them on or back to their particular place at the table. Oh, were it only as simple as that...

Sure, there are ways we can structure our Board meetings to keep the focus on the 30,000 foot view; setting the vision and governing. Several well-intentioned folks—myself included - offered up their models (see the sample on the next page for a suggested format). An agenda that truly focuses on the strategic plan is one approach I have found successful, both as a nonprofit CEO and as a consultant working with nonprofits and their Boards.

However, a well-designed agenda alone will not accomplish this goal. One of my favorite quotes - this one by Cyril Houle - sums it up quite succinctly, *"A good Board is a victory, not a gift."* My short list for the keys to a good Board begins with a way to *position* your Board for effective engagement; a strategic, targeted and comprehensive Board recruitment process, or as Jim Collins puts it, getting the right people on your bus!

Bringing the best possible group of individuals onto your Board is the **most** critical step you can take. Investing the effort to select those people who are passionate about your mission, fill a void in your current Board composition, and who are a good fit with your organizational culture, will have long term benefits. Making the right choices at this point will save you much frustration and time down the road.

The other keys on my short list include:

- ◆ Timely orientation and "on-boarding" process for new Trustees
- ◆ Well articulated expectations from the outset
- ◆ Detailed "Letter of Commitment" or Contract with each Trustee
- ◆ Ongoing Board education
- ◆ Periodic Board Self-Assessment
- ◆ Comprehensive Board Manual
- ◆ A strategic plan that clearly defines the organization's strategic goals, timeline, responsible party/ies and metrics
- ◆ Consistent reporting from CEO on progress against strategic plan goals
- ◆ Effective Board leadership; i.e., an experienced Board Chair
- ◆ A governance structure that supports successful strategic plan implementation
- ◆ Trusting, respectful relationship between the Board and the CEO.

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Winter
2012

936 Easton Rd.
PO Box 754
Warrington, PA
18976
&
163 S. Broad St.
Lansdale, PA 19446
215-343-2727
www.catalystnonprofit.com



Teri Bordenave,
MHSA

www.thethaliagroup.
com

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If all or even a good number of these approaches are in place, in addition to knowing what their role is and being engaged in it, your Board is likely to also feel well supported in their critical governance position and much less likely to venture out of it and into operations.

Sample Meeting Agenda

BOARD OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

Date

8:30 am - 10:00 am

Our Vision:

Our Mission:

AGENDA

8:30 Call to Order **Board Chair**
Consent Agenda
October 2011 Meeting Minutes

8:35 Fiscal Oversight Committee **Treasurer**
Fourth Quarter 2011 Report

8:50 Chair's Report **Board Chair**

9:00 Strategic Plan Implementation

Goal I: To find and develop a diverse group of effective Trustees who will commit to moving this Strategic Plan forward and who fit the profile, as per the Governance Committee matrix.

Proposed Slate of Officers and Trustees **Governance Committee Chair**

*****Action Item-Please review the enclosed slate and be prepared to vote on it**

Goal II: Using FY 2010 as a baseline, increase total amount raised by 8%/year thereafter.

Planned Giving Program **Development Committee Chair/
Development Dept. Head**

*****Action Item - Proposal to create XXX Legacy Society for Planned Gifts included in the Chair's Report**

2011 Fundraising Status Report & **Development Dept. Head**
Review of Trustee Pledge System

Proposed merging of the Major Gifts and Fund Development Committees

*****Action Item - Please review the rationale included in the Chair's Report**

9:45 CEO Report Chief Executive Officer

9:55 Other Business

10:00 Adjournment

Teri Bordenave, MHSA has worked in the nonprofit sector since 1979 in a variety of senior leadership roles, including 20 years as President/CEO, and as a consultant. Her expertise includes strategic planning, leadership development, strategic restructuring, team building, organizational development, governance, change management and relationship building.

Teri brings her background as a poet and artist to her consulting efforts, approaching each endeavor as a unique work of art. The Thalia group is a consulting firm located in Schenectady, NY

The Catalyst Center partners with Milestone Bank for 2012 Nonprofit Management Training series

The Catalyst Center for Nonprofit Management is pleased to announce that Milestone Bank will be the 2012 Corporate Sponsor for our nonprofit management series. The Spring series consists of 3 training seminars and as a result of Milestone's support, attendees will be able to register and attend at no charge.

April 24th 8:30-12:00 pm **Speak Up and Be Heard: Communicating Effectively**
Esther Hughes, Author, Speaker, Motivator

We all have areas of strengths and weaknesses; however, if we have no self-awareness and do not seek the proper training, we limit our ability to be effective messengers, which in turn can affect our (and our organization's) credibility. During this session we will explore ways you can write or speak your message more clearly.

May 22nd 1:00-4:30 **Planning for Financial Sustainability**
Cindy Bergvall, CPA Bee, Bergvall & Co./Catalyst Center for Nonprofit Management

The first step toward financial sustainability is an understanding of what your numbers are telling you. Understanding financial statements, the annual budget and the organization's 990 are just a few critical skills for both executives and board members to have as they plan for the future sustainability of the organization. During this session we will look at a number of tools and indicators to assess your financial health.

June 5th 8:30-12:00 **Successful Mergers and Collaborations**
Nancy Burd, The Burd Group & Laura Solomon, Esq. Founder, Laura Solomon & Associates

As more organizations face the challenges of our economy, sometimes the only prudent course of action is a collaboration or merger. A well executed merger of two organizations with complementary missions, values, and constituencies can achieve economies, efficiencies and synergies that the organizations are unable to achieve alone. During this session we will look at key elements of a successful collaboration or merger from both a planning and legal perspective.



To Register:
visit the
Training and Events
page of
www.catalystnonprofit.com

Seminar location:
PA Center for
Biotechnology
3805 Old Easton Rd.
Doylestown, PA

Board Boot Camp-Bristol Saturday, March 3, 2012 8:30-12:00 pm

**In Partnership with
Interfaith Housing Corp.**

Location: Calvary Baptist Church, 250 Green Lane, Bristol PA

The **Board Boot Camp** program has been designed for both new and experienced board members to learn or refresh their skills on being an effective nonprofit board member. This does not happen by accident, but rather by thoughtful and consistent attention to the role of board members in your organization.

During this intensive session we will share industry best practices in terms of governance, planning and management.

\$35 1st person;
\$15 each add'l/same organization

Registration fee includes breakfast and Board Governance Toolkit CD

Register at:

www.catalystnonprofit.com/training.htm

8:30-9:00

**Registration & Breakfast
by Milestone Bank**

9:00-9:50

**General Duties of All
Board Members** *Includes
the Board's role in fundraising*

9:50-10:20

**The Importance of Strategic
Planning**

10:20-10:30

Break

10:30-11:15

**Financial Oversight for
Boards**

11:15-11:45

**The Vital Role of
Engagement-CEO & Board**

11:45-12:00

Closing discussion

For more information contact Liz Vibber at 215-343-2727 or lvibber@bbco-cpa.com



Register at:
www.catalystnonprofit.com/training.htm

CCNM Community Bulletin Board

For a complete listing of announcements and job openings, visit our website at www.catalystnonprofit.com. Please submit items for the Community Bulletin to lvibber@bbco-cpa.com. Due to space limitations we are unable to post fundraising events.

New Around Town

- ◆ **Florence Kawoczka** has joined Habitat for Humanity-Bucks County as Executive Director
- ◆ **Trisha Odoms** has joined YWCA Bucks County as new CEO. Ms. Odoms replaces **Lorna Michelson, Ph.D.**, who served in the role for eight-plus years and retired in September of 2011
- ◆ **Jamie Haddon** has been named president and CEO of United Way of Bucks County
- ◆ **Caroline O'Connell-Stinton** has joined Foundations Community Partnership as Associate Director
- ◆ **Joseph Cuozzo** has joined Mercy Neighborhood Ministries of Philadelphia as Development Director
- ◆ **David Ford** has joined Family Service Association as Development Director
- ◆ **Tamela Luce** has joined North Penn Community health Foundation as Program Manager
- ◆ **Linda Abram** has joined North Penn United Way as Director of Community Impact
- ◆ The **Bucks County Women's Fund** is now **Bucks Women**, a part of the United Way Bucks County

Check it out!

Generocity.org is a new online giving and networking site designed to promote philanthropy and volunteerism in the Philadelphia area. A new feature of the site is a listing of nonprofit sector job opportunities, as well as a number of interesting and timely articles.

Fundraising Auction Secrets: *The Complete Guide to Organizing Highly Profitable Fundraising Auctions* by Michael Ivankovich is hot off the press! Order your copy at www.fundraisingauctionservices.com

Are you Up-to-Date?

Many of our announcements are contained within our monthly e-news. If you are not currently on our e-list, contact Liz Vibber at lvibber@bbco-cpa.com.

PS-Don't forget your board! A number of executive directors have added key staff and board members to our e-list as well!

Subscribe to our monthly e-newsletters
by contacting lvibber@bbco-cpa.com

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Management
PO Box 754
Warrington, PA 18976

