

Board Recruitment

How to Bring in the Right Board

Board Toolkit

December 2012

Great boards don't just happen. First, the right people are recruited and oriented. Then, they are provided with the opportunity and support to do great things. Board recruitment efforts are not achieved overnight. It's a long term initiative that you can begin today. This toolkit outlines processes to recruit the right people onto your board, sample terms of reference for your board development committee and a sample matrix that can be used to take stock of current skills and attributes, and to determine what experience and abilities are still required.

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SAMPLE PROCESS

Build your Nominating or Board Development Committee

The nominating or board development committee will lead your board to select new members. In many ways, this will be one of the most important committees of the board since the future strengths of the board will be a result of those who are sitting around the boardroom table.

The committee often includes the chair of the board and selected board members. The past president can lead the committee as someone who has a strong sense of the current board and what it requires to move forward. The Executive Director is often involved in a consultative capacity. Additionally, committee members must be unafraid of and willing to ‘sell’ the organization for what it is: an excellent opportunity for involvement.

Set the responsibilities of the committee

It is essential the Board is clear regarding the committee’s objectives and goals. Terms of reference for the committee ensure the scope of their job is well defined and clear to everyone. A sample Board Development Committee Terms of Reference is provided at the end of this document.

Responsibilities might include:

- Proposing criteria for and selecting potential board members;
- Cultivating volunteers and stakeholders for prospective interest in the sector and governance;
- Presenting candidates to the board for approval, and then to members at the AGM;
- Orienting new members to their responsibilities;
- Recognizing board member achievements

Each year, the committee develops a plan and timeline for meeting its responsibilities. Some responsibilities will be consistent each year (identify board member prospects, interview interested candidates, etc) while others might be part of a longer-term plan toward better succession planning systems (develop introductory package, develop orientation manual and new board training session, conduct evaluation of aspects of the nomination process).

Identify the skills and abilities you require in new board members

Assessing the current makeup of the board, for its strengths and opportunities, is a key role of the committee to best determine the requirements of the board. Identifying what skills, experience and demographics would best suit the board in the upcoming years is important before beginning the recruitment process. A board matrix can be used to take stock of current skills and attributes, and to determine what experience and abilities are still required. A sample board matrix is provided at the end of this document.

Prospect for new board members

The committee can identify prospective board members suggested by various sources including: committee members, other board members, senior staff, skilled volunteers engaged in your organization's work and/or that have been advisors to your board. Potential candidates from past years may be useful if prospects were not chosen because their skill set was not required at the time or they were too busy the last time they were approached.

Cultivate the relationship

Once the committee has an initial list of good candidates, it's important to approach those people and cultivate relationships with them well in advance of the nomination process. Do your homework to determine the interests, abilities and appropriateness of each prospect in advance of meeting with them. If your prospect is not already engaged with your organization in a high-level volunteer role, you may consider working with them in this capacity first. This is a key way to determine if your prospect is interested in better understanding the work of your organization. The organization will be best served if the candidate is well acquainted with your not-for-profit and if you have a good sense of their skills, ability to serve as a member, and cultural fit.

An introductory meeting(s) with your board prospects will often include the Chair of the Board, and/or Chair of the Committee, Executive Director and prospect. It provides an opportunity for honest discussion about the organization, and prospective board member. This is the time to provide the prospect with a position role description. Building the expectation of accountability into the recruitment process begins by outlining what is expected of them and what they can expect in return. Plan this meeting carefully - who will talk about what and in what order; what materials you will send before and/or bring with you; and when you will share the material with the candidate. Try to understand what is motivating a prospect to join your board so you can be sure the role will meet their interests. Also, for those who are not interested in joining, try to determine why. Sometimes they are currently too busy but would happily reconsider at a future date.

Be sure not to make any unofficial offers to the prospect – the committee will not know which candidates are best until their recruitment efforts near completion. Once you've determined the top prospect list, (with board approval to proceed, if required), the prospect should be formally invited to put their name forward for election. Once the slate is approved at the AGM, the next step of developing the skills and abilities of your board to act effectively for the organization can begin.

Sources:

Six Keys to recruiting, orienting, and involving nonprofit board members, Judith Grummon Nelson; National Centre for NonProfit Boards; 1997

Board building: recruiting and developing effective board members for not-for-profit organizations, Alberta Community Development and the Muttart Foundation; 1995.

TEMPLATE: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Board Development Committee

Goal: To ensure a leading edge governing Board which other organizations can model.

Role: The role is focused on assessing the function of the Board, the qualities and skill sets required of Board members, and through the year determining the makeup and potential gaps in skill sets required on the Board. This committee will be responsible for ongoing development of the governance knowledge of Board members and ensure Board self-evaluation.

Core Values for Guiding the Committee:

1. We value a culture of “appreciative inquiry” which includes valuing innovation.
2. We value a culture of mutual respect, diversity, and learning

Membership:

- The Committee will be convened by the Executive Director
- Current Chair
- Past Chair
- Incoming Chair
- Selected past Board members
- Others as deemed appropriate by the committee

** (members of the Committee sit as individuals and not as representatives of their organization)*

Objectives:

- To review and amend Board Matrix
- To liaise with the Board of Directors
- To advise on possible candidates for the Board
- To present a slate for the Board at the AGM
- To ensure annual self-evaluation
- To plan ongoing governance educational opportunities

Responsible to:

Chair of the Board

Meeting Schedule:

The Committee will meet in person a minimum of once per year and as often as required, by whatever means is most convenient, in order to complete the work of the Committee.

SAMPLE TOOL

Board Matrix

| | Name | Name | Name | Name | Name | Name |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| DEMOGRAPHICS | | | | | | |
| Full Years on the Board | | | | | | |
| Gender - Male | | | | | | |
| - Female | | | | | | |
| Sector Involvement | | | | | | |
| Private | | | | | | |
| Public | | | | | | |
| Nonprofit | | | | | | |
| PROFESSION | | | | | | |
| Acctng/Finance | | | | | | |
| Education/Training | | | | | | |
| Law | | | | | | |
| Business | | | | | | |
| Community/Soc. Services | | | | | | |
| Government | | | | | | |
| IT | | | | | | |
| Real Estate/Developer | | | | | | |
| EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND | | | | | | |
| Secondary | | | | | | |
| University/College | | | | | | |
| Post graduate | | | | | | |
| KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS | | | | | | |
| Finance/analysis | | | | | | |
| Legal Issues | | | | | | |
| Advertising/Marketing | | | | | | |
| Management | | | | | | |
| Real Estate | | | | | | |
| Human Resources | | | | | | |
| Government Relations | | | | | | |
| Adult Ed./Training | | | | | | |
| Fundraising | | | | | | |
| Strategic Planning | | | | | | |
| Advocacy | | | | | | |
| Programs/Policies | | | | | | |
| Community Resources | | | | | | |
| Volunteer Engagement | | | | | | |
| AREAS OF INFLUENCE | | | | | | |
| Business & Industry | | | | | | |
| Government (civic, provincial, federal) | | | | | | |
| Media/Advertising | | | | | | |
| Not-for-Profits | | | | | | |

BOARD MEMBER ATTRIBUTES

Review the matrix to determine it adequately outlines skills and credentials that are required. It is also important to assess other attributes to ensure that a candidate is a good fit for a Board role. Required attributes for governing the organization (vs. managing) as stated by the Board Development Committee are:

- Visionary – able to see our organization in broad terms as part of the voluntary sector; not focused on detail
- Strategic – able to contribute to the development and execution of our strategic plans
- Communication skills – able to share ideas, “sell” a position and influence others decisions
- Appreciation of the voluntary sector – including previous direct contact with Vantage Point board and staff as well as experience as a knowledge philanthropists with Vantage Pont.
- Attitude of appreciative inquiry
- Clear understanding of the role of governance, which does not include operations decisions. Those are the purview of the Executive Director.

About Vantage Point

Vantage Point offers leading-edge learning opportunities for not-for-profit executives and boards of directors. We work with you to attract, meaningfully engage and integrate the abundance of talent available to you. By mindfully engaging passionate citizens you can stretch budgets and human resources further to create an abundant not-for-profit.

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Where will the talent take you?
For more information, visit our website

 thevantagepoint.ca

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