



# BOARD WORKS

NOVEMBER 2012

## ◆ BOARD MEMBERS AND FUNDRAISING

By: Rick Stiffney, President/CEO, MHS Alliance

What roles should board members play in fund raising by the not-for-profit organizations they lead and serve? One author I read recently wrote, “Give, get, or get off the board.” This phrase, while overstated and catchy, raises an important question. One survey of approximately 3,000 CEOs concluded that board members’ engagement in fund raising is one of the least effective areas of board involvement.

One short-hand way to characterize a board is to classify it as a fund-raising or a policy-setting board. However, these categories are not clean-cut.

Certainly, some boards – such as those for the arts and special causes – exist primarily to raise funds. Also, foundation boards spend most of their energy on building resource capacity.

Other boards dedicate little of their energy to raising funds. These boards are called policy, monitoring, or strategic leadership boards.

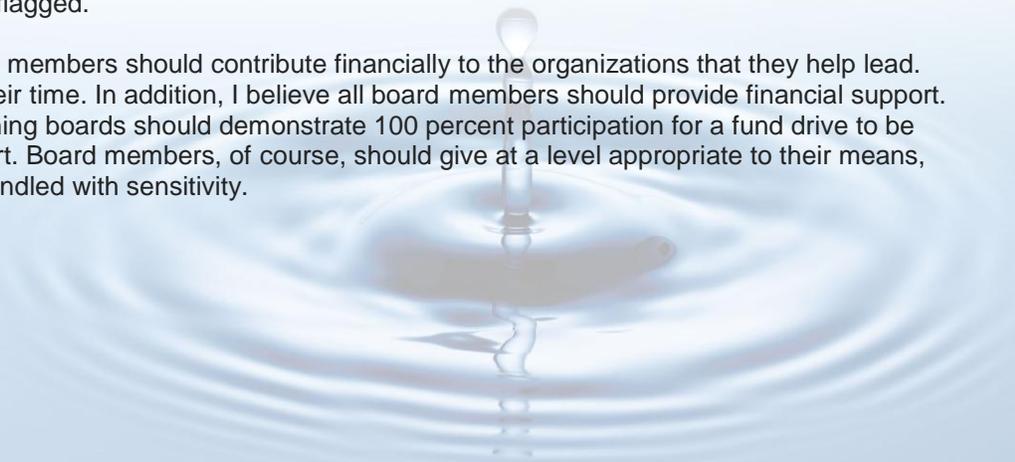
The problem with such classifications is that even foundation or special cause boards need clarity of mission, long-term direction, and a basic policy framework before they can do effective development work. On the other hand, few not-for-profit organizations can operate for long without doing at least some fund raising.

So, for us, the question becomes, “What constitutes reasonable engagement in fund raising for a particular board?”

First, all board members ought to have some passion for their service. *Get involved.* One of the easiest ways to demonstrate support for the organization is to show up. Yes, showing up for board and committee meetings is important, but board members also need to be present in other ways that signal engagement to key internal and external stakeholders. Potential donors also pay attention to how much board members are involved in sponsored activities. This may mean attending special events or community meetings.

Sometimes board members take so much personal interest in operational issues that they start showing up too much. Such over-involvement needs to be flagged.

Second, *give.* I believe that all board members should contribute financially to the organizations that they help lead. Certainly, board members give of their time. In addition, I believe all board members should provide financial support. Fund-raising experts say that governing boards should demonstrate 100 percent participation for a fund drive to be successful in inviting external support. Board members, of course, should give at a level appropriate to their means, and the amounts given should be handled with sensitivity.



## Fundraising

Effective organizations have strategic and efficient fund development to carry out their missions. Greater fund development capabilities result in enhanced:

- Annual and special appeals and events
- Major donor relationships and gifts
- Foundation and business solicitation
- Capital campaigns and feasibility studies
- Grant writing
- Education and mentoring of the board, CEO and staff

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When board chairs and CEOs recruit new board members, they should be very clear in stating that financial support will be expected. Such expectations should be incorporated into board covenants and job descriptions.

Third, *get*. While governing board members represent a wide range of capacity to give financially, they can expand their impact on the organization's bottom line by tapping into their personal networks. They can help identify friends who might also be donors. Board members can even go the extra step of assisting staff members in making initial personal contacts.

Finally, *get off the board*. This counsel counters the previous points. Board members who cannot make a commitment to get involved, give, and get are in the wrong place. Life is too short to waste precious time sitting on boards when one is not engaged.

Without a doubt, board members can effectively raise the level of engagement in fund raising for the organizations they lead and serve. Such engagement has crucial implications for the organization's ability to fulfill its mission.

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## ◆ FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do we have a clear expectation of board members about fundraising?
2. Do you agree with Rick that 100% of board members should be expected to make a financial contribution?

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## OUR VISION

To be a community of vibrant Anabaptist health and human service ministries committed to God's work of healing and hope in Jesus Christ.

## OUR MISSION

MHS Alliance strengthens and extends Anabaptist health and human service ministries in faithfully and effectively fulfilling their missions.

For further information or to suggest topics for future issues of Board Works, please contact MHS Alliance at [Emily@mhsonline.org](mailto:Emily@mhsonline.org).



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