



Recruit Your Board & Volunteers

No decision you make regarding your nonprofit organization carries more importance than who is chosen to lead it. The members of your Board of Directors make up the governing body of your nonprofit and are legally accountable for its actions. Practically speaking, they are accountable to your supporters and beneficiaries to oversee the accomplishment of the organization's purposes. The buck stops with them...at least it is supposed to! Board recruiting should be on the agenda for every Board meeting.

Forming Your Board of Directors

Every nonprofit must form a Board of Directors. You need a minimum of 3 members to legally form, but the ideal Board would be an odd number of members between 7 and 11. As a corporation, the Board has financial and legal responsibilities that are detailed in the Bylaws -- which are a Board's internal operating rules.

The incorporator of the nonprofit can appoint the initial Board members and officers, who will be officially elected at the first Board meeting. Future Board members will be elected by a majority of the Board.

Create Your Board Recruiting List

Board Members then create a list of donors, clients, volunteers, and former Board member referrals, and also evaluate their own network of friends, family, and business acquaintances, to see if any would be a good fit to serve on the Board. This potential new Board member is now considered a candidate.

Characteristics of Great Board Members

1. You must select people who share your sense of mission. If they do not care deeply about the very purpose of the organization, their value is minimal.
2. They must possess a certain level of business or organizational competency. It is not necessary for them to have prior experience as business *leaders*, per se, but they should understand principles of good business practices.
3. They should be long-game strategic thinkers.
4. They should be willing to give of their time *and money* to see the organization's mission accomplished.
5. They should always understand that their role is *governance*, not *management*. Governance establishes mission and programs, while management actively works those programs under accountability to governance.
6. And finally, they **MUST** be people of integrity.

Evaluate Your Board's Needed Skillset

It's unlikely that you personally have the all the skills needed to run your nonprofit. So look for people who do have the needed skills. Business skills such as operations management and understanding of finances are important. Also important are additional skills beneficial to the focus of your particular nonprofit.

Recruiting and Engaging Volunteers

1. Create a job description. If four people walked up to you today and said, “what can we do?,” you need to know what your reply would be. Do you have tasks that need to be completed? Are there projects to be done? Has there been one program that could be operational if you had one more person that knows how to [fill in the blank]?
2. Start with your friends and family. Then ask them if they know people that would want to be a volunteer. Any organization that you're a member of is also a place to look into, such as a social group, club, organization, church, etc. Service clubs are often looking for group projects or individual tasks. Social media is a great way to get the word out.
3. Make sure to show your appreciation to your volunteers to make them glad that they chose to volunteer their time, effort, and skills for your organization's purpose. And snacks and refreshments go a long way!

Characteristics of Great Volunteers

Every successful nonprofit relies on the passion and support of its volunteers. Though they may come in all shapes and sizes and ages, and from a myriad of backgrounds and lifestyles, the best volunteers share five important traits:

1. They share the passion and mission you have for your nonprofit.
2. They are willing to make a commitment of time and energy, even if that's just a an hour or two each month, sometimes more for a special event.
3. They've made a point of learning about your organization and what volunteering to help may entail, then sign on where they can be most helpful.
4. They stay active, helping with the fun jobs, as well as those boring but necessary.
5. They ask questions if they aren't sure about what to do, provide support and encouragement to others, and they are willing to learn from any mistakes they might make.

Who will serve on your team?

Use the following worksheet to brainstorm your first roster of Board Directors and key Volunteers.



ENVISION YOUR TEAM WORKSHEET

Question 1: Who are the 2 or more board members (3 total including you) that are ready to join you in this adventure?

Question 2: Who are the potential volunteers or staff that you have identified to help with the work?

Question 3: What additional training do you or your team need to serve your constituents well?