

Desired Board Values

Board values are the guiding principles of an association's governing body. In a discussion with association and chamber executives they identified the values they most seek in building high performing boards.

Each elected leader brings individual interests and values. It is the composition of the board that results in a set of guiding principles to advance the organization and serve its membership.

Desired Traits

Start by identifying the values or guiding principles that are most important for success; or those seemingly lacking. Create the list and share it with the nominating committee. They should discuss the values with prospective directors.

- ☑ **Authentic** – An authentic leader is not there for personal gain or fame. They have an ability to recognize what's important and are charismatic about influencing others to action.
- ☑ **Candid** – Directors are expected to be “up front” with their ideas and concerns. They should be frank in expressing thoughts.
- ☑ **Committed** – There will be good and bad times in the organization. A director should be committed for the long term; not only interested in a few priorities and then lose interest.
- ☑ **Community Minded** – The director should prefer unity over exclusion. They embrace and represent the entire community; not just subgroups or personal interests.
- ☑ **Considerate** – There will be times when the board may disagree, or some discussion may cause conflict. Courtesy to colleagues and staff is essential.
- ☑ **Diversity of Thought** – A director should be open to new ideas, new models and new people. The opposite is the director stating, “That’s not how we used to do it.”
- ☑ **Engaged** – Though meetings are periodic, a director should remain engaged in the interim. Adjournment of the board meeting is not a cue to lose interest until the next meeting.
- ☑ **Innovative** – The director seeks solutions with available resources; frequently applying new technologies.
- ☑ **Inquisitive** – Curiosity, to a point, is an asset. Directors should ask questions or “verify and trust” that processes and initiatives are in good order.

- ☑ **Integrity** – A director should support the highest standards of excellence, honesty and ethics in carrying out duties.
- ☑ **Objective** – Directors must make decisions based on facts and knowledge. Too often proposals are adopted because they sound like a good idea or simply support a colleague.
- ☑ **Optimistic** – Directors should have a positive attitude; it is far better than the pessimist who postures, “You guys better solve this problem.” Positivity encourages team problem solving.
- ☑ **Passion** – The director has enthusiasm for the purpose and advancement of the organization.
- ☑ **Proactive** – The director offers ideas and volunteers for tasks, not one to wait to be “voluntold” (the opposite of volunteering).
- ☑ **Relentless** – When the mission and strategic plan are in place, a director should work steadily for their advancement to serve members and the community.
- ☑ **Resource Abundance** – A director should have sufficient time and finances to fulfill board duties. A prospective director might confirm with an employer and family that there is sufficient time for the role.
- ☑ **Respected** – The organization needs persons who are respected in the community. Directors should be considered models of excellence.
- ☑ **Selfless** – The director is more about giving than taking credit; ideas are generously shared with others.
- ☑ **Supportive** – The director comprehends and is committed to teamwork with the board, committees and staff while advancing the mission; an open mind is essential.
- ☑ **Time Management** – A director respects time; realizing the value of meetings, honoring commitments, and allocating time to fulfill commitments.
- ☑ **Thought Leaders** – Thought leaders offer insights and vision. They continually conduct environmental scans to share in board discussions.
- ☑ **Transparent** – Secrecy has no place in governance. A director should promote openness.

Identify the important values desired for your organization’s board of directors.
Encourage the nominating committee to vet candidates against the desired values.

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance and management tips and templates at www.nonprofitcenter.com.