Board Tips

What board members want

An insider’s look at what motivates – and irritates – board members

1. Don’t make BIG requests too soon
2. Do ask for feedback
3. Don’t wait for potential board members to raise their hand (personal ask)
4. Don’t seek yes men or yes women (don’t micromanage as people want to participate their way)
   a. Outline the mission and objectives, and then turn the board members loose
5. Do promote the perks
6. Do make an emotional connection
   a. Share a riveting backstory that binds them to the board’s goals

Get the most out of your board

1. Set expectations
   a. Maybe in the form of a board member agreement
2. Institute term limits
   a. Regular turnover, and the corresponding infusion of new members with innovative ideas, keeps a board fresh and engaged
3. Install a strong leader

How to solicit people to your board

1. Assess each person’s interests, capabilities, and capacity for involvement
   a. This assessment should identify what resources each board member will need to be successful. Talk to people in one-on-one meetings to encourage candor and avoid the effects of peer pressure on their responses.
2. Develop an individualized work plan for each person that matches bullet point 1
3. Provide practical training
   a. Utilize the UAAA in helping train your board
4. Empower your board to hold each other accountable
The right moves for a new board

1. Setup up a good infrastructure
   a. Decide how often the group will meet, and establish attendance requirements. Utilize the UAAA to help write job descriptions. Determine term lengths and limits. Good people want to know these things, and clearly spelling them out will help you avoid misunderstandings down the road.

2. State membership expectations
   a. Make sure every person is aware that they need to be UAAA members during their board member term as well as anything else the board determines (additional donation to board?).

3. Start small and simple
   a. Recruit a few close friends to become a steering committee for the new group. Brainstorm with them and take their opinions under serious consideration—they represent all the people you will ask to become involved.

4. Grow strategically
   a. Before you recruit more board members, develop a list of characteristics you want in the mix. Consider diversity of age, profession, relationship with the institution, ethnicity, gender, and any other factors that are important to the group. Then determine who should be invited to join the group to match the makeup you need.

5. Take your time
   a. The board doesn’t have to be at its optimum size in the beginning. Aim for six to 10 members at first. Have a few meetings, and see how the group takes shape before you recruit more members. Quality, not quantity, is critical in making sure your board is successful from its inception.

6. Determine how you will pay for the board and staff it
   a. Managing and supporting a board takes time and energy. Figure out how the UAAA will work with your group and in what capacity and incorporate their staff person in the way that’s identified. Make room in your budget for meeting expenses, such as refreshments, room rentals, and meeting materials.