



Board Development Topics:

Questions Potential Board Members Should Ask Themselves

This document contains questions that potential candidates should ask themselves and that active board members should periodically re-examine during their service.

WHAT DO I WANT TO GET OUT OF BEING ON THIS BOARD?

A common experience for board members at the ends of their terms is a feeling that they didn't really get deeply involved and don't feel that they contributed as much, or got as much as they had hoped, when they joined. Board members who plan and ask for what they want in the board will contribute more and gain more. For example, if there's a community leader on the program committee you would love to get to know, ask to be put on that committee. If one of your reasons for joining is to meet new people, volunteer to help put on annual events.

IS THIS THE RIGHT CAUSE AND ORGANIZATION FOR ME?

Approach this decision as if you were planning to make a major donation. Begin by thinking of areas where you have strong feelings such as for animals, the elderly, children, or the environment. After settling on a subject area learn about several different organizations that work in that field and investigate the ones that seem to have a high impact and are well-managed.

The next time you consider joining a board, first ask yourself whether you truly feel strongly about the type of work the organization does and the people it serves. Since you'll be investing not only your money but your time and energy, ask yourself whether the organization seems to be a pretty good risk as an investment.

CAN I WORK WITH THIS ORGANIZATION AT THIS PARTICULAR STAGE IN ITS' LIFE?

At one time in an organization's life, board service may be fairly smooth with no bumps, while at another time service may involve a hair-raising roller coaster ride. What type of board seems right for you right now? You may want a board that really lets you roll up your sleeves and get to work, or you may want a board that is stable.

WHAT CAN I, AND WHAT WILL I, CONTRIBUTE TO THIS ORGANIZATION?

What skills, contact, and perspectives do I have that will be useful to this organization? How, specifically, will the board use what I can bring? Often as board members we find that some of our talents and contacts never seem to get utilized by boards we're on. Perhaps you gave up a music career for accounting, or have writing skills that are not used at your job. Consider first what you can bring to the table, and then whether you are willing to give that to the organization.

Also ask yourself: Do I believe in this organization enough to introduce my customers to it? Can I make a commitment to attend the meetings? Am I willing to make a generous donation? Would I feel comfortable having my name on their letterhead, in brochures, on their website. The right time to ask yourself these questions is before, not after, you have joined the board.