

# A Board Member Self-Assessment

Use this quiz to see how well you are doing as a board member.

BY ANDREW SWANSON

**H**ere are 20 questions for you to use to assess your own performance on the board. Answer “yes” or “no.”

\_\_\_\_\_1. Do you attend most, if not all, of your board’s meetings—especially those that are regularly scheduled?

\_\_\_\_\_2. Are you a member of a committee that contributes regularly to the work of your board? And is your attendance at meetings of this committee regular?

\_\_\_\_\_3. Do you participate regularly in your board and committee meetings whenever you have knowledge and experience to contribute?

\_\_\_\_\_4. Do you carry out assignments carefully and within the desired time frame?

\_\_\_\_\_5. Do you participate in your board’s fundraising efforts (if not in the actual solicitations, then at least in support activities of some kind)?

\_\_\_\_\_6. Do you avoid any semblance of conflict of interest?

\_\_\_\_\_7. Is the organization on whose board you sit at or very near the top of your personal philanthropic priorities?

\_\_\_\_\_8. Do you avoid the holding of hidden agendas?

\_\_\_\_\_9. Do you avoid speaking publicly about board activities (unless specifically charged by your board to do so) and refer any questions for such information to the board president or CEO?

\_\_\_\_\_10. Do you support the decisions of your board in public—even if you disagreed with the decisions when made by the board?

\_\_\_\_\_11. Do you participate in your board’s leadership development effort by regularly contributing names of people who may someday be useful additions to your board or to one of its committees?

\_\_\_\_\_12. Do you avoid taking unilateral action as a board member unless instructed to do so by your full board?

\_\_\_\_\_13. Do you avoid speaking with subordinate staff about the performance or activities of your CEO?

\_\_\_\_\_14. Do you avoid intervening in any dispute between a friend on the staff and a supervisor or the CEO?

\_\_\_\_\_15. Do you understand and completely support both the purpose and mission of your organization?

\_\_\_\_\_16. Do you understand and accept the fact that the CEO is accountable only to the full board—not to the board president, not to the executive committee, not to any other committee?

\_\_\_\_\_17. Do you understand and accept the principle that your board is responsible to establish the results to be achieved and that the CEO and staff are responsible to develop and employ the methods necessary to achieve those results?

\_\_\_\_\_18. Do you come to every meeting prepared by having read thoroughly all the materials sent to you in advance?

\_\_\_\_\_19. Is it clear to you why you

were asked to serve on your board and what is expected of you?

\_\_\_\_\_20. Do you enjoy your service on your board—and, if not, are you working legitimately to correct whatever stands in the way of enjoying your service on your board?

The answer to each of the above questions ought to be a solid “yes.” Should you have to answer any question “no,” then it is up to you to take action to improve your board performance. The rest of the board, the organization, and the clients it serves have a right to expect this of you. ■

## Selected References

Carver, John, *Boards that Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations*.

Eadie, Douglas, *Boards that Work*.

Howe, Fisher, *The Board Member’s Guide to Fund Raising*.

Howe, Fisher, *Welcome to the Board*.

Muehrcke, Jill, ed., *Board Leadership & Governance, Leadership Series*.

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