



Where Can You Find Good Board Members?

Q:

We are a small group and don't know a lot of people. Where do we find board members? How do we approach people to ask them to be on our board?

A:

You don't need to look far to find good board members. You just need to find people who will be supportive of your organization's mission. Here are some good places to start:

• **Business associates, neighbors, and friends.** Frequently you'll find that people you contact this way already know something about your organization and its goals. You have the advantage of knowing their strengths and weaknesses. Are they

good at raising funds? Do they work better in a group or alone? Will travel during the week interfere with commitments?

• **Groups who tour your site and show an interest in your mission.** At one nonprofit, a valued board member came from a United Way site visit; another came from a women's group who toured the nonprofit's facility.

• **Committee members who work with you.** Those who come through the committee structure have already shown an interest in contributing and are usually excellent board members. Coming from

the inside, so to speak, they often take less time to become productive because they're familiar with your goals.

• **Board banks.** Ask organizations such as United Way, Junior League, and leadership centers in your area if they have board banks you can tap. Also check with professional organizations. Such banks of people offer specific talent when you enlarge a board.

• **Major donors.** People who give money are often delighted to give time and expertise as well.

• **New executives in town.** Check the business section of your newspaper and ask realtors for infor-

Be very clear about the many advantages of joining your board.

Bundled Rods—the ancient symbol of strength and authority. Though fragile when taken individually, these rods are unbreakable when unified. Our specialty is in identifying and knowing how to assemble the many different strengths that lie within your organization's grasp.



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Downlink Update

Carol Weisman shares other board insights in “Board Development: Building Passion for Mission”—a distance-education course she teaches for the Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations. The Learning Institute meets a long-standing need of nonprofits—quality education taught by nationally recognized instructors. Its new Certificate of Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership and Management is based on the following curriculum, delivered to downlink sites across the United States, Canada, Mexico and South America:

Strategic Planning
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The Learning Institute for Nonprofit Organizations is a program of the Society for Nonprofit Organizations (6314 Odana Road, Suite 1, Madison, Wisconsin 53719). For more information, please call PBS Adult Learning Services at 800-257-2578.

mation on newcomers to your area who may be looking for a way to get involved in the community.

- **Corporate leaders.** When you visit a corporation to solicit funds for your nonprofit, take the opportunity to solicit for a board member as well. For instance, ask if there is someone in the marketing department who is interested in your mission and might like to serve on your board.

Before you ask these people to be on your board, you should know the answer to two questions:

1. Why do you want them on your board?

2. What do you have to offer them?

When you talk to potential members, be very clear about the many advantages of joining your board. These include the potential to learn, take part in decision-making, use their skills, learn new skills, and help make changes to fill community needs. Also be specific about why you want them on your board. For instance:

“We would like to have you on our board because we need a large special event and were wowed by what you did when you chaired last year’s ball for zyx organization. We offer you the opportunity to help children with ABC problem.”

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Learn More About It

Looking for more keys to board effectiveness? You’ll find them in Carol Weisman’s unique, entertaining, and helpful book *Secrets of Successful Boards: The Best from the Non-Profit Pros* (see page 22).