



ASK *the experts*

How Much Should Each Board Member Give?

Should you require a donation from everyone on your board?

Q:

How do you establish the amount of financial commitment expected from a potential board member? When, if ever, can we make exceptions?

A:

This is about as tricky a question as they get. I always go back to mission when discussing money.

How much money do we need to accomplish our mission? It's very helpful to have

guidelines. For instance, when discussing this subject, you might say, "We expect a minimum gift of \$500. We understand that many of our board members will be able and want to invest much more than that in our organization, and some won't be able to."

There are frequently exceptions. I'm on a board with two nuns. Neither can give personally but, instead, go to their communities for donations. I've also been on boards where long-time board members have lost their jobs. There has to be an element of flexibility, always keeping the mission in sight.

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Is It O.K. to Compete?

Q:

What guidelines can you recommend for nonprofits that, due to the similarity of their services, are in effect competitors?

A:

Always provide the best services you can, and meet the wants of your markets. Businesses throughout

the world are focusing on identifying and building on their core competencies. Mission-based businesses like yours should do the same.

If you're uncomfortable with the idea of competing, talk to the head of the

organization that provides services similar to yours. See if you can collaborate or specialize in ways that don't require direct competition.

Long-term, though, you need to work toward becoming comfortable with service competition. After all, you already are competitive for donations and staff.

Don't be afraid to compete! It's the new reality for nonprofits. ■

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