



Can an Employee Get Rid of the CEO?

How can you make sure an incompetent CEO gets fired?

Q: If a CEO is providing terrible leadership and the board hasn't done the yearly evaluation required by the bylaws, is there anything an employee can do to get the board to evaluate the CEO? When is it possible to oust a poorly performing CEO?

A: A board can terminate a CEO at any time. You should understand, however, that it's psychologically very difficult for a volunteer board to cut off the livelihood of a CEO who's given years of dedicated service, even if it hasn't been the most exemplary service. How to get the board to consider such action, or even start a review process, is a tricky question.

How to get the board to consider such action is a tricky question.

I assume that the CEO's leadership is merely poor or wrong-headed, not illegal. I also assume that the issues haven't been—or can't be—resolved when raised in private meetings, staff meetings, or meetings with board committees. If I'm right in these assumptions, my next question is whether your view is shared by others on the staff. The group has a better chance of effecting change than a single employee.

Questions or complaints to the right board members may be enough to start the review process. If the review process doesn't include talking to staff, however, it may not pick up the issues that concern you.

If there's a group of employees who feel as you do, it may be possible to talk "off the record" to a board member you feel would be sympathetic, but I wouldn't

count on maintaining confidentiality. Anonymous complaints to internal "hot lines," if you have them for issues such as whistle-blowing or harassment complaints, may also initiate an inquiry. Request for a strategic plan may be a way to raise the issues indirectly.

You need to remember, though, that the CEO may deem your questions traitorous and decide your services are no longer needed. A firing or two of staff (who, from what I infer from your question, would have no protection from any whistle-blower policies), may eventually hurt the CEO in the board's eyes, but you may be long gone before that happens.

If a few judicious questions about a review don't start the process, you may have to bide your time until the board gets around to it. If nothing's happening and the failure of leadership is seriously compromising the organization's effectiveness or you're simply not happy with the situation, you may want to find another place to utilize your talents. ■

Don Kramer
Nonprofit Issues
www.nonprofitissues.com

One more suggestion: Take a look at "CEO Evaluation: The Board's Second Most Crucial Duty" (Vol. 8, No. 3), "Evaluating the Top Administrator" (Vol. 15, No. 4), and "Reviewing the CEO: A Guide for Nonprofit Boards" (Vol. 20, No. 6) at www.snpo.org/members. Consider distributing these articles to board members as a subtle reminder of the vital importance of ongoing CEO evaluation.

—Ed.

Moving? Let Us Know!

Send old AND new address, with mailing label if possible, to:

The Society for Nonprofit Organizations
P.O. Box 510354
Livonia, MI 48151

The post office WILL NOT forward copies of *Nonprofit World*. So let us know BEFORE you move so that you won't miss any issues.

Advertisers' Index

501(c) Agencies Trust	Inside Front Cover
DonorPerfect	page 7
eTapestry	Inside Back Cover
RPS National Insurance Professionals Corporation	page 19
The Society For Nonprofit Organizations	Back Cover
www.BrandsForGreaterGood.net	page 23
www.FundraisingRides.org	page 23
Yost Engineering	page 25

