



Harness the Power of Termed-Out Board Members

Don't lose the energy, talent, and loyalty of former directors. They offer a huge opportunity.

By Robbie Kellman Baxter & Eugene H. Fram

Most nonprofits ignore one of their biggest assets – those whose terms on the board have ended. Rarely do organizations have a plan for continuing the roles of these active, engaged volunteers. Yet their talent doesn't suddenly decline once their formal connections are severed.

Without some venue for continuing contact, the organization can quickly lose important human support assets. And it's a terrible experience for loyal board members when they're abruptly dropped from their central role within the organization.

Form a Vibrant Ex-Board-Member Community

Here are some suggestions for creating the best group possible:

Start by inviting all retiring board members to join an informal alumni group. Provide all of them with occasional

updates and gatherings, and offer optional activities for those who want to be more active.

Set expectations. Define the role of the new group, laying out time requirements and responsibilities. Be clear that they'll no longer be voting members of the board, responsible for its health and future direction, but that their input will be greatly appreciated and valued.

Make it special. Participation in the new group should be fun. Have an official transition ceremony luncheon. Invite members to events. Hold them in high regard, and make them feel special.

Have an occasional joint meeting of the alumni group and the current board, at which an outside mission expert makes a presentation.

Consider having an annual social occasion with the alumni, their significant others, and current board members.

Make sure the current board works on building "forever" transactions with retired board members. Knowing that they'll be part of this group someday will heighten their interest. Technology is extending the infrastructure that enables current and former board members to develop trusted interpersonal relationships. Nurturing these connections will enrich life for both groups.

“Most nonprofits ignore one of their biggest assets.”

“Work on building “forever” transactions.”

Put All This Talent to Good Use

What are the best ways to draw on the talents of your new group? Begin by looking at your organization's unmet needs. Which of your challenges could be served by former board members? Think broadly and deeply, and develop a long list. The possibilities are endless. Here are a few:

- **Contact alums about big strategic questions.** Ask them to study these issues, conduct deep research and analytics, and then make recommendations to the board.
- **Have the alumni group reach out to other organizations** to find partnership opportunities.
- **Use termed-out board members to serve on the audit committee,** since they're familiar with the organization's financial reports.
- **Tap alums to join nominating and recruiting committees** for future board members.
- **Ask specific members who have the time** to join task forces reviewing policies.

The important thing to remember is that the more you invest in the role of your long-term members, the more engaged

those volunteers will become. Don't miss the chance to harness their engagement and wisdom. 

Robbie Kellman Baxter is the founder of Peninsula Strategies (peninsulastrategies.com), a management consulting firm, and author of The Membership Economy. Dr. Eugene H. Fram (frameugene@gmail.com) is professor emeritus, Saunders College of Business, Rochester Institute of Technology, holding RIT awards for outstanding teaching, university service, and communications services. He has authored or coauthored more than 125 published articles and six books, including Going for Impact and Policy vs. Paper Clips.

All Aboard

Also take a look at these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Emeritus Board Members: The How, the Why, The Art (Vol. 34, No. 2)

Using Board Portals to Keep Directors Connected (Vol. 29, No. 3)

Nonprofits without Audit Committees Risk Disaster (Vol. 22, No. 2)

Exit Interview: Entrepreneurial Tool for Board Improvement (Vol. 17, No. 5)

How Can Your Board Participate in Strategic Planning? (Vol. 30, No. 2)

Enjoy Reading NONPROFIT WORLD ?

Here are more benefits of membership in the Society for Nonprofits

- 12 issues of [Nonprofit World Funding Alert](#), providing monthly updates on grant and funding opportunities
- [Membership in GrantStation](#), with instant access to over 5,500 grantmakers via the Find-a-Funder searchable database
- Complete access to over 1,200 printer-ready management articles, searchable by author, key word, or subject
- [Discounts on products and services](#), including books, audiotapes, videotapes and webinars presented by experts in the field
- [Reduced enrollment fees](#) from the Learning Institute for the Society's [Certificate of Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership and Management](#)
- [Free job postings](#) on our [NonprofitCareers.org](#) job site

For more information, visit: NonprofitWorld.org

