

Build the Board of Your Dreams: How & Why to Cultivate Potential Board Members

Use these techniques *before* you ask someone to join your board.

By Terrie Temkin



It's unrealistic to think that people will just say yes if you ask them to join your board. And the people who do say yes without knowing much about your organization rarely end up being the strongest board directors.

You need to cultivate people so that when you invite them onto your board they're already committed to your mission. Effective service comes only from an understanding of the organization, its mission, vision, values, history, and needs. By cultivating potential directors over time, you give them the knowledge and sense of belonging that will make them successful if and when they do say yes.

Here are some easy ways to cultivate future directors.

Send the organization's printed newsletter or the link to its online version.

Provide frequent informal executive updates.

Send invitations to all organizational events.

Hold special events for potential board members.

Give tours of the organization.

Invite potential directors to an intimate breakfast or lunch with the board president or CEO.

Send handwritten thank-you notes for involvement in organizational activities.

Send cards for birthdays, anniversaries, condolences, and congratulations.

Ask for participation in brief surveys. You can conduct these surveys after events or online. You might ask them, for example, what they would look for in a board orientation.

Send stories that demonstrate your organization's impact.

Respond to posts that potential directors make on social media, noting how the posts relate to your organization's mission.

Send e-mail action alerts and request their help.


Ask them to join a committee.

Invite them to help review marketing materials.

Ask them to help with strategic planning.

Send a note recognizing the potential director's appearance in an article or blog.

Provide training and leadership development opportunities.

Add your own ideas for things your organization can do to cultivate potential board members. 

Terrie Temkin, Ph.D. (terriet@nonprofitmanagement solutions.com) is the founding principal of CoreStrategies for Nonprofits, Inc. and editor of You and Your Nonprofit Board: Advice and Practical Tips from the Field's Top Practitioners, Researchers and Provocateurs (charitychannel.com).

Bring Them on Board

Be creative in building relationships with potential board members. Find further inspiration at NonprofitWorld.org:

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