



The Exit Interview: An Entrepreneurial Tool for Board Improvement

Here is a simple, effective way to strengthen your board.

BY DAVID DOSAMANTES

One of the best ways for the board to improve itself is to conduct exit interviews of all its outgoing board members.

Such interviews are practical and easy to implement. They tap into the experience, knowledge, and ideas of the organization's most experienced leaders.

Exiting board members have a wealth of information which can be used to strengthen the board and help the organization accomplish the mission. The exit interview is an ideal way to gain an honest assessment of the board's performance and ensure that board members' concerns are aired. Here are exit interview questions for outgoing board members:

- Why did you originally agree to serve on the board?
- Was your understanding about the requirements of serving consistent with your actual board experience?
- What did you like best (and least) about serving on the board?
- What advice would you offer to incoming board members?
- If you could do the job over again what would you do differently?
- What suggestions would you make for improving the way the board operates?

- What are your feelings about leaving the board?

Board transitions provide a unique opportunity to reflect and plan. All too often, however, transitions on the nonprofit board are treated as routine. Exit interviews provide a way to manage transitions so that they lead to improvement for the board and the organization. Here are tips for making sure the exit interviews lead to real improvements:

- Have the board president or an officer conduct the interview.
- Conduct the interview in a comfortable venue, perhaps over lunch.
- Take written notes.
- Make the interview a form of volunteer recognition.
- Make it fun.

Leadership transitions are critical moments in an organization's life.

All too often, board transitions are treated as routine.

Be sure to take advantage of these moments, at which people are exceptionally open to change. ■

Selected References

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These publications are available through the Society for Nonprofit Organizations' Resource Center. For more information, see the *Resource Center Catalog* or contact the Society at 6314 Odana Road, Suite 1, Madison, Wisconsin 53719 (800-424-7367).

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