



Should You List Your Board on Your Letterhead?

Will you get a better or worse response to your direct mail if you cite your board on the letter?

Q: I oversee our direct-mail program. We're wondering whether listing our board of directors on the first page of the letter will increase or decrease response. What do you think?

Many potential donors, seeing no names they recognize, will read no further.

*Dale Johnson
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a truly star-studded board. But in any other circumstances, I believe that listing the board on the letterhead used in appeals is a mistake and is very likely to depress response.

The reason this is usually a poor idea is that lists of names invariably distract most readers. Lists get very high readership, and if your list isn't calculated to increase the credibility of your appeal, you're well-advised to leave it off. Many potential donors, seeing no names they recognize, will read no further. ■

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A: It depends how well your directors are known. In a small community where the board consists of the best-known names in town, a charity might well benefit by displaying its board list on the side of its direct-mail appeals. The same goes for a national organization that sports

Must You Open Your Board Meetings to the Public?

Are nonprofit boards obliged to invite the public to attend?

Q: Is a nonprofit organization required to let the public sit in on its entire board meeting or just the part allocated for public comment?

as a whole. The ordinary nonprofit is a private entity and is considered generous (if not foolish) to let the public come to its board meetings (except in special cases where the nonprofit chooses to invite people to attend). ■

A: There's no general rule that a nonprofit must open any part of its board meetings to the public. Some states have open meeting requirements for nonprofits receiving government funding or serving government purposes, but the situations are limited and don't apply to nonprofits

*Don Kramer
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