

Exit Interviews: When Board Members Say Good-bye

Never pass up this opportunity. It's pure gold.

By Carol Weisman

What's the smartest thing a brave and fearless nonprofit executive can do when a board member is exiting the board? That would of course be an exit interview. And yet, few nonprofit leaders make the most of this golden opportunity.

Whether the departure is for personal reasons or because a term has ended, it's a rare and special moment in the life of your board member and your organization. Don't let it pass you by.

Ask the board member for a final meeting. You'll learn things that will help you grow professionally, and you'll ensure positive involvement with the board member that will serve you well in the future.

Where to Meet

You'll want to have the meeting in a home or office. You need to choose a place that's private as opposed to a busy restaurant or coffee house where your conversation could be overheard.

What to Ask

The questions to ask in this final meeting are:

- **Did we use** your talents effectively? (This should be asked frequently, but rarely is!)
- **If I can call you** in the future, what issue should I consult you about?
- **What did you enjoy** about your time on the board?
- **What would have made it** better?
- **How can I improve** as a leader?

“You'll learn things that will help you grow.”



“Meet in a home or office, not a restaurant or coffee shop.”

How to Act

Be open to listening. Try not to be defensive. After the meeting, send a note thanking the member not only for the board service but also for the time spent in debriefing. And, in the future, whenever you have a chance to call upon a former board member, grab it.

Looking Forward

Ideally, ask the above questions of each board member yearly. (That's a great resolution for you to make, along with the usual eat less, exercise more.) You needn't wait till they bow out to gain the wisdom your board members can offer. **S**

Carol Weisman (carol@boardbuilders.com) is founder and president of Board Builders (boardbuilders.com) as well as an internationally known speaker, author, trainer, and consultant. See her Learning Institute program (Board Governance) online at NonprofitWorld.org/LearningInstitute.

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