

Can You Fire a Board Member for Disagreeing? How much leeway does the executive have in removing board members?

Q. Can the executive director of a nonprofit organization fire a member of the organization's board of directors for not agreeing with him?

A. Generally, no, except in a few rare circumstances. Check the organization's bylaws for removal provisions. Staff usually can't remove board members. But it may be allowable if the executive director is the sole member of the nonprofit corporation with the power to appoint and remove directors. That might be the case if the executive director is the founder.

“The board may want to consider finding a new executive director.”

If the executive director has problems with a board member who is seriously undermining the organization's programs, it might be a good idea to talk to the board chair and other board members about the possibility of removal. If the executive director just doesn't like disagreement and wants only praise and approval from the board, then the board may want to consider finding a new executive director.

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How Much Should Staff and Board Be Expected to Give? Should staff and board members be required to give a certain amount each year?

Q. What do you regard as a reasonable amount of board giving per year? Or staff giving? For, say, a \$10-per-year membership organization?

A. I — and everyone else I know in the fundraising field — believe that nonprofit board members bear ultimate responsibility for an organization's financial health and ought to participate personally in fundraising. My rule of thumb is that every member of a nonprofit board should give something at least once a year.

That means everyone, without exception.

“Board members bear ultimate responsibility for an organization's financial health.”

Clearly, some can afford more than others. But in a \$10 per-year membership organization, for example, it's entirely reasonable to require that every board member pay the \$10 dues as an absolute minimum. And those who can afford much more should pay more.

The organization will find 100% board giving a real asset in fundraising. Funders will be encouraged to hear that a grant applicant can make such a claim.

I feel that staff giving is another matter (though there are many who disagree with me). Some nonprofits encourage staff donations, which seems okay — and some virtually require it, which doesn't seem okay.

I think coercion is out of order, especially with low-wage, entry-level personnel. Certainly, though, management-level staff ought to demonstrate the same level of buy-in as do board members.

So, there you have it — my opinions. Best of luck to you!

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