



# Is Your Board Evaluating the Executive Properly?

This book will help you review your executive and organization in a way that strengthens everyone involved.

By Terrence Fernsler

## Evaluating Your Executive: New Approaches, New Purposes

By *Donn F. Vickers & Kelly Stevelt Kaser*. 56 pages. Softcover. Academy for Leadership and Governance ([www.thejeffersoncenter.org](http://www.thejeffersoncenter.org)).

It's more crucial today than ever before to hold regular evaluations of the executive director. Yet only about a third of nonprofit organizations routinely evaluate their CEOs. And even when nonprofits do assess their executives, the experience tends to be more confusing than enlightening.

Existing systems of evaluation are inadequate because they don't address the changed roles of executive directors. Our organizations don't just need managers anymore; we need leadership from our chief executive officers. That means we must also change the way we critique our CEOs.

Most evaluation systems were created under a paternalistic system, built on distrust and the assumption that the board knows more than the executive director. Now, however, these systems are archaic and debilitating.

### Is Your CEO a Manager Or a Leader?

Use this list, which contrasts leadership with management behavior, to determine how your executive tends to proceed and what approaches you need most, given your organization's current situation.

Manager Approach	Leader Approach
Administer	Innovate
Maintain	Develop
Ask how & when	Ask what & why
Focus on systems	Focus on people
Rely on control	Rely on trust
Seek predictability	Seek change

An evaluation should help both the executive and board feel clearer and more confident about expectations and goals, more inspired about professional development, and more trusting in the work relationship. Evaluations need to reflect cooperation between board and CEO and help an organization adapt to its changing environment.

There's no "one size fits all" way to assess executive directors, so Donn Vickers and Kelly Stevelt Kaser

present a range of processes, adapted from their own advisory committee and research. Each approach is designed to further the organization's mission and gauge the performance of the organization as well as the CEO.

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How do you decide which process is best for your organization? The first step is giving the evaluation serious thought: What are the desired outcomes? Who should be included? How can you make it a positive experience for everyone involved? To help you select the appropriate method, the authors group their suggested processes according to the appraisal's purpose.

For many organizations, finding time for contemplation is difficult. But carefully considering how to evaluate the CEO and conducting the assessment in a thoughtful way will help both the executive and the organization.

This book offers useful formats to review nonprofit executives (and organizations) on a regular basis. Once you choose the right process, you'll find that such assessments offer enormous rewards. They provide the executive with a blueprint for learning. They strengthen the board-executive partnership and advance a culture of reflection. They help you focus on the future, set goals, and pinpoint strengths to capitalize upon and weaknesses to improve. And they engender trust and respect among all those who help lead the organization. ■

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