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LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

How to be an Effective (non-profit) Board Member

A First Person Primer /Deborah Bryant

Today's Talk

- Finding your board director “why”.
- Understanding your commitment.
- Making meaningful contributions.

Not

- Picking the right corporate structure.
- Fiscal agency.
- Fund-raising.

(Different Talk)

Speaker's context

Civil Service



Advocacy



Public Policy



Education



Activism



Inspect your Motivations

Civic or Social

- Purpose aligned with your own values

Professional

- Overlaps with your area of vocation
- Provides an opportunity to work with other board members you'd not otherwise meet

Personal

- Something you're passionate about
- Provides rich experience and opportunity to hone a range of skills.

Don't set yourself up for failure.



Be Authentic

If you don't really care about trees, don't join the Sierra Club board.

Then ask yourself...

Can I meet these needs without joining the board?

- By volunteering for specific projects or working groups
- Or opening your checkbook (or fund-raising)



Still Tracking?



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Cat people slide.



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Non Profit Board 101

- As a board member, your first obligation is to the benefit of the organization
- That includes protecting and preserving the institution itself
- Take time to understand the corporate status and its obligation (charter)
- Fully disclosing conflicts of interest as they may arise

In the US, a non-profit's purpose is baked in to its application approved by the IRS. It must be met and not altered*.

But seriously.



In the US, non-profit charitable status affords certain freedoms in support of carrying out a public benefit mission.

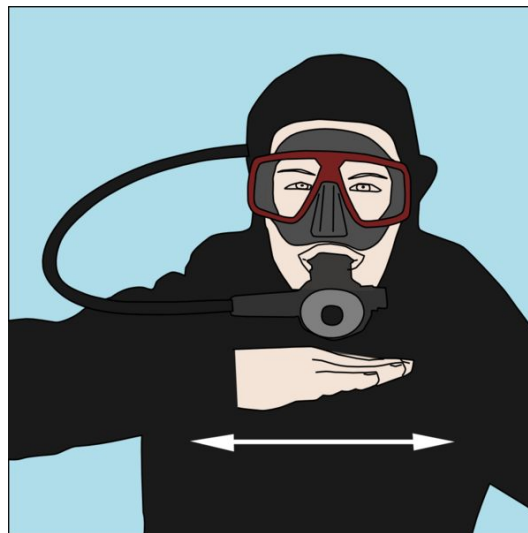
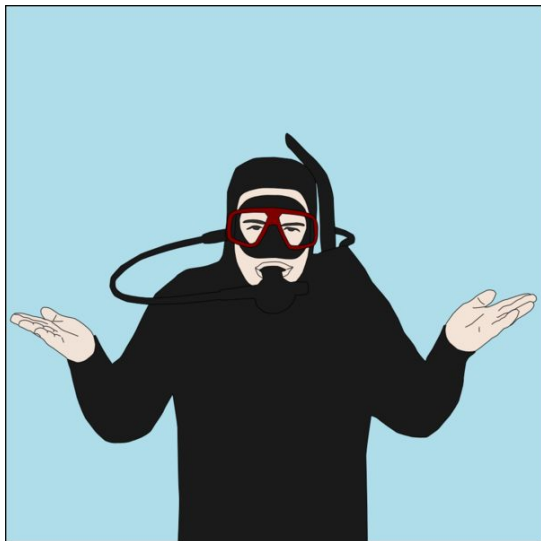
Understand the Board's Operating Model

- ⇒ Working or Policy-setting?
- ⇒ How is the board sustaining or guiding the org?
- ⇒ How does it function?

Pre-Commitment Checklist

- ⇒ **Read** the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws
- ⇒ Review any other artifacts like Conflict of Interest (CoI) Policies
- ⇒ Find out how often the board meets and the intervening obligations
- ⇒ Talk with at least two board members about what is expected and what their experience has been

Dive In!*



*Doesn't hurt to have a board buddy.

Bring what you've got that's special.

What may
distinguish
your
contribution?



Bring what you've got that's boring.

What **gaps** can you fill?

**Do the needful, it will be
deeply appreciated.**



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Don't Over-Commit



Overcommitment:

"To commit excessively:
such as; to obligate
(someone, such as
oneself) beyond the
ability for
fulfillment."

Merriam-Webster

Institutional Wisdom for Good not Evil

- Make it easy for others to learn by the board's mistakes, and its successes.
- Document well.
- Leave a legacy.



?s

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More info on Organizations in Deck

Open Source Initiative

www.opensource.org

Open Source Elections Technology (OSET)

www.osetfoundation.org

www.trustthevote.org

DemocracyLab

www.democracylab.org