

“Don’t Presume Board Members Volunteer”

The vast majority of Board members I have worked with over the years are talented, dedicated men and women. Community leaders keenly interested in supporting the mission of their chosen non-profit organization. However, they seldom volunteer! They tend to remain “standing ready” until asked specifically and individually to take-on meaningful tasks and assignments. As with potential major donors, they need to be asked! Personally, precisely and persuasively.

I often hear executives lament that their Board members “*check their brains at the door before a meeting*”; or, “*don’t give us much of their time or expertise*”; or, “*it’s just not a fundraising board!*” And, time and again I find that Board members would become more engaged if they were given meaningful tasks, with sufficient guidance, and welcomed support. If asked!

Some suggestions to assist your Board members become more engaged:

- Articulate clearly and in writing the Board’s roles and responsibilities with meaningful goals and expectations. And, periodically report on progress made toward meeting those goals and expectations.
- Meet at least once a year with each Board member to determine what he/she is most capable and willing to accomplish on behalf of the organization. And, confirm those understandings in writing with periodic follow-up to encourage their efforts.
- View and solicit Board members as potential donors. Don’t presume their generosity just because they are “*on the Board*”. As with any potential major donor they need to be persuaded by a compelling “*case*”, urgent funding priorities, and appropriate donor recognition.
- Provide for annual self-evaluations by Board members, as well as that of the Board as a whole.

How is Your Board Volunteering?