



Instructions for an Introductory Exercise in Board Assessment

Purpose

A board self-assessment can be an easy, fun and quick way to hone the board's attention and energy. Through an assessment, board members gain a common understanding and discover characteristics of powerful boards. The follow-up to the assessment then builds the unique culture and strengths of the current board. Doing an annual assessment keeps the board fresh, informed and focused.

Instructions

Step 1 - Identify a board assessment that is applicable to your board. Have each board member complete an assessment and tally the results. If you do not currently have an assessment that you use annually, we have provided a sample assessment in Step 1.

Step 2 - At the following board meeting, present the results of the assessment. Give each board member a copy of the results and the blank worksheet in Step 2. Take 10 minutes to have your board members complete the worksheet. After the meeting have someone compile the results.

Follow-Up

At the following board meeting, present the compiled answers to the board for reflection.

- Determine the top three areas to focus on improving in the coming year and prioritize.
- Determine the best steps to take to improve each of those areas.
- Decide on a follow-up group that will determine action recommendations and report back to the board every three months (e.g. Executive, Governance, or ad hoc committee).

This 10 Minute Board Exercise was made in collaboration with Diane Lang of Lang Leadership. Diane brings 30 years of experience as an attorney and nonprofit Executive Director to her current work consulting with nonprofit organizations and teaching nonprofit management and law at the University of Oregon. She can be reached at dianelang@comcast.net.



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minute
Board Exercises

Get your board talking about some very important issues

Example of a Board Assessment

Step 1 - Have each board member complete a board self-assessment form. If you already have an assessment that you prefer, use it instead of this example.

Board assessment completed on _____

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Questions for Invigorating Process	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
We have a successful group, we meet, we perpetuate ourselves.					
Board members prepare for board meetings and receive the agenda and materials ahead of time.					
Meetings are respectful of board members' time (<i>i.e. start and end on time</i>).					
Meetings are well-organized and follow an agenda.					
Meetings are board-led, and include board discussion and decisions that move the organization forward, <i>and not predominantly listening to staff or to oral reports</i> .					
Meeting process encourages the voice of all the board members, <i>not just a few</i> .					
Subgroups work on issues that are unwieldy for the whole board and bring recommendations back to the full board.					
Board members know and respect each other.					

Questions for Board Basics and Governance	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
We have good process and structure.					
We have a job description for board members and officers.					
We have annual board and committee goals.					
We annually survey our needs for skills, expertise, connections, demographics and recruit for the board accordingly.					
We annually evaluate the Executive Director/CEO.					
We regularly evaluate our finances.					
We have metrics for and regularly evaluate the success of our programs.					
We have metrics for and regularly evaluate the success of revenue-generating activities.					

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Questions for Ensuring Our Evolving Relevance in Today's World	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
We ensure the evolving relevance and highest function of our mission and organization.					
Board members seek the pulse of the community and understand they represent broader community and not just their own passions, interests and opinions.					
We have and we understand our business model.					
We have a strategic plan and a business plan.					
Board has an identified role in assuring the success of our strategic and business plans.					
Board is active in developing partnerships and connections that would accomplish the strategic and business plan.					
There are metrics to measure the board's accomplishments with the strategic plan.					
Board has or ensures an annual process for how our organization implements, evaluates, updates the strategic and business plan.					

Questions for Supporting and Sustaining	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
We support and sustain our programs and mission.					
Board members are active advocates and ambassadors within their unique circles.					
Board members identify and help make connections with groups to educate.					
Board members are active in donor stewardship, i.e. keeping donors feeling appreciated, feeling good about the organization and informed about mission and work.					
Board members participate in setting up and participating in ask meetings with major donors.					
Board members invite others to participate in events and the annual campaign.					
Board members annually identify potential supporters, help make connections and develop relationships.					
We have metrics to measure board participation in and success at raising friends and funds.					

Anything else that you think should be included in this assessment (accomplishments of the board, other areas of strength or weakness you think should be evaluated, etc.)? *Leave this area blank if you wish to remain anonymous.*



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A follow up worksheet for your

Board Assessment

Step 2 - After reviewing the results of your board assessment, fill out the below form. Your answers will be compiled for a discussion at the following board meeting.

Of the areas that received the lowest scores on your board assessment, what stands out for you as the **top three** items to focus on improving in the year ahead?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What would be a simple, concrete, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-limited) action step for each of the above three areas of focus?

1. *(from above)*
2. *(from above)*
3. *(from above)*

Of the areas with the highest scores, what are some ways to continue the momentum in the year ahead?

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-
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