Broken Engagement: Why Has Our Board Checked Out? How Do We Fix It?

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Agenda

- What Is Board Engagement?
- When Does It Break Down?
- Why Does It Break Down?
- How Can You Fix It?
- Situations When Boards Disengage
- Action Plan
Audience Poll

Tell us about your primary role:

- Non-profit CEO
- Board Chair
- Soon to be Board Chair
- Senior staff
- Board officer
- Consultant
The Engaged Board

Engagement

- Participates
- Connects
- Shows Up
- Reflects & Renews
The Engaged Board

Shows Up

- Board and committee meetings
- Events
- Funder meetings
- Community meetings
The Engaged Board

Actively Participates

- Personal contribution
- Healthy debate
- Leads board, committee or task force
- Enhances culture
The Engaged Board

- Recruits board members
- Identifies donors
- Asks for donations
- Connects
- Attracts other resources
- Advocates for mission
- Develops positive board relationships
The Engaged Board

Reflects and Renews

- Recruiting process
- Orientation
- Assessments
- Structure and design
- Retreats
- Exit Interview
Audience Poll

My board’s primary engagement challenge is:

- Showing Up
- Active Participation
- Connecting Resources
- Reflecting and Renewing
How to Enhance Engagement

**Shows Up**
- Meetings
- Expectations
- Recruiting Process

**Participates**
- Leadership
- Expectations
- Recruiting Process

**Connects**
- Expectations
- Training
- Recruiting Process

**Reflects & Renews**
- Expectations
- Accountability
- Recruiting Process

Engagement
Walk In Your Board’s Shoes
Is it exciting or scary?
Are you blazing new trails or stuck in the mud?
Can they stop and smell the roses or do they run from the stench?
Do the shoes fit?
My board’s overall operations can be described as:

- Highly functional
- Good, but could be stronger
- Neither good nor bad
- Showing signs of stress
- Highly dysfunctional
When Does It Break Down?

- Identify
- Cultivate
- Recruit
- Orient
- Involve
- Educate
- Evaluate
- Rotate

Celebrate!

Source: BoardSource
When Engagement Breaks Down

Before Their First Meeting

**Why**

- Small candidate pool
- Limited number of entry points
- Poor fit
- Lack of clarity about expectations
- Too many members
- Poor onboarding
- No process or poorly executed process
How to Enhance Engagement Before Their First Meeting

- Generate large pool of prospects
- Multiple entry points
- Screen thoroughly
- Rightsize
- Honesty about expectations
- Invest in orientation and training
- Have a process - Do not skip a step
When Engagement Breaks Down During Meetings

Why

Accountability & Behaviors
- Ineffective leadership–Chair and/or CEO
- Poor recognition
- Lack of team building
- Bad behavior/toxic culture

Content & Design
- Committees not functioning
- Boring and trivial
- Lack of balance
- Fiduciary vs. Generative
- Operations vs. Governance
- Reporting vs. Discussing
- Concentrated vs. Shared Leadership
Enhance Engagement During Meetings

How to

Accountability & Behaviors
- Shared and dynamic leadership
- Culture of inquiry
- Team building
- Individual recognition
- Model good behavior
- Have fun

Content & Design
- Committees functioning
- Dashboards
- Mission moment
- Educate vs. report
- Generative thinking
- Link to strategic plan
- Appropriate time allocations

Educate
Involve
When Engagement Breaks Down

After and Between Meetings

Why

- Lack of accountability
- Concentrated leadership
- Ineffective leadership—Chair and/or CEO
- Committees not functioning
- Lack of team building
- Poor recognition
- Bad behavior/toxic culture
How to Enhance Engagement

After and Between Meetings

- Actions tied to strategic plan
- Shared leadership
- High performing leadership
- Accountability
- Committees functioning
- Relationship building
- Individual recognition
- Model good behavior
- Have fun
Audience Poll

My Board’s engagement breaks down:

- Before the first meeting
- During the meetings
- After the meetings
- At every stage
Situations When Boards Disengage

- Leadership transitions
- Board Chair and/or CEO dysfunction
- Before and after major fundraising events
- Organizational transitions
- Resistance to change
- Financial crises
- Others?
Your To-Do List

- What have I done this week to engage my board?
- Evaluate engagement before, during and after meetings
- Develop strategies for specific situations
- What are the activities that will have an impact 3 months, 1 year, 3 year and 5 years from now?
- Checklist for an engaged board
Resources

BoardSource:

1. The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members
2. Meeting, and Exceeding Expectations: A Guide to Successful Nonprofit Board Meetings
3. Boardroom Chemistry – Getting Your Board to Govern As A Team
4. Recruiting a Stronger Board
5. Getting on Board with Effective Orientation

General:

1. Meetings Suck by Cameron Herold
2. Death By Meeting by Patrick Lencioni
Summary

- Keeping your board engaged is hard work
- It begins with the recruiting process
- Distribute accountability throughout the board
- Build it into the board’s culture, values and activities
Questions?
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