

Board Disorientation Manual

WELCOME TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This information has been compiled to help you assimilate into our organization. Basically don't worry about anything because everything is a staff responsibility. You won't be bothered with requirements of membership; term limits, or rules that other organizations have. We want you to feel like you've arrived. Enjoy yourself, see and be seen with important people! Impress your friends!

- Make certain that you always complain about something at each meeting. Even if the subject is minor, make it into something major. This way other board members will be impressed with your knowledge of the organization -- chiefly because they have no knowledge and your loud concerned tone will make it seem like you know everything.

- It is critical to the board staff relationship to keep the director on edge. Make certain that the executive director knows that you think you could do his/her job better than he/she does. Ask her/him in public meetings who he/she reports to and who can fire him/her. Bonus points are available for suggesting that your wife's uncle's cousin wants to help out in the administrative part. You will be especially grateful since this wonderful person just finished his G.E.D. in prison and needs a job as a condition of parole.

- Give advice freely; its one of the reasons you were chosen for this board. It isn't necessary to provide any actual assistance -- the advice is enough. Bonus points are available for suggesting that the above-mentioned relative would be an excellent resource to the CEO.

- Always complain about not receiving information from the organization. Imply that you were overlooked because of a conspiracy or inefficiency on the part of staff. Bonus points for implying both!

- Avoid calling the organization's office to ask for help on an agency project. Wait until you can complain in an open meeting about not being informed or helped.

- Feel free to make "pop in " visits to the office. Staff is responsible for providing 24-hour hospitality for board members.

- Plan a trip somewhere and find a reason why the organization should pay for it. Even if you feel a little guilty it is important to make them think they owe you something.

- Attend board meetings infrequently and don't worry about keeping up with information. After all you shouldn't have to waste your time reading the minutes... that's a staff responsibility.

- "I've got a call in to..." is an acceptable committee report. You don't have to call other board members about anything -- that is clearly a staff responsibility

- Committee work is an important part of board work. The novice may think he/she actually will have work in this area but with proper timing it just isn't so. Keep using the "I've got a call in to..." as you report until everyone gets irritated and blames the executive director. After all it is belittling to have to call another board member. The director should have anticipated this and done something about it.

- And speaking of committee work, always suggest that someone else (God knows you aren't that stupid) should call the airlines to get tickets donated for your speaker and special guests for an event.

- Invite all of your friends to be on the board so you can have an excuse to meet frequently. Also try to get local celebrities on the board (regardless of their appropriateness to the organization) because it increases your stature. The important thing to remember is that whatever increases your stature in the community helps the organization!

- If you want an easy officer role on the board be the "secretary" because everyone knows that taking minutes is really a staff responsibility. An additional bonus of this job is that it puts you on the executive committee, which will really impress your friends.

- It isn't your responsibility to help assimilate the g-r-o-w-l-n-g number of clueless board members you have brought to the board... that is a staff responsibility.

- In the end remember what a valuable service you are giving to the organization: your "name" with no money; your "advice" with no help; and your willingness to serve on the board (providing there is no actual work). Therefore relax and enjoy things. You've earned it!

- We forgot to mention "fundraising". Forget it, you are too important to us without that and besides, that is why we hired a C.E.O. / Executive Director.

- We also forgot to mention one other important item. For those of you who are retired and miss having a secretary to jump every time you bellow -- feel free to use the office staff.

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