



BOARD BRIEF: Creating a Superstar Board

Board Briefs are "at-a-glance" resources that help board volunteers better support their Boys & Girls Club. They are designed to occur as five-minute education opportunities at board meetings.

SUMMARY

All boards are charged with the same three responsibilities: Governance (policies, regulations, practices); Ensuring Resources (manage finances, raise money, secure physical needs); and Set Strategic Direction (planning and policy). Excelling boards employ a laser-like focus on these responsibilities above all other distractions to ensure informed, timely leadership for the organization and its mission. In addition, superb boards also implement other key processes, which are outline here for duplication at your Boys & Girls Club.

BUILDING A SUPERSTAR BOARD

Board Infrastructure Matters

Traditional boards employ standard committees expected for basic functioning. Superstar boards, however, develop infrastructure based on the organizational priorities. They design their infrastructure based on the following principles:

- Use of Committees and Task Forces – Long-term tasks are assigned committees, such as Audit or Planned Giving Committees. Short-term functions – those that only last 1-3 months – are assigned task forces. This addresses the common board complaint that things drag on and time is wasted. These sub-groups ensure a strategic focus for more efficient board work.
- Effective Use of Talents *and* Interests – A CPA doesn't have to be the Treasurer! Superb boards use multiple talents and assemble committees/task forces strategically. They match talent to organizational needs, and balance talent across committees and task forces.

Culture of Accountability

Board members must do what they say they will. Effective boards understand this accountability standard is not negotiable. A culture of accountability is fostered by: clearly defining success, roles and responsibilities; implementing systems to measure progress and using them; reporting on milestone achievements; and enacting consequences for failing to meet expectations or goals.

Board Development

Most boards believe they could use more members, with hope that more members lead more money and more kids served. But effective boards are very selective about expanding and have well-defined processes to strategically develop their leadership. Best practices follow.

- Board Recruitment: Clear, detailed expectations of service are shared with candidates.

Adequate time for recruitment is budgeted. The process is more comprehensive than for a new donation due to the level of commitment and ultimate impact on the Club.

- Candidate Screening and On-boarding: Many boards simply expect new members to have interest in serving Excelling boards, however, have a list of board needs to fill and then match them to interested candidates to ensure that the strategic direction is maintained.
- Board Evaluation: In addition to maintaining a culture of accountability, superstar boards have systems in place to measure board performance. These tools measure whatever is important to that organization, such as attending meetings, making contributions, raising funds, recruiting donors, solicitation meetings or attending programs.

Standard for Processing Issues

Important developments (A.K.A. issues) arise suddenly for all boards. How boards respond to such issues is often what sets them apart. Superstar boards are disciplined, stay strategic and refrain from getting tactical. Boards should expect Club professionals to do the necessary research to provide options for the board to consider. Effective boards trust their CEOs to perform due diligence and provide strong, sound arguments. In addition, they:

- Ask Strategic Questions: Look at the big picture, long-term impact, and evaluate items comprehensively. Evaluate risk, remain mission-driven, and make sound business decisions based on good judgment not personal bias, agendas or fear.
- Foster Open Dialogue: Every member has a voice; every issue is processed fairly. The environment promotes respect and encourages questions and debate on issues.

Other Superstar Board Practices

Superstar boards have practices in place to ensure continued effectiveness. Some of these best practices include:

- Routine review of financial statements to measure fiscal health and strength.
- Transparency in reporting and measurement to ensure upcoming issues are apparent.
- A standing mandate of “No Surprises,” both from staff to the board, and the board with the CEO. This practice helps board avoid budget shortfalls and loss of reputation, and provides time for planning with legal issues, major injuries, etc.
- Regular recognition of individual and board accomplishments as well as celebrations of birthdays, anniversaries, etc. helps maintain energy and camaraderie.
- Full board reviews of impact reports to ensure every board member has knowledge and understanding of how the Club is achieving its mission. The report should be a combination of attendance metrics, outcome metrics, success stories, and program summaries. Such reviews provide great stories for the board to share with the community.
- Oversight of a budget process that builds reserves and plans for growth.