



**BOARD
MEMBER
ARTICLE**

ASK OUR CONSULTANTS: BOARD MEMBER RECRUITMENT

Berit M. Lakey, Ph.D., BoardSource Senior Governance Consultant

How involved should the chief executive be in recruiting board members?

Whether board members of a nonprofit organization are elected by the organization's members or by the board, or even whether they are appointed by another authority, the chief executive has a role to play. What kind of a role and how extensive a role are questions that the board needs to explore.

I see four related roles for chief executives in the recruitment process: identification of potential board members, recommendation of potential board members, participation in interviews with potential candidates, and raising cautionary flags, if necessary, related to possible nominees. Let me also suggest roles that are not appropriate: appointing or handpicking members of the board (except during the founding stage when the first board is being assembled).

Identification: Because chief executives serve as key ambassadors for their organizations, they develop extensive networks of people and organizations that share similar values. These networks can be invaluable in identifying potential board members. Nominating bodies should be asking chief executives to be on the look-out for individuals with the qualifications and attributes needed by the board.

Recommendation: When a chief executive knows of someone who exemplifies what the board needs, the chief executive should make a recommendation to the nominating body outlining what the person would bring to the table, but also stating how he or she knows the potential nominee. The nominating body can then decide how to proceed.

Participation in interviews: At times, it might be useful for the chief executive to participate with others in interviews with potential board members, but it should be as a supporting actor providing information about the organization. No potential board member should be given the impression that the chief executive is the one who decides who sits on the board or that the chief executive is recruiting supporters for his or her management approach.

Raising cautionary flags: If the chief executive is aware of someone being recommended as a possible nominee who would potentially bring negative publicity or serve

as a negative influence on the board, the chief executive must make the nominating body aware of the need for extra caution during the vetting process prior to formal nomination.

Inappropriate roles for the chief executive: To safeguard the organization's reputation for integrity and accountability, it is crucial to avoid even the impression that the chief executive exerts undue influence on the election or appointment of board members. The chief executive should therefore not even recommend for possible nomination individuals with whom he or she has a personal, business, or family relationship. And boards or other nominating/appointing authorities should ensure that they do their own due diligence resulting in a board full of capable and independent-minded individuals committed to the organization's mission.

After board elections, the chief executive is usually an important participant in the orientation of new board members, who need to know about the organization's programs and services as well as to be introduced to its facilities and key staff.

Resource

The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members

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