One Voice and Communication by the Board

Remember the game of whispering a message down a line of people? Inevitably the original message morphed into something different or wrong by the time it reached the final person. Post-board meeting reports often experience similar communication confusion.

The directors are expected to communicate key meeting results to others outside the board room. While meeting minutes summarize the actions of the board, they can be lengthy and are often distributed weeks later. In the mean time, members will ask what was decided, and each director will pass on selected pieces of information from his/her point of view and in their own words.

 Ideally when the board adjourns, there should be agreement and understanding about key messages that should be communicated. Other issues and announcements may be communicated at a later date by the chief elected officer.

ONE VOICE
One way to ensure consistent, clear messages is to create a meeting recap upon which directors can rely.

"Because the board is a single entity, the post-meeting messages should be viewed as one, not as varied opinions by individual directors."

As the meeting is ready to adjourn, or immediately following, agree upon the key messages to communicate outside the board room. Create a recap and give it a document name such as “One Voice.” Urge directors to rely on the recap to accurately communicate results. (The same document can be used to distribute to allied organizations, donors and other interested stakeholders.)

This reinforces that the official spokesperson of the organization is the chief elected officer (a.k.a. president or chair of the board). While he or she can delegate authority to the directors and/or staff to handle communication, directors should not assume they have authority to report information and should respect the confidentiality of board discussions and documents.

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