

TEN ATTRIBUTES OF GREAT NONPROFIT BOARDS

A Great Organization Almost Always Has a Great Board.
And a Great Board Scores High on These Attributes ...

1. **Adopt a philosophy of governance** so that the board and CEO do not compete. Rather they serve separate, complementary roles and function as partners in a trust relationship.
2. **Embrace a clear, relevant and timely purpose/mission** along with the values, strategies and monitoring activities to accomplish specific goals.
3. **Select a board-oriented CEO who is equipped** to advance the mission within board established policy parameters. Then the board governs in ways that support, compensate fairly, evaluate and, if necessary, terminate the CEO, always keeping the best interests of the organization in mind.
4. **Elect a chair** who is able and willing to manage the board and to maintain the integrity of the structure and process that the whole board has determined is best, leaving management to the CEO.
5. **Define specific criteria for new members**, then select, orient, train, evaluate, and reward board service for those who give their time, talent, and treasure.
6. **Welcome CEO/staff input in formulating policies** that the board adopts and documents in an organized, written Board Policies Manual (BPM) of 15-20 pages, which is constantly improved as the board learns and adjusts to changing internal and external factors.
7. **Organize itself into committees** that speak *to* the board, not *for* the board and that do board-related work rather than supervise or advise staff on their work.
8. **Insist on great meetings**, which include good staff material in advance, time for social interaction and learning, agendas that are focused on improving the BPM. Oral reports are limited to allow at least half the meeting time for board dialogue.
9. **Is accountable** through legal, financial, and program audits; observance of the law; avoidance of conflicts of interest; assessment of results; self-evaluation of the board as a whole and of individual board members; and appropriate transparency in dealing with its stakeholders.
10. **Pursue excellence** by keeping board members forward-looking and focused on outcomes/results, on disciplining themselves, and on effectual change so that they recognize, appreciate, and enjoy the process of governance.