

Governance is a Shared Energy

Supercharged Boards are built on trust! The trust between the Board Chair/Board with the organization's Leader is essential to impactful governance. Boards who have an open, honest and trusting relationship with the CEO/ED foster a healthy and purposeful organization. The CEO must be a genuine partner in the work of the Board. Board members must trust the CEO to competently manage day-to-day operations, hire and supervise staff, and make solid operational decisions.

A strong and healthy Board/CEO partnership provides flexible and resilient leadership. A weak or dysfunctional team will impede effectiveness and puts the organization at risk in many ways - lack of strategic direction, executive/staff turnover, and a toxic organizational culture.

Healthy Energy = Teamwork

Teamwork – makes the dream work – or so goes the saying. An organization's Board and CEO working in unison requires a unique kind of teamwork. The Board's duties center on its monitoring role. The CEO is responsible for making things happen. Both sides need each other's support – and availability – without veering off to micromanagement or control. Use these simple and effective tactics to help create unity and collaboration:

- 1. *Be Attentive to People Skills:*** Whether you are recruiting or working with a new Board member or a CEO, identify the attributes and skills this individual has:

Open-Minded	Patience	Sense of Humor
Flexible	Unselfish	Persistent and Diligent
Diplomatic	Honest	Empathic
Trustworthy	Respectful	Goal-oriented
Good Communicator	Excellent Listener	Works well with people
Compromise	Conflict Resolution	Consensus Builder

- 2. *Help Your Board, CEO and Leadership Team Get to Know Each Other*** Having fun together is one of the most productive things you can do. Fun builds trust, promotes teamwork and creates loyalty and a greater desire on everyone's part to be a team

3. Develop a Shared Purpose One way to get the Board, the CEO and the staff to collaborate and work as a team is to develop a joint purpose statement for the organization's leadership. An example might be: *"The leadership of our organization is committed to ensure the long term sustainability of the organization to provide impactful services by focusing on sustainable funding and by enhancing public recognition. This requires all leadership to strategically position the organization to best fulfill the mission of this organization."* The act of working together to create a shared purpose is in itself the first act of collaboration and relationship building.

4. Determine Worthy Goals

The highest performing organizations focus on worthy goals. Effective leadership working collaboratively should spend 80 percent of their time on the 20 percent of the tasks that are most bearing on the organization's success. The best way to determine what these tasks are is to ASK: What is the most important issue we will have to address in the next 12 to 18 months? If multiple responses emerge, have the members vote. This develops buy in just by the action of voting!

5. Regular check-ins between the CEO and the Board Chair. If there is open and consistent communication, surface issues can be discussed and solved before they become massive challenges

6. A "no surprise" commitment. If trust and open communication exist, there is **NO** reason not to share issues and together determine the best possible solution.

7. Thoughtful reflection on performance. A vital responsibility of the Board is to annually evaluate the CEO's performance and provide honest feedback on successes and opportunities for improvement. Equally important, is that the Board assess its own performance.

Healthy relationships don't just happen. It takes time and energy on the part of all involved. Creating an understood balance of responsibilities and engaging everyone in working together holding each other answerable will develop a culture of accountability increasing the organization's functionality.

Primary Responsibilities of the Board

Anyone working at a nonprofit may find themselves asking what his or her role is in relation to the Board. The partnership between the Board-CEO/Staff can be tricky to navigate at times. It is critical that everyone understand each other's roles and responsibilities.

The Board refers to the group, not to individual board members. The Board functions as a team. Individual board members have no inherent authority – or individual rights – over the organization but each must assume accountability – for their own actions. The full Board has three main responsibilities:

- **Direction:** The Board guards the organization's mission and steers it in the right direction.
- **Oversight:** The Board monitors the activities, health and ethical behaviors of the organization.
- **Resources:** The Board ensures the organization has ample resources, capable staff and an esteemed reputation.

In the beginning of a nonprofit's life, it is common for board members to wear different hats and function in a staff capacity. As the organization grows and when the Board hires its first CEO, the Board delegates the daily leadership to that person. The CEO reports to the Board and any staff who are subsequently hired report to the CEO.

Primary Responsibilities of the Board Chair

The relationship of the Board Chair with the CEO may be the most critical element of a healthy nonprofit. The Chair of the Board holds the key to creating a culture of communication, intent and accountability. Some of the main relationship building responsibilities of the Chair include:

Serve as a mentor and advisor

Ask tough questions

Act as the leading light when necessary

Embrace an attitude of collaboration

Display a deep mission commitment

Support the CEO

Build leadership team relationships

Communicate and facilitate

Primary Responsibilities of the CEO

The CEO is responsible for maintaining honest, open communication with the Board primarily the Board Chair. It is the CEO's responsibility to keep the Board informed on issues and activities of the organization's daily existence. If this communication is not flowing, the Board will be challenged to make well-rounded thoughtful decisions. Some of the main responsibilities of the CEO include:

Informally builds relationships with Board members

Proactively seeks Board input

Provides exposure to the leadership team

Recognizes and employs the skillset of individual Board members

For more clearly defined roles between the Board and the CEO download MP Consulting's free resource ***Board Chair & CEO Partnership***. Please feel free to contact me for an introductory call if you would like to discuss your organization.