



November 9, 2018

The Top 5 Strategies for Building Strong Nonprofit Board Communications

Written by Nick Price

Communication is supposed to work both ways, but it doesn't always quite work out. Perhaps most people take communication for granted or maybe they just don't realize how much really goes into to it for it to be successful. It's vitally important for nonprofit board members to communicate well with each other because there's a lot at stake for the members, donors and the community.

In thinking about how to build strong nonprofit board communications, it helps to think about communications from a relationship standpoint. Think about the qualities that you appreciate in people who are naturally good communicators. You'd probably describe them as being honest, trustworthy, ethical and **open**. They're people who invest in others and take time to **listen**. They're quick to offer encouragement and make it a practice to express their appreciation. These are the qualities that help people develop strong and lasting relationships.

Continue reading to find five specific strategies for building strong nonprofit board communications.

1. Be an Active Listener

The difference between listening and active listening is that with active listening, you actually hear and understand what the other person is saying. You won't hear what you think they're saying or what you want to hear.

To partake in active listening, cast out from your mind all other thoughts and focus only on what the other person is saying. It's not easy, but you can do it if you work on it and you'll get better at it the more you practice it in your relationships. Be careful not to prejudge or be too quick to interject, especially if you're interjecting with an opinion of your own. Also, listen to what the other person isn't saying. Lengthy silent pauses or skirting around things might be an indication that you need to ask a few questions to get some genuine conversation going.

When you show genuine interest in what someone else is saying, you're sending a message that their opinions matter. It elevates their self-worth and makes them feel appreciated.

Your active listening skills demonstrate that you're putting them first in that moment. Active listening will go a long way toward motivating your fellow board members to become more active and engaged in the organization.

2. Make It a Two-Way Conversation

Active listening is more of a two-way conversation than you might think. It's just that you're being far more selective about what you say, how you say it and when to chime in on the conversation.

Look for cues on how and when to respond. If they're feeling down and seeking support, gently lift them up

using kind words. Seek out any possible misunderstandings in the conversation and ask a few pointed questions for clarification. Try to restate what they're trying to say or summarize it to see if you're getting it right. Use probing questions to get to the heart of the matter.

Make sure your body language communicates active listening. Before you end the conversation, be sure to express your appreciation for the honest dialogue.

3. Work on Creating a Culture of Trust

Good communication between board members starts before the board member appointment is final. One of the first mistakes boards make is to gloss over the duties and expectations for the board member. It's best to be upfront about what the board expects so that the new member doesn't feel misled and lose trust right out of the gate. Most boards expect directors to make personal donations, participate in fundraising, and use their personal and professional networks to advance the organization's mission. Board members should know this upfront.

There are many different modes of communication. Take the opportunity for face-to-face communication whenever possible. Be aware of physical and psychological differences.

Build trust by being as helpful as possible, especially when communicating with newer board directors. Relationships take time to build. Every organization has their own ways of doing things. Help new members learn the ropes and **give them helpful insights** about the organization and its people along the way.

Lack of communication makes people feel left out. Keep newcomers updated on plans, progress and future events. Use all means to send out communications including email, phone and newsletters.

Also, take note that quantity of communication isn't the same as quality of conversation. Don't be the person who talks for hours and never says a thing.

4. Work on Improving Relationships

Relationships develop over time through mutual experiences gathered through spending time together. Make an effort to share good times. Create opportunities for activities or get-togethers outside the boardroom. Schedule a board retreat or plan a day to do some teambuilding exercises.

Attend board development events in groups and share your insights. Follow through on your own board duties so they don't negatively impact anyone else.

If you think you may have rubbed someone the wrong way, don't shove it under the rug. Talk about it. Poor communication will diminish your credibility and undermine your relationships.

If you have a problem with someone, your last interaction may be a result of bad timing. It's best to air the situation so you both can move forward.

5. Assure Board Directors That Communications Are Confidential and Secure

Much of the board's work is confidential. Keeping confidences builds trust. Boards need a safe, secure way to communicate so that sensitive information remains private. A [board portal](#) is the best solution for secure board communication and collaboration. Boards can use the portal to review the agenda and all related reports. Agenda building is so simple with [BoardEffect](#) that it's far easier to get board books out in plenty of time for review and get important questions answered before the meeting begins. Notification tools remind directors to complete tasks. Boards can also share articles and insights online in between meetings. BoardEffect also offers survey tools for board self-evaluations and other helpful questionnaires.

Board portals are intuitive, user-friendly and mobile-friendly, which allows board members to communicate securely online from any setting.

The Wrap-Up on Building Stronger Nonprofit Board Communications

Remember that communication is strongly tied to relationship-building. Building better relationships and improving communications is a work in progress. If your board lacks good dynamics and they're failing to work together well, consider that they may need to brush up on their basic communication skills. Good communication helps fuel passion for the cause. When board directors enjoy their role and feel supported, getting them engaged is a snap.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

See how BoardEffect can streamline governance and increase efficiency across each cycle of board activity.

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

Most Popular Posts

Board Report Template and Outline

Even if you've never written a board report before, it's easy enough to learn how...

Board Governance Policy Template

Good governance encompasses an array of issues. When corporate and organizational issues are going well,...

What Are the Best Practices for Nonprofits?

A lot of people are surprised by how much work goes into a nonprofit organization....



« [Consent Agenda for a Nonprofit Board](#)

[How Ex-Officio Board Members Can Impact Board Decisions for Your Nonprofit](#) »

[PHP Code Snippets](#) Powered By : [XYZScripts.com](#)