2. Talent to Task

The Right People

Choosing new directors

A board is a special type of leadership team and the board's composition affects its ability to lead the organisation. In fact some experts believe that board composition is the most important factor affecting whether or not a board will be able to carry out its functions effectively.

In the nonprofit sector, board membership is voluntary so getting the right people for the job is even more difficult. It has been found that board members themselves are more likely to view their board as effective if it has the right capabilities – i.e. a broad range of skills beyond finance and accounting. These include —

- understanding of nonprofit management;
- understanding of the organisation's area of operations and client or membership base;
- knowledge of the mission and strategic plan;
- possession of contacts that are potentially valuable to the organisation.

A recent US study has shown that organisations reporting greater difficulty in recruiting new board members are also more likely to be organisations with a lower performance rating.

It is critical that every nonprofit board has effective selection processes and succession plans to attract, recruit and retain the best board or committee members. The recruitment process should be transparent and accountable to members and other stakeholders.

Effective boards are aware of the need to groom members for leadership through a process of planned succession and board member development.

Board recruitment and succession planning

Top Managers

Another key role for the board is choosing and replacing the chief executive or top manager. Therefore the board must also think about Chief Executive succession.

In doing that, the board must ensure a good working relationship can be maintained with the chief executive/top managers, since this relationship is critical to the board's understanding of how the organisation is operating and its ability to carry out its monitoring or control role effectively.
External Weblinks and other Resources

- **Removing a board member is sometimes necessary** – this article from Blue Avocado (U.S.) gives some advice on how to do it.


- NCVO’s advice on **Planning Board Succession** - NCVO is a UK organisation supporting the nonprofit sector. See also their **Induction and Recruitment information**. Note that in these pages, the word “trustee” (of a charity) is used instead of director or board/committee member.


- Lukas Neville, Elspeth J Murray (2008) ‘Succession, strategy, culture, and change at Santropol Roulant’, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* Vol. 19(1), p.107-121 – this is a teaching case study, aimed to develop understanding of key issues in succession planning, and managing transitions and organisational change


- **Managing the Chief Executive's Departure**, excerpt from the book *Chief Executive Transitions* - available from BoardSource (U.S.).