

RECRUITING BOARD MEMBERS BY BRUCE DINGMAN

Posted Oct 5, 2018

[SHARE](#)



RECRUITING BOARD MEMBERS: NOT REALLY THAT HARD

The Predicament & The Solution

It's the annual board meeting when either due to someone retiring from the board or term-limiting off that the board members are scratching their heads for they have no one in mind to replace the existing board member. There are several things to do. First, do an inventory of the giftedness that might be lacking on the board, i.e., diversity, legal, advancement, pastoral, etc. Then specifically recruit to fill in any such "holes."

Secondly create a document that describes the organization and its mission, why one would want to be attracted to it and what the expectations are of board members (address the three "T's" of Time, Treasure and Talent), and citing the gifts that in particular would bring value. This marketing piece should have a quality appearance and can be sent to prospective board members to ask if they know someone who might be right. If already knowing someone fairly well feel free to ask them if they might be interested but if not knowing them that well contact them asking if they know someone. It can be rather delicate to ask someone to consider being on a board then quickly turn them down, so some significant tact and diplomacy is needed.

The "Willy Sutton Syndrome"

So, where do we find such a person? As the story goes Willy Sutton was asked why he robbed banks and his reply was, "Well, that's where the money is." So, where might this person be? Identify first why someone would feel called to the mission. For example, I serve on the board of a "Business as Mission" organization operating in other countries and knew an international president of a large U.S. conglomerate who was retiring and invited him to meet with our president and after that to sit in on a board meeting. For another mission board I knew a ministry executive whose wife had recently become an attorney, had lived abroad but now lived within a few hours drive of the organization's headquarters. She joined the board and brought several strengths with her.

A Secondary Board

Seldom done for it takes work and years to accomplish is the creation of a secondary board but it can serve several useful purposes. This is for people who want to be closer than just being a donor. At one board meeting each year add an extra day with a special presentation with people from the field and invite the members of the secondary board to join with the board for this annual update. The secondary board is a place for getting to know people who might become board members as well as a place for board members rotating off to still be involved. The secondary board is in a major way a "nursery" for preparing future board members. Include spouses on that board, too. Such a secondary board could grow to 50-200+ members.

A Healthy Process

A good process for selecting a new board member should first include sending them information about the organization and the board responsibilities, plus a listing of the current board members and their bios. Sometimes the next step is meeting with them or sometimes it's getting information from them (a resume, having them answer a questionnaire that spans why they are interested, the gifting they'd bring to the role,

and so forth). If all is looking good then some sensitive reference checking may be next or that could come later. And finally inviting them to sit in on a board meeting for an "in close" getting acquainted session. And the last two steps, a caucus of the board members of their interest in inviting that person to be on the board and then asking the person about their continued interest.

Remember, that the demise of many ministries that started out well was their evolution into having ineffective boards, and likewise the reverse. Ministries that grew and became major positive forces for advancing the Kingdom did so because they had effective boards.

####

[Bruce Dingman](#), president of [The Dingman Co.](#), does executive searches for Christian organizations plus serves on the boards of CrossWorld, Agora Enterprises and Open Doors. He can be reached at bruce@dingman.com