**The Board/Staff Partnership Exercises and Handouts**

These exercises and handouts can be used by the Chief Executive and Board to create a constructive partnership. Most of these exercises were designed for the Chief Executive and the Board Chair, but some of the handouts could be shared with the full board.

**Board/Staff Roles Worksheet**

On the chart on the next page, please indicate with the appropriate letter where your board is now and where it should be:

1. Board initiates and decides on its own (chief executive may implement).
2. Chief executive formally recommends and board decides.
3. Chief executive decides and/or acts after consultation with board members during or outside of normal board or committee meetings.
4. Chief executive and/or staff act on their own within approved guidelines.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Issues and Tasks** | **Is Now** | **Should Be** |
| Mission statement for organization |  |  |
| Formal annual goals and objectives |  |  |
| Recruitment of new board members |  |  |
| Board and committee structure |  |  |
| Policies regarding board role and activities |  |  |
| Hiring and salaries of staff other than CEO |  |  |
| Changes in bylaws to keep current |  |  |
| Annual income and expense budget |  |  |
| Budget amendments as required |  |  |
| Capital expenditures |  |  |
| Staff compensation policies |  |  |
| Other personnel policies and practices |  |  |
| Investment policies |  |  |
| Arrangements for external audit |  |  |
| Fundraising plan and policies |  |  |
| Adoption of new programs or services |  |  |
| Termination of current programs or services |  |  |
| Staff organizational structure |  |  |
| Organization’s insurance program |  |  |
| Board meeting agendas |  |  |
| Other |  |  |

###### **Board and CEO Sources of Conflict Exercise**

###### 1. What are some examples of the potential sources of conflict between the Board and the Chief Executive?

###### 2. What steps can be taken to avoid or manage these sources of conflict?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Source of Conflict** | **Examples of this source of conflict** | **Steps to avoid or resolve this type of conflict** |
| Poor data/info/  communication |  |  |
| Varied working styles/personalities |  |  |
| Unclear expectations |  |  |
| Different values or priorities |  |  |
| Change or transitions in the leadership or organizational direction |  |  |

**Board/Chief Executive Communications Exercise**

In your groups, please discuss the following questions relative to the board chair-chief executive relationship (You will visit each question station).

1. When/how does communication most often fail?
2. When/how is communication most often effective?
3. What might be helpful for the other party to know in order to promote effective communication?

# WORKSHEET: Leadership Team Questionnaire

Please spend a few minutes completing this questionnaire and then share your responses with your leadership teammate. By completing the statements below and sharing them with your teammate you will take steps toward developing or strengthening an effective leadership team for your organization. The more up-front and clear you can be, the more likely it will be that your leadership experience will be something you enjoy and appreciate.

1. I think we need to check in with each other

Several times a month \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Once a week \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

More than once a week \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Whenever one of us has a question/information to share \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. My order of preference for our communications is:

Face-to-face meetings \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What I value in a working relationship is:
2. Something that generally bothers me in a working relationship is:
3. Something that I find challenging in my position at this point is:
4. What you could do that would be most helpful to me in fulfilling my role is:
5. What I can offer as a contribution to our working relationship is:
6. In my opinion, other important elements to building a positive working relationship are:

**Board Chair/Chief Executive Exercise**

Please take a minute to answer the question below and share your thoughts with your small group:

* What tools or approaches do your board chair and chief executive use to build a strong relationship?

**Hypotheticals: Board/Staff Constructive Partnership, What If…?**

For each of the following scenarios: What are the major issues. What should the chief executive, the board chair or other board members do?

### **What If...Number 1:**

“The meetings are torture,” says the nonprofit’s chief executive, who asked that her name not be revealed. “We just sit around the table, holding our breath until she stops.” No one, other than the chair, does much talking in these meetings. Whenever others timidly raise their voices, the chair dismisses them with a curt comment. But there’s a lot of chatter in the parking lot. Moments after the meeting adjourns, board members are out the door and on their cell phones. They hurriedly compare notes. The chief executive huddles with sympathetic board members to determine how they can regain control from the troublesome chair.

### **What If...Number 2:**

“Some board members just have trouble connecting,” the chief executive says. Since many of his board members are chosen for their expertise in areas other than art, he believes conflicts arise when they stray from their comfort zones. “These are proud people who have been successful in life,” Steiner says. “If they don’t know about art, they get defensive and exhibit the kind of behavior you might call troublesome.”

### **What If...Number 3:**

Brenda, the chief executive of Kids Dream Big, was at the end of her rope. Just this morning, her HR manager had received an e-mail from Ned, a long-time board member, containing probing questions regarding the recent firing of the organization’s marketing coordinator. Brenda planned to call Ned as soon as she calmed down. This wasn’t the first time Ned had gone to a staff member with questions about the organization, which offered programs to help children develop their musical and artistic talents. Ned telephoned, sent e-mails, and dropped into staff offices when he was on-site for board meetings. Once he even cornered the director of development at the grocery store and grilled her about mailing lists! Brenda was always surprised when he contacted staff because she was diligent in following up with him and other board members when they asked questions, whether about program participation rates and student satisfaction scores or even about instructors and program schedules.

**Assessment of the Chief Executive**

***Guidelines for an assessment of the chief executive:***

• Do it.

• Do itin a constructive way.

• Make it a regular exercise.

***Areas for assessment may include:***

• Organizational goals

• Administration and budget

• Program activities

• The chief executive’s relationship with the board, funders, government agencies, and the community

• The relationship with staff

• Other areas appropriate for particular organizations

***Issues that shape the process:***

• Who has the principal responsibility: the executive committee, board chair, personnel committee, or full board?

• How is agreement with the board on the criteria for the evaluation to be reached?

• What is the time frame for the evaluation?

• Will staff, community, or clients be involved?

• How will the chief executive provide input for the evaluation?

• How will the evaluation be shared with the chief executive?

• Does the chief executive have an opportunity to respond to the evaluation?

• How will the outcome of the evaluation process be shared with the full board?

• Will the process be formal or informal?

Adapted from Nason, John W., *Board Assessment of the Chief Executive. A Responsibility Essential to Good Governance*.

**Action Planning Exercise**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Ways you have ensured this characteristic is part of the board/staff partnership | Improvements to ensure this characteristic is part of the board/staff partnership |
| 1. Shared understanding of the mission and vision |  |  |
| 2. Clear roles and responsibilities |  |  |
| 3. Open and honest communication |  |  |
| 4. Mutual respect |  |  |
| 5. Two-way evaluation |  |  |