

Recruiting the Right Board Members or Why Boards Fail

Adapted from *Developing Dynamic Boards* by Dr. James Hardy

1. The wrong criteria were used in selecting people to serve.

Board members should not be selected simply because they are nice, friendly people. Neither should they be selected purely on the basis of personal friendships. On the contrary, board members should be selected because they have the diverse attributes, abilities, and skills that the agency needs to move forward. You must also include the community's "movers and shakers," to provide the highest possible credibility for your ministry.

2. The inability or reluctance of board members to utilize their talents while serving on the board.

The reasons are multiple:

- members have not been given responsibility or it is ill defined
- meetings are dull and unproductive
- the board chair and the chief executive have already decided on major policies and plans
- inadequate orientation, on-going training, and evaluation.
- the list of possibilities could go on ad infinitum. Regardless of the reasons, a national study of corporate executives who serve on nonprofit boards shows that nearly 50% feel underutilized.

3. There are large omissions--they leave undone those things that boards should do.

The job of the board is to govern:

- ensure legal and ethical integrity, and maintain accountability
- provide meeting structure and a schedule by which day-to-day committee responsibilities are taken care of outside the boardroom.
- employ, support and evaluate the chief executive officer (affiliate executive director)
- enhance the organization's public standing
- ensure that adequate resources are available for implementing plans and policies
- determine, monitor, and strengthen the organization's policies, programs, and long-range plans

All too many boards meetings do not focus on the board's critical jobs, but become dysfunctionally involved in day-to-day operations that they should be dealing with at committee meetings rather than board meetings.