

10 Signs of a Good Non Profit Board Member And a Few Indicators of Bad Ones

These are keen observations based, sadly, on real experiences.

A Good Board Member:

Attends most meetings, not just big issue meetings - This indicates interest in actually helping, not just using the board to make their opinion heard.

Arrives on time for meetings and is prepared - Arriving on time means they take the role seriously. Having read and understood all issues to be considered means they take their role as important to the success of the organization.

Insists that meetings end as scheduled but not before they start - A valuable board members is a busy board member and timelines are essential. However, making a motion to cancel the meeting as it opens is viewed negatively.

Provides direct contact information not just an email address - This includes office, home and cell phone numbers. You would be amazed at how hard it is to explain things exclusively by email.

Avoids such conflicts of interest as family business - Today non profits need to be more cautious about conflicts of interest or even the appearance of one. If your lawyer, printer, and landlord are on the board, there could be a conflict.

Will attend, but not become, a special event - The board represents the organization and if they don't attend special events, they send a negative message. If they are arrested for fighting during the event, that also sends a negative message.

Questions strategic direction, but not daily operations - Boards should not micro-manage. They choose the executive director, not the type of pens to use. A board member should also avoid arriving before staff to report on who was late, how long staff took for lunch and what they were wearing. Some call this stalking.

Does not need to be asked before donating their time - Helping at events and with programs is important and the board sets the example. There are many ways to help out. Working long hours to review rules, contracts or proposals; assisting at tournaments; carefully reading all information provided by staff; and serving as a resource to staff are but a few.

Does not seek personal advantage for self or family - Avoids the appearance of seeking to forward the interests of their own children, club or special interest. Seeks what is best for the organization and not what is most advantageous for their interests.

Openly supports and encourages others including staff Quick to compliment and acknowledge others, slow to criticize. Relishes organization success, seeks to learn from failures.