



RE-IMAGINING BOARD ENGAGEMENT

– A 2022 Fresh Start

OVERVIEW

Board engagement on the right topics at the right time to advance the organization's mission is a perennial topic for leaders. With fundamental changes in the nonprofit sector, with new opportunities for greater equity, and the challenge to develop strategies that are adaptive and offer new ways to deliver mission impact, board engagement has perhaps never been more important. As organizations evolve from the recent COVID environment, leaders and organizations have an opportunity to reflect on recent lessons learned and reimagine a fresh start to board engagement in 2022.

WHY REIMAGINE?



THEMES

While boards vary in their development lifecycle – from founder-led to institutional – and with role differences from fundraising to governance, there were several shared themes that emerged from our discussions:



ANCHOR ON PURPOSE:

Use of Governance as Leadership (GAL) and references to the Purpose-Driven Board as foundational for the board's role in this time of organizational and sector change to strengthen values and adapt missions to meet the challenges ahead.

DEVELOP THE FUTURE PERFECT BOARD:

Revisiting board member selection process and treating board recruitment as just as essential as recruiting an executive team member for the organization. What experiences, skills, and contributions can the person make? Importantly, what mindset does the individual bring to the board?

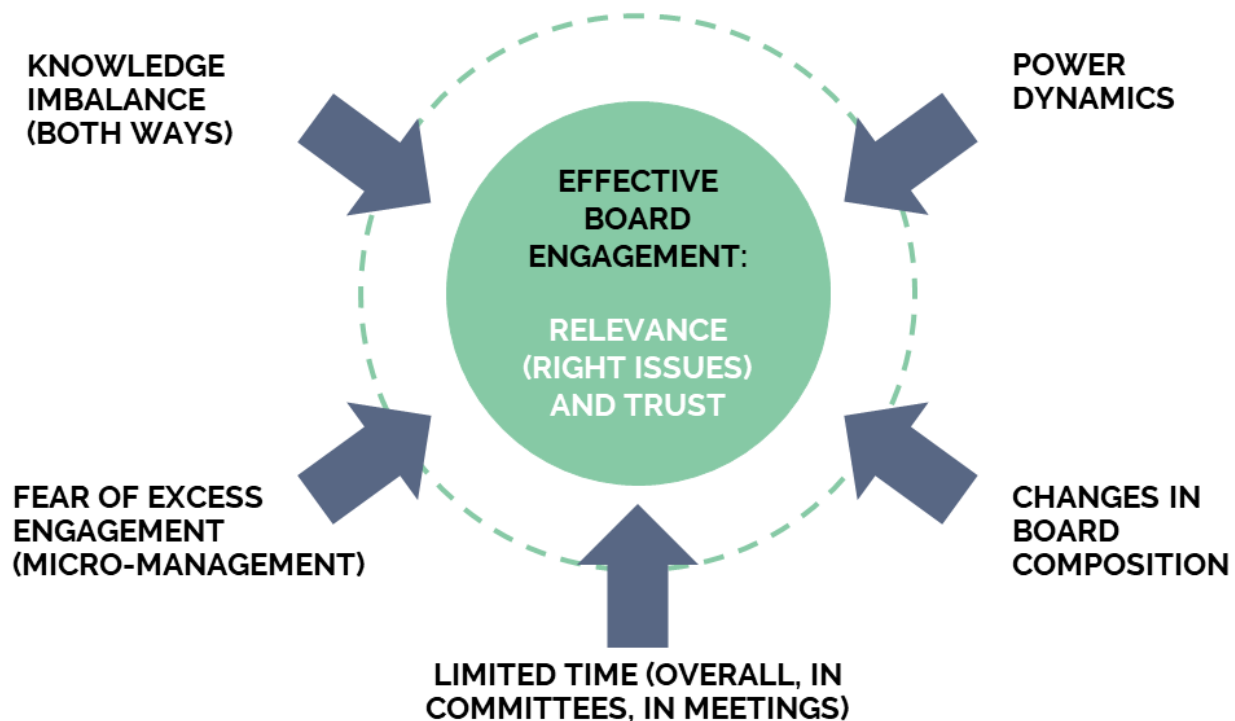
LEARN TOGETHER:

Importance of board member learning through orientation, onboarding, committee work, program visits, and the ongoing deepening of understanding the organization's impact within its complex eco-system. Especially important given the dynamic nature of the board with changes in composition over time.

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT ENGAGEMENT:

Planning and investing by the board chair and CEO in creating and supporting a deliberate culture of board engagement fit for the organization's purpose and leveraging evolving tactics and approaches.

WHY ENGAGEMENT IS DIFFICULT



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

REIMAGINING BOARD ENGAGEMENT: FRESH START COMMITMENTS FOR 2022



In our discussions, we found a strong interest in improving Board engagement, incorporating the lessons learned from the last 18 months, and aspirations to create the board culture that connects members to purpose and each other, that emphasizes learning and development, and that draws inclusively from the talents and experiences that each board member brings. There was also a sense of using 2022 as a “fresh start” year to explore and reimagine engagement for the years ahead.

In that spirit, several findings and new commitments emerged:

RESET

1. Recommit the Board to its purpose as stewards of the larger mission, values, and impact; have Board members individually articulate their aspirational legacies to the organization.

2. Create a Board learning agenda to engage in individual and collective development during the year.
3. Review Board composition to identify the future sources and mindsets/experiences/skills and expertise needed, centered on values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.
4. Revisit the Board member lifecycle (from initial prospect discussion to selection to onboarding to committee work and visits and legacy).

RENEW

5. Re-connect Board members to each other and to the organization's work.
6. "Fresh start" Board meeting agendas, schedules, and types of meetings to reinvigorate engagement.
7. Establish a shared understanding of the changing external environment for better inquiry, learning, and decisions on the generative and strategic issues ahead.
8. Intentionally shape a culture of inspiration, shared values, trust, appreciation, growth, and achievement among board members

REVIEW

9. Leaders learn from each other. Organizations share practices. Commit to regularly share issues and solutions with other organizations for improved effectiveness and effectiveness.
10. Assess what's working and what can be improved transparently across all members of the Board.

LOOKING AHEAD

Each board is unique in the roles it plays, its culture, and the nature of its engagement. In addition, boards, like the organizations they serve, are in motion, evolving to meet new needs and opportunities. As a result, board engagement reimagination is an ongoing process where leaders can benefit from sharing ideas, solutions, and approaches. We look forward to supporting this important dialogue.

GETTING STARTED



- ◆ Assign Board member or Committee (e.g., Governance) with engagement responsibility
- ◆ **Working Session:** Have Board define its required engagement (where and how) versus current practices and identify barriers to desired engagement
- ◆ Prioritize and commit to actions (overall and individual member) to address priority engagement opportunities, in conjunction with overall Board development objectives
- ◆ **Working Session:** Assess results and refine actions at annual Board development session

WE EXIST TO HELP NGO CEOS ADVANCE THEIR MOST URGENT INITIATIVES

- ◆ When a recent employee climate survey shows shockingly low trust scores for one or more key leaders and the CEO wants to address this immediately.
- ◆ When the CEO or a mission critical executive plans their departure, potentially putting the organization at risk.
- ◆ When two teams don't play nicely together causing loss in revenue.
- ◆ When the CEO approves a big new vision and the leadership team has to execute quickly and cohesively, bringing all staff into alignment with the vision.
- ◆ When the leadership team runs out of ideas on how to support the exhausted workforce and are seeing key workers resign.





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