SP GRACE

Tips for Better Engaging Your Board Members

What Motivates Your Board Members?
Do You Know Why They Are On Your Board?

01 Chance to Pioneer Change

02 Fulfilling Passion Projects

03 Social Loyalty & Support

04 Professional Visibility

05 Leadership Experience & Opportunities

06 Opportunity to Use Untapped Skills

07 Community Involvement & Networking

08 Deeply Embedded & Interested in Local Community Served

09 Advocacy & Policy Influence

10 ...and more!

Understand What Drives Them

When someone joins a non-profit board, they are often *primarily* motivated by one of the following:

1 Personal Connection/Fulfillment

2 Professional Opportunity or Development

3 Altruism/ Community Impact

Motivation 1: Personal Connection/Fulfillment

Behaviors

- **High Passion –** They often show a high level of enthusiasm and emotional investment in the organization's activities that align with their personal beliefs or interests.
- **Personal Advocacy -** They are likely to personally advocate for the organization's mission in their social circles and communities.

Challenges

- **Bias Toward Preferred Projects -** They may favor projects or initiatives that align closely with their personal interests, sometimes at the expense of other important organizational goals.
- **Risk of Burnout -** Due to their high level of personal commitment, they might take on too much responsibility, leading to potential burnout.

Motivation 2: Professional Opportunity or Development

Behaviors

- **Skill Utilization and Growth –** They actively seek roles that allow them to use and grow specific professional skills. They are often interested in training and development opportunities.
- **Leadership Aspirations -** They are keen to take on leadership roles or high-visibility projects that can enhance their resumes or professional stature.

Challenges

- **Potential Overemphasis on Resume Building -** The focus on professional gain may sometimes overshadow the broader needs of the organization, leading to decisions that favor personal advancement over organizational well-being.
- **Limited Long-Term Commitment -** Their engagement might be contingent on the professional benefits they perceive, which could affect their long-term commitment if those benefits are not continuously evident.

Motivation 3: Altruism/Community Impact

Behaviors

•Community Engagement – They are active in community outreach and advocacy. They often bring strong local networks and are effective in mobilizing community resources and support.

•Focus on Impact Metrics - They prioritize and push for clear impact metrics and outcomes to ensure the organization's efforts are visibly benefiting the community.

Challenges

•Impatience for Results - There may be a tendency to prioritize quick wins or visible impacts over long-term strategies that require more time to yield results.

•Potential Conflicts Over Resource Allocation - They might push for more resources to be directed toward community-facing initiatives, which could conflict with other organizational needs like capacity building or internal development.

Learn to Be a FLEXIBLE Communicator!

- Think of a board member
  - Consider one who may be more challenging for you to connect with
  - Consider one who is more challenging to get on board with your ideas
  - Consider one who is disappointing as a member of the board
- What motivates this person to be on the board?
- What do you need from this person?
- How might you modify your approach to consider this person's motivation?

The following examples can help you think about how to best "flex" to your individual board members' motivations in your one-on-one conversations with them.

SP GRACE

Motivation 1: Personal Connection/Fulfillment

Scenario

The board member, Sarah, has a personal history and strong emotional connection to the organization.

Example Approach

"Hey Sarah, you've often shared your stories about the huge impact our apprenticeship program had on you back in high school. We're hitting a bit of a tough spot funding-wise to continue and expand our apprenticeship program, and we really need to rally support to keep it going. I thought of you immediately — would you be willing to spearhead fundraising plan that is targeted just for the apprenticeships? Your personal story is so inspirational and I believe you would be the perfect ambassador to get others to pitch in."

Motivation 2: Professional Opportunity or Development

Scenario

The member is looking to expand their professional network or skills through their involvement.

Example Approach

"Hi Chris, I've observed how you engage with donors and funders and see how much they like you. You're such a great networker that I think you would be the perfect board member to spearhead our big apprenticeship fundraising event. Not only will the event support our program, but it will also involve some key players in our industry. It's a fantastic networking opportunity and we could really use someone with your skills and lovable personality steering it. What do you think about taking the lead on this?"

Motivation 3: Altruism/Community Impact

Scenario

The member is primarily motivated by the desire to make a significant community impact.

Example Approach

"Alex, you've always been passionate about making a real difference, and right now, our apprenticeship program is in need of support to expand its reach. This is the program that we get the most feedback about from our participants that is changing the complete trajectory of their lives. We're kicking off a fundraiser that could really transform the scale of what we do for these kids. Can we count on you to help spearhead this effort? Your drive for community impact would make a huge difference."