



Care & Feeding of the Manager & Board Relationship
Creating a healthy & productive ED/Board relationship



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What we will talk about today....

- 1 **Why** the relationship between the ED and the Board is important
- 2 What does a good partnership look like-**characteristics**
- 3 **How** to get there: Principles of great relationships between ED and the board
- 4 Key points & wrap up

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Before We Get Started....

*Lets get a feel for who we have
in the room....*

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*The potential to leverage the board-
executive director relationship and
increase nonprofit organizations' stock of
meaningful, productive relationships is
great and unrealized. **Building and
nurturing this relationship must be
a priority.***

—Mary Hiland, Journal of
Nonprofit Management

-2008



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Key point #1

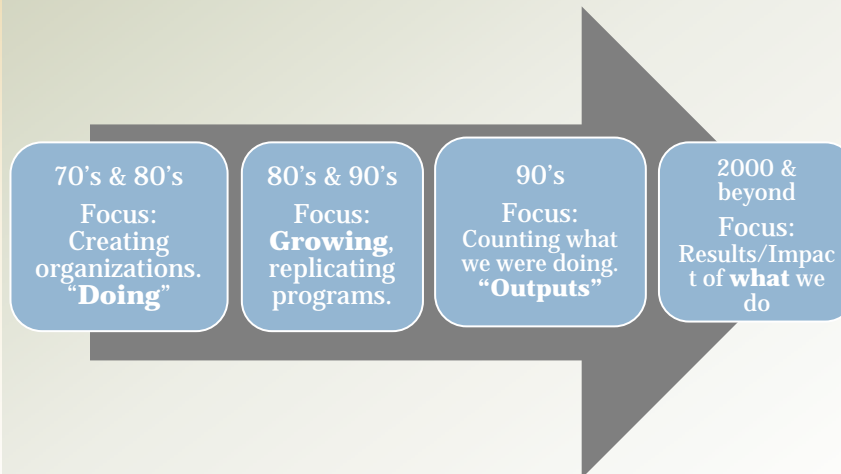


There is no single relationship in the organization that is more important as that between the board and its executive/CEO.

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Shifting Tides.....context



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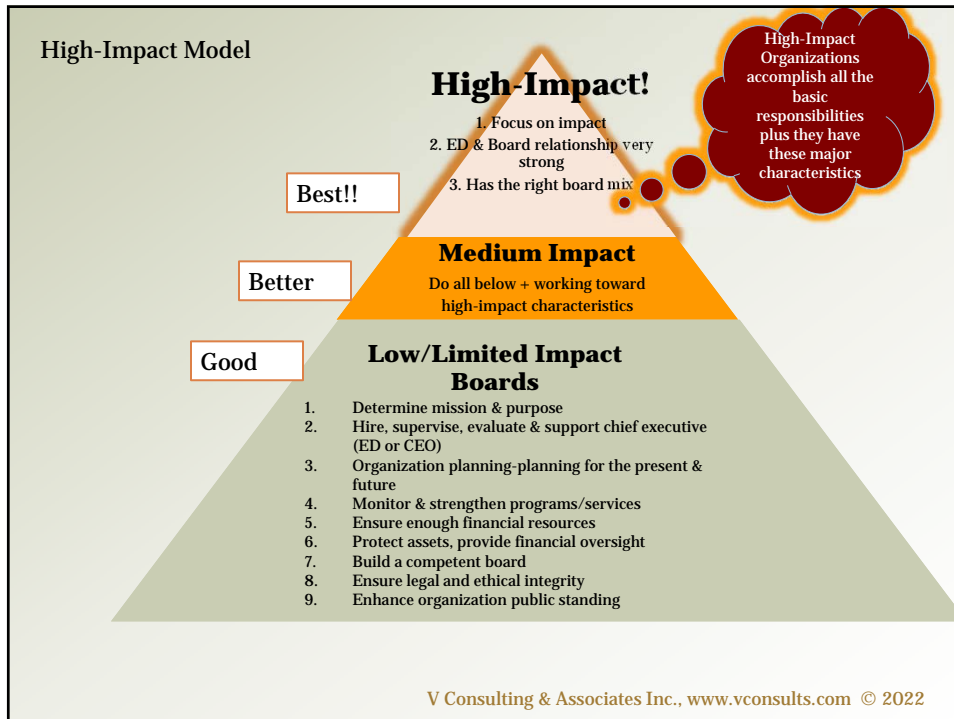
What is Impact?

- Impact** is what sets nonprofits apart from for-profits.
- Impact** is the change we want to see because our organization exists.
- Impact** is what donors, funders and community want with their investment
- Impact** is the result of what we do

*Nonprofit Organizations are **catalytic agents of change**. We must begin to study and understand nonprofits not merely as organizations housed within four walls, but as catalysts that work within, and change, entire systems....we need dramatic change if we are to solve the complex global problems that plague us today. – “Forces for Good”, 2008*

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Characteristics of a High-Impact Group

Impact is what sets nonprofits apart from for-profits.

Impact is the change we want to see because our organization exists.

Impact is what donors, funders and community want with their investment

Impact is the result of what we do

ED & Board relationship is strong

1. Board active, knowledgeable and engaged in hiring, supervision, evaluation and support of Executive Director (ED)
2. Clear roles & expectations that are **resilient and adaptable** to crisis and day to day operations
3. Positive communication
4. Board & Executive Director recognizes and agrees on culture of the organization
5. Board has strong identity as “owners” of the organization

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Focus on Impact

1. Counting & communicating the impact your organization has with your programs/services
 - ❑ Not just what you do by **why** you do it
 - ❑ Focus on **results**, not efforts alone
 - ❑ Frame impact with the **before and after** aspect
2. Advocating for impact outside your walls
 - ❑ Remember nonprofits are catalysts of **social change**
 - ❑ **Leverage** outside resources
 - ❑ **Advocate for a larger cause**, not only your organization

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Characteristics of a High-Impact Nonprofit

Impact is what sets nonprofits apart from for-profits.

Impact is the change we want to see because our organization exists.

Impact is what donors, funders and community want with their investment

Impact is the result of what we do

The Right Board

1. Recruitment is strategic & intentional, consistent with organization culture
 - Special considerations for elected boards
2. Recognize and embrace diversity of board
3. Use meetings and time together for decisions & action, not just reports
4. Approaches conflict & threats as growth opportunity
5. Appropriate number of executives on the board

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Characteristics of a “good” partnership

1. Make a list of adjectives/descriptive words of an organization with a poor or dysfunctional board-executive director relationship.

2. Now make a list of adjectives/descriptive words of an organization with a **great** board-executive director relationship.

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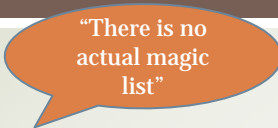
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Characteristics of a “good” partnership

Dysfunctional	Highly Functional-Great!
Poor communication	Balance
lawsuits	Clear roles and responsibilities
struggling	thriving
conflict & crisis	healthy
fear	resilient
unstable	dynamic
focused only within walls of agency	Communication regular and positive
hobbled	Change agents
jeopardized	People asking to join board
High turnover of staff, volunteers & board	All staff, volunteers and board work toward creating results
Rubber stamp board or micromanaging board	Mutual support
Small board	Diverse, engaged board
Constantly challenged executive leadership	Dynamic, charismatic & empowering leadership
uninformed	Focused on long-term
Controversial support in community	Broad support
Poor leaders	Proactive instead of reactive

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“There is no actual magic list”

Attributes of a Resilient Leader

<p>Present</p> <p>Empathetic</p> <p>Authentic</p> <p>Vulnerable but strong</p> <p>Courageous</p> <p>Calming</p> <p>Flexibility</p> <p>Adaptability</p> <p>Focus</p>	<p>Recognize when to lean in, when to lean out</p> <p>Grit/hardiness</p> <p>Consistent</p> <p>Articulate</p> <p>Listen more than talk</p>
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Which of these attributes do you excel at, are inherent for you?
 Which of these do you need to grow?
 Which have been tested by the COVID crisis?

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Characteristics of a “good” partnership

So why do you care as a board?

“We have a great Executive Director....I think”

–board chair of a NP

“I have a full time job, I don’t have time to do this sort of thing, I leave it to the board chair and Executive Director” –board member

“I just want to volunteer to read to kids, not do all this organizational development stuff”-board member

“The coalition will deal with this later, we are not sure we can even make payroll next week”-coalition board member

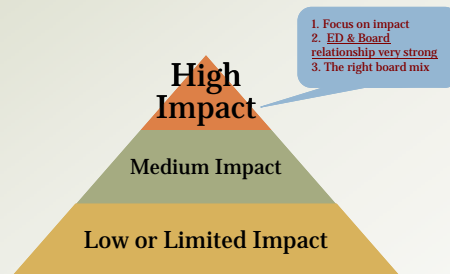
“Board-executive relationship? I don’t even know what we do” – new board member

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Key point #2

*The board **and** executive must devote regular attention and **time** to their relationship for the health of the organization if they want to be high-impact.*



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Silver Lining Phenomenon

Resilient leaders turn disruptive changes and conflicts from disaster to growth opportunities

Resilient leaders resolve conflict while developing relationships, buy in and expanding networks

Resilient leaders shift the disruption to new directions, capturing the opportunity

Resilient leaders are not wearing rose-colored glasses, they recognize danger and opportunity and seize it for growth

What is the silver lining for your organization from COVID?

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Key Point #3

Resilient leaders and boards find the silver lining of a crisis without ignoring the danger/threat.

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Key point #4



*High-functioning board-executive relationships start with clear agreement on **roles & responsibilities.***

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Good teamwork is not a blurring of responsibilities and roles

**Board
Governance**

- Governance
- Support
- Legal

**Executive
Management**

- Manage product and behavior of entire org.

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Key point #5

*Different music
requires different
dances-you get to
define yours together!*

The specifics of the distinct roles & responsibilities between a board and executive are unique and up to every organization to define.



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HOW to build a better partnership

Principles of Successful Board/Executive Partnerships

1. Interdependence: Difficult to exist without the other
2. Focus on RESULTS not tasks
3. Accountability: evaluate executive and evaluate board
4. Trust resulting from communication and respect
5. Separate roles & responsibilities

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HOW to build a better partnership

Principles of Successful Board/Executive Partnerships

Principle #1 Interdependence

5 Principles

1. Interdependence
2. Focus on results
3. Accountability
4. Trust
5. Separate roles & responsibilities

Practical considerations/To Do

- Develop clear **job descriptions** for board & executive
- Provide opportunities for ways to show **support** of one another
- Devote time to discuss if the **balance** of interdependence is working for both
- Recognize that executive has **multiple relationships** to build and manage but the board works as one entity
- Don't take each other for granted
- Recognize mutual responsibility to create & support culture of organization

Remember

*One role can not exist well without the other
Must be separate and distinct
Mutually supportive of roles & responsibilities*

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HOW to build a better partnership

Principles of Successful Board/Executive Partnerships

Principle #2 Focus on Results

5 Principles

1. Interdependence
2. Focus on results
3. Accountability
4. Trust
5. Separate roles & responsibilities

Practical considerations/To Do

- Evaluate for results** toward the strategic plan, not just daily busy tasks
- Forward focus**-don't get bogged down in the what happened or what you don't want to happen
- Meetings focused on **decision making** and **discussion**, not just reports of busy work
- As a board member, don't make decisions of discipline of ED based small conflicts with community or staff, focus on the bigger picture of results

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HOW to build a better partnership

Principles of Successful Board/Executive Partnerships

Principle #3 Accountability

5 Principles

1. Interdependence
2. Focus on results
3. Accountability
4. Trust
5. Separate roles & responsibilities

Practical considerations/To Do

- **Board evaluates** itself annually with a consistent evaluation tool and implements changes in roles/function and activity accordingly
- Evaluation of executive is based on results of the **strategic plan** not activities & behavior alone

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HOW to build a better partnership

Principles of Successful Board/Executive Partnerships

Principle #4 Trust

5 Principles

1. Interdependence
2. Focus on results
3. Accountability
4. Trust
5. Separate roles & responsibilities

Practical considerations/To Do

- Time and resources devoted to developing **trust**
- Agree on **ways** to **communicate** different types of information.
 - Crisis information
 - Regular management metrics
 - Governance/strategic plan accomplishments
- Agree on **frequency** of communication
- Recognize different **motivations** of board members
- Identify different styles of communication and **conflict resolution** between board members and Executive Director
- Build resilience with the board and executive

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HOW to build a better partnership

Principles of Successful Board/Executive Partnerships

Principle #5 Separate roles & responsibilities

Practical considerations/To Do

- 5 Principles**
1. Interdependence
 2. Focus on results
 3. Accountability
 4. Trust
 5. Separate roles & responsibilities

- Recognize **legal obligations** & responsibilities of board as basic elements
- Discuss all details above the basic elements at least annually
 - Agree on who will plan, who will manage and who will lead and under what circumstances.
- Remember even the best laid plans can change out of necessity, so work toward being flexible and adaptable as needed.
 - If adaptability isn't a strength, devote time to improving your individual and group adaptability.

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Key point #6

If the relationship between the board and executive needs to change, devote time & resources to it. It will be one of the best investments you make in the organization.



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Key Points!!

- 1 There is no single relationship in the organization that is more important as that between the board and its executive/CEO.
- 2 The board and executive must devote regular attention and time to their relationship for the health of the organization.
- 3 Resilient leaders and boards find the silver lining of a crisis without ignoring the danger/threat.
- 4 High-functioning board-executive relationships **start** with clear agreement on roles & responsibilities.
- 5 The **specifics** of the distinct roles & responsibilities between a board and executive are unique and up to every organization to define.
- 6 If the relationship between the board and executive needs to change, devote time & resources to it. It will be one of the best investments you make in the organization.

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Thank you for your time & attention!

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