

7 FOUNDATIONS OF BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

Tips to maximize your board's return

A camp director cannot be listening to **multiple individual voices** and treat each one as if it were his/her supervisor.

IF YOUR board could only do three to five things consistently well, what would you focus on when there are so many important considerations for boards to be effective? While there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer to this question, there are some areas that board coaches and consultants are consistently asked to help with. Here

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are seven foundational recommendations that, from a board coach's perspective, often give the biggest return for the effort required:

2 Decision making. Thriving boards have an agreed-upon path that is understood and documented for good decision making in the camp. A clear understanding of the roles between the camp director and the board is important. One of the core ideas in good governance is that the board describes the size and boundaries of the playing field in which the camp director can make decisions.

3 One board, one voice. The only time a board or an individual board member has authority is when the board makes a decision together. The camp director should only be accountable to one board with one voice. A camp director cannot be listening to multiple individual voices and treat each one as if it were his/her supervisor.

4 Work that matters. Every board meeting should contain work that matters. Board members are giving their volunteer time, knowledge and talents to make the camp better. Camp directors have a responsibility to make sure that the board has the opportunity to deal with decisions that will have a real impact on the camp.

A great question for any board to ask is: If we could only make two

1 Clear expectations for board members. From the recruitment phase through the actual work of being a board member, there needs to be clear expectations of what the board is asking of its members. Boards that are doing this effectively have a combination of the following in place: board member commitment sheet, job descriptions and a clear evaluation process.



by **ED MCDOWELL**



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decisions in the next 12 months that would substantially help the camp be stronger, what would those decisions be and why?

5 Conflict resolution. Healthy boards have a shared understanding and communicated protocol for conflict resolution. Board work involves conflict for a simple reason: We are working with people. Every person has his or her own way to deal with conflict. It is important for a board to say, “This is how we deal with conflict.”

6 Don't overthink it. Boards have a natural vulnerability to make things more complicated than they need to be. Guard against this. David Goodnight is the board chair for Warm Beach Camps and Conference Center, of which I am the executive director. He consistently reminds me, “Ed, we want bright,

clean, simple lines in our decisions.”

Here are a few examples of board duties that help with bright, clean, simple lines:

- We will pay our bills when they are due.
- We will budget expenses eight percent less than revenues.
- All board members will demonstrate growth in their faith and be actively involved in a local church.
- All board members will donate to the camp every year. How much is given is a personal stewardship decision of each board member.

Think through the simplicity of each of the examples above and the long-term impact it would have on the health of the camp where you serve. Notice that each of these examples can be evaluated quite easily.

7 Take care. The board is responsible for its own health and vitality, and the best boards have taken this seriously. Priority is given to the board as a spiritual community and a governing body. Board development is part of the ministry's budget. While executive leadership is key, a ministry will not grow beyond the capacity of the board.

I encourage you to choose three of these foundations for the board you serve on to get right. The results will strengthen the long-term effectiveness of the camp that you serve. ●



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