

Recruiting Board Members: Questions and Tips

Identifying and recruiting prospective board members is a process. Ultimately, for each board member, your goal is to build a relationship that will be sustainable and productive. Here are 20 questions about six key areas that matter for effective board service. Choose those most appropriate for the person and the setting.

Passion

- o How did you first get interested in our cause?
- o What has inspired you to stay interested?
- o What else would you like to see our organization do to support (your focus)?

Time

- o What takes up most of your time?
- o How many hours a month (approximately) would you have for board service?
- o Are there months when you would typically have more or less time?
- o What constraints on your time for board service would you anticipate?

Motivation

- o What do you look for in an organization when you volunteer?
- o What previous board or volunteer experiences have you had that stand out? Why?
- o If you've been disappointed in previous board (or volunteer) experience, why?
- o What interests you about the idea of board leadership in our organization?
- o What would you hope to gain personally/professionally from board service?

Personality

- o Our board tends to be (e.g., very social; pretty much all business; other descriptor of board personality). How do you see yourself fitting into that environment?
- o What types of interactions or relationships with other board members would be most important to you?
- o Board members tend to have one of three roles: ambassador, advocate or asker. In which role do you most see yourself? Why?

Confidence

- o How knowledgeable are you about the responsibilities of board service?
- o How do you view being required to attend training in governance and other board member responsibilities?
- o How would you view having your performance as a board member evaluated?

Finances

- o Are you comfortable with making a financial commitment to the organization?
- o Are you comfortable asking others to donate to the organization?

➤ Tips on the Art of Questioning

- Change the wording of questions to fit your speaking style so you sound comfortable, not stilted. The candidate will be more comfortable too.
- When framing your own questions, aim for open-ended questions (e.g., why...? how...?) that ask candidates to explain their thinking.
- Pause to give the person time to think and respond. Providing “wait time” is one secret to getting the information you need.
- If you’re not clear about an answer, ask for clarification. Don’t fill in the blanks with assumptions.
- Even if you’re acquainted with a candidate personally, you need to hear the person’s responses, not what you think this friend/associate would say.
- Even if you’ve served on another board with a candidate, this is a different board. Ask from the current perspective.
- Keep in mind that there’s no such thing as too much information about a person’s attitudes, expectations and qualifications when it comes to board service.