How to Make Sure the Board of Directors Participates in the Project for Change

Especially in projects for change in small- to medium-sized corporations, the Board can be the leverage point – the point in the project that can make the biggest difference – for success in your project for change. In these situations, your client seems reluctant to involve their Board, at all, in your project, you should seriously consider whether your client is really ready for a project to accomplish significant change in their organization.

To ensure that the Board of Directors in your client's organization provides strong contribution to your project, consider the guidelines in this subsection.

Benefits of Board Involvement in the Project

1. **The Board ensures the project is fully resourced and shows political support.**
   Board members have full authority for allocation of resources for the organization. Consequently, Board members can ensure that the project has all necessary resources, including people, money and time. Their allocation shows strong political support for change, which can sustain ongoing motivation and momentum for change.

2. **The Board ensures that project plans are developed and implemented.**
   The Board supervises the Chief Executive Officer, having full authority over the CEO. Although employees (including the CEO) usually develop and implement many of the action plans in the project for change, the Board can ensure that those plans are fully developed and completely implemented.

3. **Board members provide a wide range of useful expertise.**
   Board members often have a wide range of useful skills for governing the organization, such as planning, leadership, management, supervision and problem solving. They may also have technical knowledge of the organization or the industry. Those skills can be useful during a project for change.

4. **The Board provides time and energy to help implement plans for change.**
   Employees are already overloaded. Giving them yet more work to do (during your project) can completely overload them such that they collapse altogether, which could significantly damage the organization. Although the Board is responsible to govern the organization by establishing broad plans and policies, Board members still can help with implementation of various plans by helping to develop and oversee development of plans. Plans might be to address issues in strategic planning, marketing, staffing or financial management.

5. **The Board provides objective assessment on project issues and results.**
   Board members usually are not involved a great deal in the day-to-day activities of a project. Consequently, they often retain an objective perspective on the activities and results of the project. Their perspective can be useful when addressing issues in the project and evaluating results of the project.

6.   **Involvement of Board members is a powerful means to Board development.**
      One of the best ways to get good Board members is to give them something to do. One of the best ways to get rid of Board members is to give them something to do. Your project can be useful means to give Board members something to do – and, thus, develop the Board.

Ensuring the Board Is Highly Involved in the Project

1.   **The Board should be involved in first meeting with you, the consultant.**
      In projects that are intended to accomplish significant change in an organization, members of the Board certainly should be aware of – and have approved – the project. The Board Chair should participate in the first meeting with you during Phase 2: Engagement and Agreement.

2.   **Both the Board Chair and the Chief Executive Officer should sign the contract.**
      The Board Chair should sign the contract along with the Chief Executive Officer. That approach helps to ensure that the Board is indeed aware of, and supports, the project.

3.   **Educate Board members about successful organizational change.**
      Members of the Board usually already have full-time jobs and are quite busy. Still, you should briefly educate them about what it takes to accomplish successful organizational change. You might provide them a short article, or brief presentation.

> See "Requirements for Successful Organizational Change" on page 182 for information about successful change that you can share with a Board.

4.   **Involve at least one Board member in the Project Team.**
      In projects for change, you should try to form a Project Team comprised of key personnel from your client's organization. Ensure that at least one Board member, ideally the Board Chair, is included on the Team.

> See "Establish the Project Team" on page 254 for guidelines to form a Project Team.

5.   **Ensure that all members of the Board get feedback from the discovery phase.**
      Near the end of Phase 3: Discovery and Feedback, you and your client will present the findings and recommendations from your analysis of the organization. Those results are important information for all Board members to know about. Ensure that you provide that information to all Board members, whether in a meeting and/or a written report.

6.   **Board members should be highly involved in activities that affect the Board.**
      Board members should participate in various aspects of the project, depending on its scope. For example, if the project includes Board development and development of the CEO position, Board members should be highly involved in setting and achieving project goals.

7.   **Include Board development in the project if many issues exist in the organization.**
      If your activities during the Discovery and Feedback phase identify many issues in your client's organization, it is likely that the client's Board of Directors has major problems, as well. Otherwise, the Board would have been effectively governing and the many organizational issues would not have existed. Also, one of the most powerful approaches to addressing major problems in the organization is to build up the Board to help you to address

those problems. Therefore, during the Phase 4: Action Planning, Alignment and Integration, include action plans to develop the Board.

> For detailed guidelines to develop a Board of Directors, see the recommended list of resources on page 489.

8. **If there are CEO and/or staffing issues, form a Board Personnel Committee.**
    A Board Personnel Committee is responsible to ensure that staffing (including the CEO) is carefully planned and fully utilized. That includes providing ongoing coaching to the CEO to ensure that his or her role is competently filled. A Board Personnel Committee can be of tremendous value to your project, especially after you have gone, to coach the CEO through the struggles of making major changes.

9. **All Board members should be copied on project reports.**
    All Board members have a responsibility to govern the organization. All Board members should always be able to access any information inside the organization. Consequently, they should be copied on reports about the status of your project.

10. **The Board should formally approve the Change Management Plan.**
    During Phase 4: Action Planning, Alignment and Integration, you and your client will develop various action plans to address the presenting priority and any other issues in your client's organization. Those plans will be in an overall Change Management Plan. Formal approval of the Plan by the Board can help to ensure that Board members have seen and will support the Plan.

11. **The Board Executive Committee should "police" implementation of action plans.**
    Ensure that the Board Executive Committee regularly reviews the implementation status of the Change Management Plan.

12. **Board members should be highly involved in reviewing evaluation results.**
    Finally, the Board should ensure that the project actually addresses the presenting priority and any other issues found in the organization. They should regularly review results of evaluations of project activities as those activities occur. Also, they should review results of evaluations of the quality of final results from the project.