

## Leading In Times Of Crisis Or Change

At the time of this writing, we are experiencing an economic downturn that is unparalleled in most of our lifetimes. The stakes are high for those of us in the nonprofit sector and, more importantly, for those we seek to serve.

Some organizations will find ways to become stronger, while others will collapse. Times of crisis -- which will be viewed by some as times of opportunity -- awaken sleeping boards and encourage them to fully assume their leadership as well as their governance responsibilities. The process of guiding an organization through exceptional moments such as these often results in boards that are clearer about their responsibilities and more prepared to fulfill them.

### Symptoms and Key Questions

- We're losing major funding!
- We desperately need a new facility, but what if we can't raise the money?
- Nothing seems to be working anymore. No one feels as if they know what's going on, or how decisions get made.
- Funders are pressuring us to take on new projects or more clients. If we succeed, we'll be more sustainable but if we fail, how will it look?
- We're feeling overwhelmed.

### Root Causes

Crisis and change present themselves in many different guises. What initially looks like a crisis can lead to exciting new possibilities. Conversely, an opportunity can pose real challenges. Some of these events cause the board and senior staff to question whether the organization will be able to (or should) continue to exist. While emotionally painful, such deep questioning is beneficial to the sector as a whole; it forces people to look at whether the resources they are using might be better applied to another purpose or a more effective organization..

The primary causes of crisis and change are:

1. **Outgrowing old ways of operating.** As organizations grow and mature, old systems and processes may no longer work but new ones may not yet be imagined. Examples of natural transitions include:
  - a. Moving from an all-volunteer organization to one with professional staff.
  - b. Moving from a founder-led organization to an executive director hired by the board.
  - c. Changing from a founding board, focused on providing volunteer support , to a governance or fundraising board.
2. **Emergence of new opportunities.** Successful organizations face new opportunities all the time. Examples of evolving opportunities include:
  - a. A chance to partner with another organization.
  - b. The awareness of an unmet community need.

- c. The sudden availability of new space.
- d. An invitation to apply for specific funding.

When faced with multiple opportunities or just one that seems “too good to pass up,” boards must balance the risks and rewards.

- 3. **Involuntary or externally imposed changes.** Recent involuntary changes have affected the nonprofit sector as a whole with such challenges as:
  - a. The ongoing struggles in the economy.
  - b. Funders’ focus on outcome measures
  - c. Changes to nonprofit reporting requirements.

For individual organizations, examples of involuntary change may include:

- Losing a key funder.
- Shifting to performance-based contracts.
- Attracting new client populations with different needs.

Each of these challenges requires the board to come together – and/or to work with senior management – to allocate resources in response to the changes.

## What You Can Do: How Board Members Lead In Times Of Change

The role of the board always is to assess situations in the context of the organization's mission, values and capacity. The board needs to be clear about its role in relationship to the change facing the organization. Typically, major changes have an impact on the board in three arenas:

1. **Governance and leadership.** When a major decision needs to be made -- such as whether or not to merge with another organization, purchase property or start a new program -- the board must determine what factors to consider when making the decision. Questions for the board to address include:
  - a. **What does the board need to know in order to make an informed decision?**
  - b. **What resources are required to accommodate the change?** In addition to financial considerations, resources may include staff availability or knowledge, board time and expertise, space and/or technology.
  - c. **What risks are associated with the change?** How will these risks be managed and minimized?

In all cases, it is important to understand that responding to the challenge at hand may well require some fundamental changes in board operations.

- How does the change affect the board's role in the organization?
- What is the impact on the board's work? On the board's work in relationship to the staff's?
- What new board practices are required to respond to the change?
- What new expertise is required on the board?
- How will these new roles be reflected in the board self-evaluation process?

For example, in the case of new reporting requirements, how will the board make sure that the organization is in compliance? Under which committee does oversight fall? What data will be required from the staff?

2. **Volunteer or helping roles.** In many cases, board members are key volunteers for the organization. For example, board members frequently play a hands-on role in technology, public relations or financial matters, fundraising or advocacy. Board members may even fill in when the executive director is unavailable due to a personal emergency. The board may have to assume some of the executive director's responsibilities until s/he can return to the position. Questions for the board to consider include:
  - a. What kind of support does the staff need from the board to navigate the change facing the organization?
  - b. What helping roles will the board let go of as the staff grows and becomes more professional?
3. **Board/Organizational culture.** When funding requirements, reimbursement guidelines or other contractual demands require the board and/or professional staff to act in ways that contradict their beliefs about quality service, organizations can be torn. Questions for the board to consider include:
  - a. What is the relationship between our values as a board and as an organization vis a vis the change that is taking place?

- b. Can we bring the two sets of values into alignment?
- c. Can the change be implemented in a way that minimizes conflict between our basic values and the requirements being imposed on our organization?
- d. What will we do if we can't reconcile the two? Will we compromise our principles or will we refuse the funding, even if it means going out of business?

In addition to the general questions posed above, each challenge requires its own set of specific questions and activities. A few of the most common situations are described below.

1. **Transitioning from volunteers to paid staff.** The successful transition from a volunteer-led organization to one with professional staff depends on two factors: agreement about the board's role when working with professional staff and realistic goals about the organization's capacity. Volunteers and staff both burn out quickly if expectations don't fit available capacity. The questions identified under "Governance and leadership" above will help guide the discussion of both factors. Specific steps in this situation include:
  - a. **Clarify the new staff person's authority** to make decisions and which decisions have to go through the board.
  - b. **Identify a primary liaison between the board and the staff.** This is usually the board chair. The role of the liaison is to channel instructions through one person to make sure that staff isn't overwhelmed by requests or assignments from several sources.
  - c. **Make sure board members understand the limits of their individual authority,** and that the staff person may not be able to respond to all requests made of him or her.
  - d. **Discuss how the board's work will change when the staff person is in place.** What meaningful contributions will board members be asked to make? What tasks will they no longer handle at the board level? What authority do they have now over decisions they used to control?
  - e. **Set up a mechanism for evaluating the staff person.** Click here for more about Evaluating the Executive Director.
  - f. **Agree about the way in which communication will be handled** between the staff person and the board. Will everyone get every email? Will the board chair be cc'd on all emails from board members to the staff? How often will the chair or other board leaders be available to the staff member for questions and guidance? How often will the staff person report back and on what topics?
  - g. **Approach the hiring process professionally, which involves:**
    - 1) Creating a job description.
    - 2) Identifying the skills and qualifications required.
    - 3) Determining an appropriate salary. This can be done through conversations with other nonprofits or information from professional sources, such as the Foundation Center, the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York, or accountants who are familiar with the nonprofit sector. Match the salary you are able to pay to the job qualifications and expectations you establish.
    - 4) Agree on an interview process.
    - 5) Check references.

**Board Benefits** – Leading an organization through the transition to professional staff helps boards:

- ✓ Develop a process for defining the respective roles of board and staff in a way that can be applied to future phases of the organization's development.
- ✓ Establish realistic expectations for the board and the staff, forming a basis for ongoing evaluation.
- ✓ Create communication protocols and mechanisms that balance inclusion with efficiency.
- ✓ Clarify decision-making processes and authority.

2. **Hiring a new executive director.** A significant number of executive directors are retiring or leaving the field. Part of the turnover is due to generational change and part due to founder or long time executive director retirements. But another key factor is burnout from the compounding demands of the job, particularly when funding is scarce (and/or the mission is a difficult "case") and public trust in nonprofits is low.

Hiring a new executive director is one of a nonprofit board's most important jobs. In fact, facing an executive transition often brings home to board members the full extent of their responsibility. The experience can be unnerving because most board members don't know what to do when faced with this situation.

- a. **Executive transition is the board's responsibility.** Many nonprofit boards and executive directors mistakenly believe that the job of hiring a new executive director should be handled by the outgoing executive director. But it is counter-productive for the board to offload its responsibility in this area. Executive transition is an ideal opportunity for the board to fully assume its leadership role as it considers a number of factors, including:
- 1) The needs of the organization and its constituents.
  - 2) The environment in which the organization operates.
  - 3) Future leadership needs.

The context of leadership transition gives these discussions the gravitas they deserve.

- b. **Create a transition committee to oversee the process that positions the organization for success.**
- c. **Take your time!** Because the responsibility can seem so overwhelming boards want to rush the transition process and just get someone in there! But the executive director's role is a keystone; a lot is riding on getting it right. Getting it wrong could mean lawsuits, demoralized staff and board, and diminished funding. As the saying goes, "If you don't have time to do it right, how are you going to find time to do it again?"

Before conducting a search, the board must think about the organization's direction in the future. Be willing to face any barriers to success and address those that might prevent a new director from succeeding. For example, a highly dysfunctional board, power struggles within the organization, and/or severe financial difficulties often undermine a successful transition.

When time is limited, such as when there has been an abrupt departure of the executive director, the board should consider hiring an interim executive director who would not be a candidate for the position.

- d. **Consider your options.** Executive transition offers an opportunity to do some creative thinking about the future of your organization. Fundamental questions to ask include:
- 1) If our organization didn't already exist, would we start it today?
  - 2) If we were to close our doors tomorrow, who would miss us?
  - 3) Where else could our constituents go to get what we offer?
  - 4) Is there another organization that does something similar to what we do or something complementary?
    - i. What relationship might we want to consider with that organization? Mergers or shared services might reduce infrastructure costs.

The timing of executive transition offers a unique opportunity to consider new or difficult ideas that would not be considered at other times, especially when there is an executive director firmly in place.

- e. **Get help!** Executive transitions are tricky and can be unnerving. Outside professionals can help you design and implement the transition process. While a consultant won't "hand you the answer," s/he can help build board capacity to undertake this significant project and can guide the board through the work involved. For more information on how outside professionals can help click [here](#).

For more on executive transition click [here](#).

**Board Benefits** – Leading an organization through an executive transition strengthens the board because it must:

- ✓ Fully embrace its governance and leadership roles within the organization.
- ✓ Become more knowledgeable about the operation of the organization.
- ✓ Reaffirm or refine the organization's vision and strategic direction.
- ✓ Formally articulate the differences and relationships between the board's and executive's role.
- ✓ Form relationships with key organizational stakeholders.

3. **Seizing new opportunities.** When facing a major undertaking, such as expansion, a capital commitment or a merger, due diligence is critical. Exemplary practices include:
- a. **Form a task force** to study issues in depth. Ideally, your task force will include board members with the expertise to make informed recommendations to the full board. Members of the task force must be willing to meet frequently and work on research or analysis between meetings.
  - b. **Identify, analyze and limit risks.** Risks could involve loss of financial resources and loss of reputation with clients, donors and the community. By analyzing the potential for

financial loss, a board can create a plan that limits losses to a pre-determined amount. Community response to the project should be assessed with input from potential supporters and from disinterested outsiders.

- c. **Augment internal expertise with outside expert advice.** If you're considering a capital campaign, talk to capital campaign consultants to understand what the conditions, strategies and tactics for success. Talk to other nonprofits of similar size and capacity that have successfully -- or unsuccessfully -- attempted a similar venture.
  - d. **Build in several go/no go benchmarks that assess whether you are on track to meet your ultimate goal.** These benchmarks are conditions that must be met before moving to the next stage of the project. Examples include the number of clients needed or the amount of funding that must be received and within specific time frame. For new programs, start with a pilot project to gain real experience with limited financial risk.
4. **Mergers and affiliations** – Many funders encourage and support consolidations in the nonprofit sector. Mergers and alliances are legitimate management options. When needs are increasing and resources diminishing, more efficient use of resources may call for fewer organizations with separate infrastructures. Mergers, however, are difficult to complete successfully and require extensive time on the part of the senior management and the boards of both agencies. Impediments to a successful merger include:
- Incompatible organizational cultures.
  - Misaligned expectations.
  - Lack of preparation and planning.
  - Insufficient financial resources
  - Lack of communication with key stakeholders.

Issues and questions specific to potential mergers include:

- a. **Identity:** What will the new organization be known as? Will both entities retain their name recognition?
- b. **Power and leadership:** Who will be the executive director? Who will be on the board? What percentage of board members from each organization will be on the merged board? What will be expected of board members in the newly merged organization? Whose culture and practices will dominate?
- c. **Financial stability:** Will each organization bring assets or debts to the new organization? Will current funders continue to fund both organizations' programs? Can services be offered at different levels or in different ways, to reduce costs while maintaining quality?
- d. **Compatibility of services:** Does each organization's staff have expertise that the other's lacks? Is there synergy among the programs? Are some services outside the realm of either organization's abilities? Would new services be a drain on existing ones?

- e. **Infrastructure:** What will the impact of the merger be for the accounting department, the physical facilities, technology usage and senior management? Are personnel practices compatible? How will benefits need to change to bring them into alignment?

**Board Benefits** – Leading an organization through the decision-making process related to new opportunities helps boards:

- ✓ Build confidence in their ability to lead and organize themselves into meaningful work groups.
- ✓ Revitalize and re-engage willing board members in wholly different ways.
- ✓ Provide members who are less committed with an opportunity to exit the board.
- ✓ Become more familiar with the environment in which their organizations operate.
- ✓ Learn to use outside expertise effectively.

5. **Adapting to externally imposed change.** The board must ensure that the organization is both aware of the changes that impact its work and knows that the board is formulating a response to meet new conditions. Board members fulfill their responsibility by learning about new requirements and trends that affect the business of the organization. Boards often rely on the executive director to keep them informed of such changes. However, the board should have procedures to independently update itself and independently ensure that it fulfills its oversight responsibility.

Most externally imposed requirements affect the organization's programs and administration, while others directly affect board operations. Recent examples include emerging standards for boards in relation to conflict of interest, financial controls, requirements to hold a minimum number of meetings annually, and demands for program evaluation and measurement. When the nature of the change is directly related to how the board operates, it is the board's responsibility to understand what is required and to formulate a response that meets the standards while respecting organizational values and culture.

Nonprofit organizations have numerous resources available to keep them current on emerging standards and requirements for boards and members. The Executive Committee or the Governance Committee should be responsible for periodically monitoring these resources and for bringing critical information, issues and potential responses to the full board..

**Board Benefits** – Leading an organization through the process of adapting to involuntary change helps boards:

- ✓ Become familiar with the environment in which their organization operates.
- ✓ Create committees and monitor/adapt oversight practices to keep up to date.
- ✓ Learn to use outside expertise effectively.
- ✓ Update reporting expectations with the executive director.
- ✓ Stay in touch with issues affecting the sector.

## Roles In Moving Forward

Regardless of the nature of change, opportunity or crisis facing your organization, the following actions can help the board take appropriate actions:

1. **If you are the board chair:**

- a. **Ask the executive director to brief you on changes** and opportunities as they emerge, and work with the executive director to determine what and how to bring these situations to the full board.
- b. **Pay attention to board operations** that no longer seem to be producing the desired results and ask the appropriate committee to make recommendations for improvement.
- c. **Make sure there is an annual board self-assessment** to identify possible areas for improvement.




2. **If you are an officer or chair** of the committee affected by the change:



- a. **Create mechanisms to stay up to date with trends** in your committee's area. For example, if you're on the fundraising committee you can subscribe to the weekly publication *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. If you're on the Governance Committee, sign up for the monthly e-newsletter *Blue Avocado* and periodically check the Governance Matters and Board Source websites. [See resources below.]
- b. **Bring pertinent issues to the board chair**, executive director, executive committee and/or the full board for information and discussion.

3. **If you are any board member:**

- a. Follow the news for developments in fields related to your organization's work, and for issues affecting the nonprofit sector as a whole. Ask questions of the executive director and suggest to the board chair topics for discussion at an upcoming board meeting.
- b. Talk to friends who are on other boards about how those boards function and what changes are affecting the boardroom.
- c. Identify experts who might help the board understand the changes it is facing. Include other nonprofit leaders who have successfully navigated similar situations.
- d. Suggest obtaining the input of independent consultants and other professionals (legal, accounting, real estate, or government, etc.) who can help the board reach informed decisions and formulate useful solutions.
- e. Read the materials sent with the initial board member packet – as well as all pre-meeting materials – to stay on top of issues facing the organization.

4. **If you are the executive director:**

-  Bring information to the board about changes and opportunities facing the organization, the direct service field(s) or the nonprofit sector in general. Make sure the board has all the information it needs to fulfill its governance responsibilities when facing both potential opportunities as well as crises.
-  Give the board an honest assessment of potential risks and rewards related to new opportunities.
-  Help the board identify and correct old ways of operating that no longer seem effective.

- Ω  Suggest outside experts and consultants who can help the board reach informed decisions and formulate useful solutions.
- ∞  Link the board to leaders of other nonprofits that have gone through a similar change.

## How Outside Expertise Can Help

Regardless of the challenge facing the organization, someone who has been through it before can tell you what to expect. Someone outside the organization can also provide a fresh point of view, and raise issues that may not occur to those directly involved or that boards may be reluctant to raise on their own.

Resources include board members and/or executive directors from organizations that have faced a similar transition, leaders of umbrella organizations in your field, funders and/or nonprofit consultants.

Consultants that specialize in nonprofit management are particularly useful when it comes to identifying and shaping your approach to a particular situation, and can guide the board through a process toward a successful conclusion or resolution. Specifically, an experienced consultant can:

- Assess the situation and help the board understand what’s going on.
- Contribute expertise specific to the situation.
- Design a process to help the board identify external opportunities and changes.
- Help the board identify potential risks and make plans for mitigating potential outcomes.
- Facilitate problem solving within the group, helping to ease tensions and refocus people on what needs to be done to move forward.
- Keep the decision making and implementation process focused and on track.

## Lessons From Exemplary Organizations: Community-Based Board Builds A Building

### Overview

In 1997, the Fortune Society embarked on the most ambitious project in its 30-year history. The project would either destroy the organization or transform it. Established to serve and advocate for men and women involved with the criminal justice system, Fortune Society decided to open a housing facility for recently released prisoners returning to New York City. The fact that the agency had never owned property, managed a housing program, had no money and wasn’t welcome in the community deterred neither the board nor the executive director. Amazingly, five years later “The Castle” opened, in April 2002, on schedule, within budget and with the support of its community.

The Fortune Academy (aka the Castle) is a success story and is nationally recognized as an innovative model for housing ex-prisoners.

## **Background**

In 1996, Fortune Society kicked off a multi-year strategic planning process to determine its future direction. The agency wanted to establish its priorities for the next five years. The board, staff, volunteers and clients were all involved.

Two organizational psychologists were hired to facilitate the first phase of the process. They recommended that the group start by recognizing that the agency was changing and that thorny issues like management, leadership and trust should be addressed.

Fortune Society was no longer small and wanted to continue to expand, and a hands-on executive director could no longer manage the agency alone. A strong management team would be necessary to realize any future vision. Lengthy and emotional meetings went on for months, even after funding for the hired facilitators ran out. Eventually the issues were resolved and another consulting firm, Community Resource Exchange, was hired to help finalize the five-year plan, which included the housing project.

It was well known that finding safe, stable housing was a problem for recently released ex-offenders. David Rothenberg, Fortune Society's founder, described how men just out of prison would sleep on his couch in the early days. In discussions about Fortune Society's priorities, clients and staff continued to reiterate that housing was an unmet need. When the process began, JoAnne Page, Fortune's Executive Director, said she knew that a new housing program would be one of Fortune's goals.

The magnitude of the housing and capital project was staggering. Yet the board was willing to take the leap. Why did the board take on such a massive capital project with so much inherent risk? How would they raise the money?

## **Role of the Board Chair**

During the campaign Roland Nicholson, Jr. was the Board Chair. He had joined the board in 1984. A charismatic attorney with interests that range from music to Eastern philosophy, he is the consummate salesman and Fortune Society remains his passion. The board's role and commitments are quite different today from what they were when he joined the board over twenty-five years ago, Nicholson says. At that time, many directors were legal aid attorneys who agreed with the principles, but were not particularly active and did not contribute.

Executive Director JoAnn Page says that Nicholson demonstrated his commitment to the organization through his level of engagement, which was possible because he had the time necessary for the office. He brought passion and much energy to the board, and his institutional history with the organization was also important for the project. Page views the board chair as her partner and someone from whom she can learn. She uses the metaphor of a "load-bearing wall" to describe the importance of the board chair's role. Page says that he/she must be someone who understands the chair's role, provides knowledge and is fully committed to the organization.

When asked to describe his role, Nicholson says that he provided oversight and supervised the executive director. He describes himself as, at the time, the chief salesman, fundraiser, and cheerleader for the organization. He held other directors accountable for fulfilling their assigned tasks and took the necessary steps to ensure completion, even seeking resignations to remove deadwood. He actively recruited new board candidates and provided opportunities for other directors to assume leadership responsibilities.

As Nicholson thought more about the building project his commitment intensified, as did that of the executive committee. His enthusiasm was contagious and spread through an ever-widening inner circle. This group included the executive committee and the most engaged board members -- those whom Page said she “could call in the middle of the night” in case of crisis.

With every step, Nicholson became more involved. He walked the neighborhoods proposed for the project and was an active part of the site selection. He also had a tie to the building in Harlem that was finally selected and rehabilitated.

### **What the Leaders Did**

Nicholson and Page worked as a team to persuade the board to move forward. Page had a proven track record. During her tenure funding had grown dramatically and had diversified. The board trusted her. She is also thoroughly engaging, and is highly regarded throughout the sector. She has shown a willingness to confront difficult issues, often in refreshing new ways.

Nicholson and Page actively sold the concept to board. They talked with directors independently and together. The board ultimately supported “the Castle” project because they knew that housing was a crucial addition to Fortune Society’s mission. The board accepted the risks because they trusted the executive director and the board chair.

The executive director knew she had to make the board comfortable with the many risks of this daunting project. She structured the plan carefully and divided it into distinct stages with multiple go/no-go points:

- Stage 1: Feasibility – Can it be done? What are the downside risks? Is everyone confident that the project can move forward?
- Stage 2: Early Implementation – Structured with many “go / no-go” decision points.
- Stage 3: Full Implementation – No turning back.

As the ultimate fallback, the board chair pointed out, they were buying a building in a part of the city with a strong real estate market, so the property could be flipped if the project failed.

The executive director and the board chair also relied on outside experts to augment in-house experience. Outside professionals assisted with the strategic planning process; developed a feasibility study for the new housing program; and worked with the executive director to drive the capital campaign.

During the course of the project, eleven different experts were brought in to address such thorny problems as financing options for real estate, how to conduct successful capital campaigns and how to navigate the commercial real estate market, among other areas. Together, the board, the

executive director and the experts developed plans and made sure that these strategies minimized the many risks to the agency.

Fortune Society was also committed to winning over its new neighbors. From 1998, when the bat-infested abandoned property was purchased as an \$8-million rehabilitation project, Fortune Society attended six community meetings each month, including community board meetings, police precinct council meetings, and meetings of the Friends of Riverbank Park. Two Fortune Society staffers, both life-long West Harlem residents, were instrumental in allaying community fears and building key relationship within the community.

Success beget success. Directors were proud of their astonishing accomplishments. Challenges, large and small were overcome, which in turn made people want to work even harder. Some issues like NIMBY, served to foster new community relationships. As the agency's reputation increased, people's pride swelled. A higher national profile made people feel honored when asked to participate. This, in turn, attracted more board members. And along the way, the directors who did not agree with the agency's new direction or didn't feel engaged faded away, leaving vacancies for new, more engaged members.

As planned, it took five years from the end of the strategic planning process to opening the doors of "the Castle."

### **How the Board Changed Along the Way**

- **More effective recruitment.** Board retention is higher, and board participation has increased. Nicholson attributes this to a more rigorous vetting process. Early in his tenure, he would accept referrals, review prospective candidates' resumes, and have a conversation with each over lunch. He would outline a board member's responsibilities and make the "ask." More often than not, the candidate would join the board, but not necessarily become or stay actively engaged.

Over time the chair began to ask more pointed questions when meeting with candidates and to check references more thoroughly. Factors that were carefully considered included:

- Passion about the mission and the agency, and alignment with the organization's values. He favored those who already had a relationship and commitment to the organization. For example, several new board members were former staff members.
- Demonstrated leadership and management experience.
- Other board commitments. He would eliminate those candidates who had too many (since they might lack the time needed to fulfill their responsibilities) and some candidates with no experience.

Potential directors are now suggested to the nominating committee. The committee meets, reviews candidates and then, if interested, the chair and executive director take them to lunch. There they discuss, in detail, the board member's role and specific expectations.

- **Clear assignments.** According to JoAnne Page, "A new board member is always brought on for a specific reason." For example, one new member was recruited to put on the annual

benefit. Another was recruited to develop ties to a particular corporation where he worked and establish relationships with entertainment industry people. Both candidates clearly understood that these were their respective “work assignments,” and agreed to them as specific prerequisites of joining the board.

By the time lunch is over, everyone knows where s/he will fit in. A new board member’s assignment allows him/her to hit the ground running, which further hastens the integration process. The new member doesn’t have to wait for a protocol to become clear or for someone to grant permission to proceed.

- **A strong executive committee.** The active executive committee is almost viewed as a “super-board” or the link between management and the board. The chair considers it “the top of the governance structure.” Since the inner circle works so effectively, there was the concern that the other dozen or so directors might feel left out. To prevent that, ad hoc committees are used frequently. The board chair appoints directors to these task forces who don’t participate on the executive committee. Attempts are made to make appointments that reflect a director’s interests and strengths, as well as make sure that work assignments are spread across the entire board.

## Resources

### Books

Allison, Michael and Jude Kaye. (2003). *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations, Second Edition*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Bridges, William. (2003). *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*. Cambridge, MA. Da Capo Press.

LaPiana, David. (2008). *Nonprofit Mergers Workbook Part I: The Leader’s Guide to Considering, Negotiating and Executing a Merger (Updated Edition)*. Fieldston Alliance.

McCormick, Dan. (2003). *The Power of Successful Partnerships. (Aspen’s Nonprofit Management Series.)* Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Inc.

### Other Publications

BlueAvocado – [www.blueavocado.org](http://www.blueavocado.org) – A new electronic magazine about nonprofits that now incorporates BoardCafe, a column about issues related to nonprofit boards.

Chronicle of Philanthropy, – [philanthropy.com](http://philanthropy.com) – Both print and online news for nonprofit organizations on grant seeking, foundations, fund raising, managing nonprofit groups, technology, and nonprofit jobs.

Nonprofit Quarterly – [www.nonprofitquarterly.org](http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org) – A magazine and online information primarily focused on nonprofit management.

Stanford Social Innovations Review – [www.ssireview.org](http://www.ssireview.org) – A magazine and website concerned with new approaches to social needs, including how nonprofits as well as for-profits are responding.

### **Websites**

[GovernanceMatters.org](http://GovernanceMatters.org)

[BoardSource.org](http://BoardSource.org) – BoardSource is considered the authoritative source on matters related to nonprofit boards. Their website features FAQ's, articles, and many self-published materials on boards of directors.

[TransitionGuides.com](http://TransitionGuides.com) – Research, articles and practices related to nonprofit executive transition.