

the **Board Builder**

Inspiring and informing better Boards
Exclusively for members of not-for-profit
Committees and Boards.

*All stressed out:
Reducing the
chances of burnout*

PAGE 14

*Meetings,
bloody meetings:
Practical steps towards
improvement*

PAGE 10

INDIVIDUAL SUBSCRIPTION ONLY
NOT for unlicensed distribution

The Australian Institute
of Community Practice
& Governance (AICPG):



AICPG
The Training Division of:



ourcommunity.com.au



AICPG

The Australian Institute
of Community Practice
and Governance

Board Builder is the membership newsletter of the Australian Institute Of Community Practice and Governance (AICPG). AICPG is the training arm of Our Community

Publisher:

Our Community Pty Ltd

National Headquarters
51 Stanley Street
West Melbourne VIC 3003 Australia
(PO Box 354 North Melbourne
VIC 3051 Australia)

Telephone (03) 9320 6800
Fax (03) 9326 6859

service@ourcommunity.com.au
www.ourcommunity.com.au

ISSN Aust 1832-438X

Copyright

© Our Community Pty Ltd.

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process other than for the purposes of and subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act. The newsletter is available to the subscriber of the service only. If you have received this newsletter and have not paid to subscribe, you are in breach of the Copyright Act. You may order your own copy of this valuable resource by subscribing.

Email service@ourcommunity.com.au
or call (03) 9320 6800.

Information provided through this publication is intended as a guide. Our Community Pty Ltd, its staff or representatives are not responsible for any actions taken by, or losses suffered by, any person on the basis of, or in reliance upon, any information in the publication, nor for any omission or error in this information service.

We welcome your input

We welcome your article ideas, input and feedback.

Contact the Editor:

Chris Riches
chrisr@ourcommunity.com.au
Telephone (03) 9320 6828

Production Schedule

www.ourcommunity.com.au/schedule

Next Newsletter: February 2011
This Issue Published: December 2

Our Commitment to Corporate Responsibility

In line with the Australian Institute for Corporate Responsibility (AICR) model actions for achieving environmental sustainability, this publication is printed on 100% recycled paper and also made available online.

Our Commitment to Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring our resources are accessible. This newsletter is available to subscribers in alternative formats on request. Email service@ourcommunity.com.au

**BOOK BEFORE
21 DECEMBER
TO GO INTO THE
DRAW TO WIN
AN IPAD!**

BOARD BUILDER Conference 2011

**A FRESH AGENDA for Australian
community sector boards,
committees & governing councils**

**Friday, 18 February 2011
9.15am – 4.30pm
Moonee Ponds, MELBOURNE**



BOOK NOW:

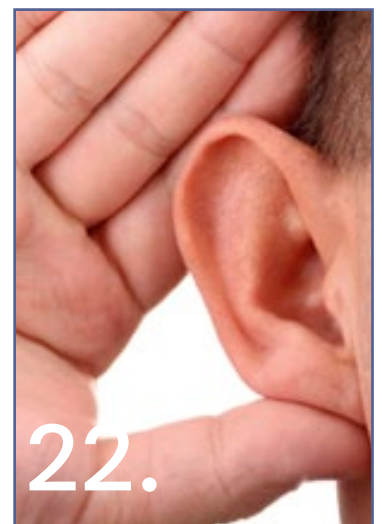
Go to:

www.ourcommunity.com.au/boardbuilder2011

Phone: 03 9320 6800

Contents

- 4** **When bad things happen to good groups:**
A quick look at the recent travails of The Wilderness Society
- 7** **A lack of youthful enthusiasm:** Young people grossly under-represented on UK boards
- 10** **Meetings, bloody meetings:** Practical steps towards improvement (*Board Scribe – David Bailey*)
- 14** **The Toolbox:** Reducing the chances of burnout
- 17** **A handy option:** Good advice on advisory committees
- 18** **The Board Doctor:** Our board doctors consider a question of board leadership and responsibility
- 22** **A Year of Listening:** Knowledge and staff retention key challenges for local boards
- 24** **Can we move beyond ritual?:** Strategic planning – a critical examination (*Board Scribe – Alan Hough*)
- 28** **Talking about results:** Groups must communicate impacts better – report
- 30** **Utopia:** Ten tips towards effective board marketing
- 32** **Clearing confusion:** New guide outlines reporting requirements
- 35** **Great Foundations:** Building resilient and effective not-for-profits (*Book Extract – Catherine Brown*)
- 38** **Drive for diversity:** Denver Foundation’s guide to board diversity
- 40** **Helping hand:** CSA offers free governance support



When bad things happen to good groups

A quick look at the recent travails of The Wilderness Society

The Wilderness Society has been through the wringer over the past two years, with internal discord, power struggles and differences of opinion hitting it hard. CHRIS BORTHWICK examines goings-on at the Society and some of the lessons that can be drawn from them.

The Wilderness Society is Australia's largest green group, and has been enormously influential both in protecting Australia's old growth forests and in raising public awareness of environmental issues.

But for the past couple of years it's been riven by discord.

The fight has centred around the Society's executive director, Alec Marr.

Mr Marr – who has had a strong presence in the group and been prominent in its leadership for 12 years (including three years as executive director) – has said that in his time at the top the Society has grown tenfold. It now has 150 staff and a turnover of \$15 million.

His critics say that 80 of those 150 staff have walked out in the last year and that the Society is losing \$1 million a year.

Both of those things can easily be true, of course. What has become clear though is that the Society's governance system has had major difficulties dealing with the organisation's internal battles.

The group's 2009 Annual General Meeting was held in Canberra but advertised in the *Burnie Advocate*, a small northern Tasmanian local paper. This led to complaints from many Society members that they didn't know about the meeting.

The AGM was attended by only 14 people (the Committee of Management and six others). The business of the meeting was said to be "to ... consider an amendment to the constitution by way of special resolution".

That amendment, passed by the 14 members present at the AGM, raised the number of people needed to call for a Special General Meeting from just 20 members to 10% of the Society's membership, or about 4500!

The meeting also elected a new group executive.

Critics opposing the amendment claimed it aimed to consolidate the power of the existing committee of management, and launched a court case against it.

In the ensuing case, the Tasmanian Supreme Court declared the

meeting, and the executive it elected, invalid (*Esposito v. Wilderness Society Inc*) on the grounds that the Society's constitution required notice of the meeting to be posted "upon the notice board situated within all premises" of the organisation and the advertisement had to specify "the nature of the business to be transacted". ▶

“

No board has an absolute entitlement to its position. Boards hold their role at the sufferance of their members, and must step down if those members want it to go.”



The Wilderness Society played a key role in helping save Queensland's Daintree Rainforest during the 1980s.

It concluded neither of those things had been done.

By the way, if you are wondering about what the law regarding notice in these circumstances is, the court pointed out that:

"The purpose of a notice of meeting is to alert the recipient to what is proposed, so that the recipient may consider the matter, including forming a view whether or not to attend. That is particularly important where a special resolution is in question....."

And:

"The notice would be sufficient if members were alerted to the nature of the problem that was to be discussed and the means for dealing with it It should be 'a fair businesslike' notice in the circumstances and not be one 'likely to mislead'.

In fact, the Court found that: "The subterfuge in relation to the meeting of 5 November 2009 was blatant to the point of dishonesty" – strong language.

Note, incidentally, that in order to

get this fixed the critics had to go to the courts. The state regulator wasn't able (or perhaps wasn't willing) to do anything about it.

The court also knocked down the amendment passed at the meeting – not because it was illegal, but because it had been passed at an invalid meeting.

LESSONS TO NOTE

Contained within the trevails of the Wilderness Society are some important points community sector boards should note:

The rules are the rules

As the Wilderness Society discovered, the rules that govern your group and its committee – including what it can and can't do – can't just be changed at the drop of the hat or at the whim of the current board.

It serves as a reminder of how important it is to take the time to examine and, if necessary, revise your constitution before any conflicts arise.

If your constitution is outdated, see if you can get any necessary

updating done before anybody starts picking sides.

You are in charge only at the indulgence of your members

No board has an absolute entitlement to its position. Boards hold their role at the sufferance of their members, and must step down if those members want it to go.

And the only way to find out whether or not that's the case is to hold an open vote.

The attitude which runs counter to this is sometimes known as Founder's Syndrome – a feeling that the members are there just to support the real owners, a not-for-profit version of Brecht's poem about the East German government:

*After the uprising of the 17th June
The Secretary of the Writer's Union
Had leaflets distributed in
the Stalinallee
Stating that the people
Had forfeited the confidence
of the government
And could win it back only
By redoubled efforts. ►*

*Would it not be easier
In that case for the government
To dissolve the people
And elect another?*

No board is irreplaceable

When your board or your CEO starts feeling that they are irreplaceable or indispensable then your governance risks becoming merely a matter of procedure.

The Wilderness Society held

another AGM in April this year, at which the old committee was bounced and a new one installed.

The new committee moved to dismiss Mr Marr, before instead offering him the chance to resign and receive an exit package.

Mr Marr, who had been on sick leave for sometime after the new committee's election, informed them he was resigning

under duress.

But that's not the end of the matter. Arguments continue, legal action has been hinted at and the Society's credibility in the public eye has taken a considerable hit.

At the same time, the Society's long-term fight for Tasmania's forest may finally have been won (<http://tinyurl.com/2cgyty6>). It's an ironic old world. ■



Cause for concern

Governance and management problems remain – commission

Weak governance and poor management by some board members remain key reasons behind problems within the UK's charitable and not-for-profit sector, according to the UK's Charity Commission.

The Commission's 2009-10 compliance work – outlined in its recent Charities Back on Track report – identified these two areas as the most common areas of concern in its investigatory and compliance work.

Areas of concern included:

- Failures by board members to properly to govern charities;
- Problems with financial management; and
- Issues with accounting and reporting.

Specific areas where there were failures in board member governance included:

- Breaches of governing documents and conflicts of interest;
- Non-compliance and regulatory issues;
- Acting outside group/board objects and allegations of general misconduct by board members.

Despite these issues, the report found most charities were governed well and managed appropriately.

In fact, of the 2400 serious concerns looked at by the Commission's assessment unit, only 180 were escalated to formal investigations. While this was slightly up on the 168 formal investigations in 2008-09, it still only represented 0.1% of the 180,000 registered charities in England and Wales.

Charity Commission chair Dame Suzi Leather said the fact the vast majority of groups in the sector were well-run and properly managed and that the public should have confidence in the sector's operation.

The report can be read here:

www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Library/track10.pdf.

A lack of youthful enthusiasm

Young people grossly under-represented on UK boards

Not only confirmed what many of us already know – that not-for-profit board members between the ages of 18 and 24 are few and far between – but have investigated some of the reasons behind the problem.

Less than 1% of all charity board members across England and Wales are aged between 18 and 24, despite the same age group representing 12% of the two countries' adult population.

The revealing, but not entirely unexpected, figures were released as part of the UK Charity Commission's new report *A Breath of Fresh Air: Young People as Charitable Trustees*.

The commission's report involved interviews with young volunteers and young board members.

It aimed to explore the reasons behind the under-representation of young people on boards, as well as investigate any action it – or groups themselves – could take to remedy the situation.

Among its other findings were:

- More than 65% of UK charity board members were aged 50 or more.
- Only 4200 board members were aged 18-24, from a total of 810,000.
- Less than 30 board members of that 810,000 are aged under 18. ▶

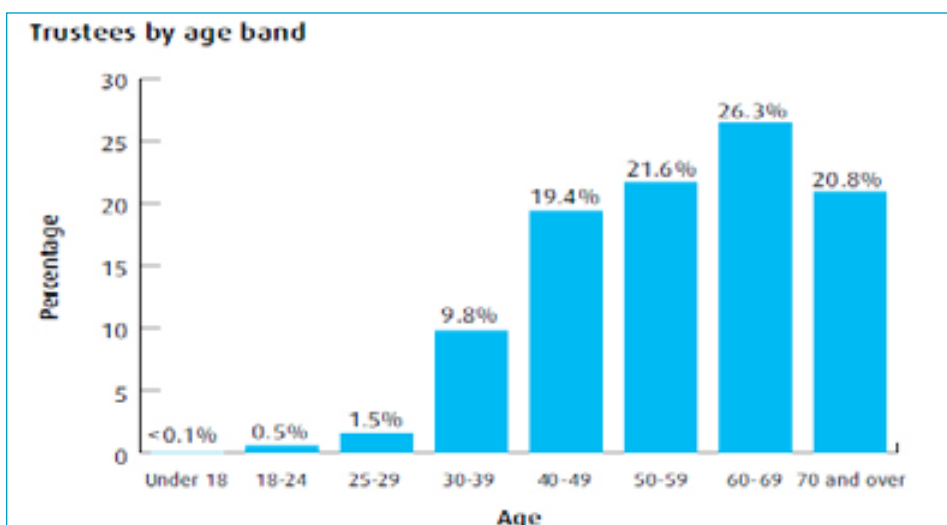
The challenges of attracting young board members

Research conducted in the UK last year found the following four reasons as the major obstacles to young people's involvement on charity boards.

- Lack of time to involve young people (17% of responses)
- Young people not interested (17%)
- Cost of involving young people (13%)
- Lack of senior staff buy-in (13%)

Other reasons included a reluctance among older board or committee members to accept young people, as well as the inability to find or support prospective young board members.

Source: *The Young People and Governance report from UK group Participation Works (2009).*



Source: UK Charity Commission

- Predictably, groups which worked with young people, or on youth-related issues, were most likely to have a person aged between 18 and 24 on their board.

UNDERREPRESENTED ON BOARDS, AND IN SECTOR GOVERNANCE

A second report – this one from the UK’s nfpSynergy – has backed the UK Charity Commission’s findings and asserted that young people are significantly under-represented in not-for-profit governance.

The report – *Young People in Governance* – found few young people were involved in governance, despite many of them having plenty to offer.

“They can bring a fresh perspective, energy and dynamism, and a closeness to service users and organisations need to recognise that young people have something unique and valuable to bring to governance,” it states.

PATHS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO JOIN BOARDS

The Charity Commission study found most young people joined a board through volunteering.

In fact, none of the young people surveyed had originally intended to become a board member, and almost all of them had volunteered with the group prior to joining the board.

This meant they already felt committed to the group and the cause before joining the board; they had already been “won over” to the group and convinced of its worth.

Some of the young people surveyed had a background in volunteering – or had become involved with charities – through their schools or universities. Others had come

into contact with charities or volunteering through their workplaces.

VIEWS ON CHARITY BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Charity Commission report found young volunteers not on a board had little understanding of what the role would entail.

They did believe the role would be less enjoyable than volunteering, and were concerned about both how demanding and time-consuming being on a board would be, and whether they had the necessary skills and experience for the role.

They also emphasised the importance of having their contribution as a board member appreciated, and that they would receive adequate support in their role.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCES AS BOARD MEMBERS

The report found that young people felt they brought new energy and ambitious ideas to boards they served on, but also felt that there were times where their efforts and skills were not being fully utilised by the groups they worked with.

Induction and education processes remained an obstacle to some.

“Some young trustees had experienced difficulties in carrying out the actual role, and were not provided with induction material or other support when they first took on the role,” the report stated.

“Some were challenged about their ability to carry out trustee responsibilities, both by older trustees and by service users. However, these young trustees had persevered and found ways to overcome the frustrations and ▶

Getting young people on board

Last year *Board Builder* spoke with Bec Brown who, at that stage, had become chair of community television station Channel 31’s board at the age of 23.

Among the advice she had for groups working to get young people on board was:

- Involve young people in sub-committees as a training ground towards future board membership.
- Have a supportive board and board members.
- Allow the young board members’ knowledge and experiences to shine through in their board role.
- Better communicate and advertise board opportunities so that young people know about them.

“

The report found that young people felt they brought new energy and ambitious ideas to boards they served on, but also felt that there were times where their efforts and skills were not being fully utilised by the groups they worked with.”

barriers they experienced.”

One clear benefit identified by those young people involved in the report was that they were able to gain experience and develop skills they would not usually have the chance to gain until they were much older.

HOW TO GET MORE YOUNG PEOPLE ON BOARD

Both the Charity Commission and nfpSynergy reports contained a number of tips to help groups gain greater involvement from young people.

According to the Charity Commission, one key way groups can encourage more young people to consider board positions is to nurture them as volunteers.

“The research findings show that volunteering is a key route into charity trusteeship for young people. Charities should consider how they can nurture and support existing volunteers to step up to trusteeship,” the report stated.

Other important factors include:

- Building relationships with groups of which young people

are members.

- Working with young people to promote board opportunities via a variety of mediums, including social media.
- Valuing young people’s contributions when they are on board, as well as recognising and utilising the skills they bring to the table.
- Establishing a solid induction program for new board members.
- Communicating more effectively during the board member recruitment process. An initial focus might be on what the role involves and what young people could contribute, followed by more general information about the role and about being a board member.

nfpSynergy emphasised the importance of clarifying key aims for young people in governance roles, and added there were a number of different models for encouraging young people’s involvement.

They included:

- Boards composed solely of young people;
- Advisory boards;
- Consultation among young people on papers presented to the board.

And support is again identified as vital: ‘Support is key for young people in governance roles – whether in the form of a mentor, a project worker or member of staff charged with the role, or other trustees.

“It will help to ensure that young people are able to make a meaningful contribution to governance and deal with the responsibilities a governance role entails.”

The full Charity Commission report can be read here: <http://tinyurl.com/38k7eyp>. The nfpSynergy report can be read here: <http://tinyurl.com/35u6xwn>.

- *How does your group encourage young people to get involved as board members and decision makers? Tell us by emailing: chris@ourcommunity.com.au.* ■

THEY SAID IT

“Our duty is to be useful, not according to our desires but according to our powers.”

— Henri F. Amiel, Swiss writer (1821-1881).

Meetings, *bloody* meetings

Practical steps towards improvement

Meetings – particularly board or committee meetings – get pretty bad press but only because they are notoriously badly run. Board Scribe DAVID BAILEY investigates some very practical ways to improve them.

Are you lonely? Work on your own? Hate having to make decisions? Then hold a meeting! You can give the illusion of progress without actually doing anything! You can meet other people, feel important, impress or bore your colleagues, share blame for decisions, and daydream in peace...and all in work time!

– Unkown

When we talk about meetings, what do we mean?

An event where minutes are kept and hours are lost? Possibly – but I'm thinking meetings are more of an opportunity for a group of people to demonstrate that the principles of synergy can apply.

Here are some issues that you really need to consider if you are organising a meeting.

PURPOSE

Let's be absolutely clear, unless your meeting has a clear purpose it will meander along until, at its conclusion, attendees wander out mumbling: "What was that all about?"

Here are some questions you can

ask in order to kickstart good meeting planning.

Before organising the meeting:

- Why am I planning this particular meeting?
- What am I trying to achieve at this meeting?
- What do my stakeholders want from this meeting?

And, if we hold the meeting and it is successful:

- What will we have done?
- What will have happened?
- What will be the immediate output?
- What will be the medium to long term impact or outcome?

- What will have changed?
- How will my stakeholders, the meeting attendees and I feel?

After thinking about these questions you should ask yourself whether a meeting is really the best way to achieve what you want to achieve. It may not be.

PARTICIPANTS

Now that you know what you want to achieve at the meeting; the next question is who needs to be at the meeting to maximise your chances of success.

- Which groups, interests and viewpoints need to be represented?
- What knowledge or expertise needs to be readily available? ►

- Who must or must not be there?
- Who should or should not be there?

Sometimes the person you least want at the meeting is the person who most needs to be there.

I once ran a planning workshop for a national research organisation that had initially chosen not to invite the key Government advisers in that field.

Some fancy last minute footwork got them there, and ultimately the ongoing collaboration between the two areas was considerably enhanced. But it could have so easily gone the other way.

SPECIAL NEEDS

As diversity becomes an increasing reality, people from a variety of backgrounds and with many different needs may need to be at your meeting. Some may need extra consideration to maximise the value of their contribution:

- People from different cultural backgrounds;
- People who have difficulty with English;
- People with low hearing, low vision or impaired mobility;
- People with dietary requirements;
- People participating by video or phone link.

If you don't know the people attending your meeting, contact them beforehand and ask if they have any special needs. If they do, they might be able to suggest alternate solutions for you.

TYPE

Once you are clear about the meeting's purpose, it's a good time to sort out the type of meeting it is

going to be.

Organisational change consultants Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal identify four different meeting types that dictate planning:

- **Structural** – formal occasions for informing and deciding;
- **Human** – informal occasions for involvement and sharing;
- **Political** – competitive occasions to win or lose;
- **Symbolic** – sacred occasions to reinforce, celebrate or transform the culture.

Colloquially, these four meeting types have come to be known as “the factory, the family, the arena

and the temple”.

You can have multiple meeting types at the same meeting, but sometimes it is difficult to segue from one to the other without a break – or a change in costume!

AGENDA

The next step to think about is the most logical flow of the meeting agenda to maximise your chances of success.

Firstly, you need to prepare a draft agenda while recognising that the draft agenda may change as attendees start preparing for the meeting.

If agenda papers are required, ask ▶

Other helpful hints towards successful meetings

- Try not to make any assumptions about meeting attendees – if you are unsure about something, seek further information from them.
- If you think the meeting may be difficult, consider engaging a professional facilitator – it will give you independence but maybe not status or power.
- If you want to concentrate on the content of the meeting rather than the process, consider inviting someone to attend whose sole responsibility is to take minutes
- If you are anxious about a presentation, have a run-through with trusted but honest colleagues beforehand.
- Before the meeting starts, deal with the standard housekeeping issues - mobile phones, refreshments and amenities.
- If you are concerned about how or where the meeting is going, take a “thinking break” to consider your options. If all else fails, ask the meeting to help you develop a way forward.
- If the purpose of your meeting includes making a decision, be well prepared – if you can't get unanimous agreement, consensus or a large majority, it may best to refer the decision to the key stakeholder or a sub-committee of attendees.
- Keep a summary record of the meeting for future reference – make sure it is distributed to all attendees within a week and that the original is stored appropriately and can be easily retrieved.
- Within reason, help attendees to get some of what they want from the meeting. But remember that it is your meeting and you should aim to get what you want from it.

yourself the following:

- Who needs to prepare each agenda paper?
- Will the papers need approval/clearance and if so by who?
- When will the finalised papers need to be with you?

Assuming the papers will be distributed before the meeting to allow time for consideration, think about how and when you want them delivered – electronically, by hand or by mail?

Also think about how you can help the authors prepare their paper. Can you:

- Provide an agenda template?
- Set a maximum length for the document?
- Suggest key headings?
- Advise whether a paper is for discussion, for information or for action?

A few focusing questions can provide a great starting point,

TIMING

Scheduling your meeting with electronic collaboration tools like Microsoft Outlook can be easy. But for an important meeting more planning is required. Ask:

- **Do your preferred attendees have family responsibilities, work part-time or have regular out-of-work commitments?** One of my toughest scheduling tasks was organising a weekend planning workshop for a

Government agency where one of the key executives was the single parent of a teenager.

- **What time of day should you hold your meeting?** Working parents with school drop-off or pick-up responsibilities may have problems with an early morning or late afternoon meeting.
- **What day of the week?** Avoid clashes with long weekends by not meeting on Mondays or Fridays, and be aware of competing priorities like school holidays, long weekends or sector conferences.
- **Does your meeting bear any relationship to any other events?** Be aware of any related events around the same time that may maximise the success of your meeting, and schedule your meeting before or after as required. Attendees will appreciate an opportunity to travel once, rather than twice, to take in a distant meeting and a sector conference.
- **For how long should the meeting go?** My experience would suggest that people can concentrate for no more than 90 minutes without a break in format. If the meeting is longer, change format or take a break.

FORMAT

You now have to determine the meeting's format.

It will depend on the types of

activities the attendees will be engaged in – for example: What is the most important activity at the meeting – is it listening and learning, discussing issues and making decisions, brainstorming, reinforcing group norms and values, or socialising and networking?

Once this is clarified you can think about how attendees will be best accommodated – around a table, in rows like a classroom, in syndicates like a restaurant, or in open forum like at a cocktail party?

VENUE

The format of the meeting will go a long way towards determining the venue and equipment required. Ask:

- How big does the venue need to be?
 - o How many attendees will there be and how will they be seated?
 - o Does the venue need to have break-out rooms?
 - o What venues are available to you and how much can you afford to pay?
- What audio-visual & other equipment do you need?
 - o What can you provide yourself and what do you need the venue to provide?
- Is the venue accessible?
 - o What is parking and public transport like? ►

- o Does it cater for attendees with special needs?
- Do you want catering, and if so, what do you need and how will you provide it?

RISK

At the end of this planning phase you still need to ask yourselves one further question – what could go wrong?

Think about:

- What you will do if key people back out or send someone

without authority.

- How long you will wait if the scheduled start time comes and there isn't a quorum.
- What you will do if attendees don't get the required pre-reading done
- If you have a low-tech back-up plan in case your technology breaks down.
- How you will bring the meeting back on track if it gets bogged down

- How you will move the discussion forward if there is heated non-productive disagreement
- What you will do if the scheduled finish time arrives and you haven't completed everything on the agenda.

COMMITTEES

While the advice in this article relates to both one-off and committee meetings, the latter pose a number of specific challenges because committee members will hopefully work together over a long period of time.

Here are some suggestions:

- Don't be too task-oriented to start with – Spend time developing relationships and cohesion within the group including the possibility of team-building activities and psychometric profiling – trust me, these are wonderful conversation and relationship starters
- Reduce surprises by making the random routine – Develop a standing committee meeting agenda, develop a committee calendar so that you know what issues will be discussed at each meeting, agree the frequency and length of meetings and fix the meeting dates in people's diaries as early as possible
- Resist any pressure to hold the meetings as required – That will only mean that each meeting will attract the same heavy burden of organisational effort required to hold a one-off meeting. ■

DAVID BAILEY

David is a member of the Australian Institute of Management, with qualifications in earth sciences, industrial psychology and a diploma in Corporate Governance. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Community Practice & Governance and is also a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



He has worked as a business analyst in the utility sector, a policy adviser and program manager in the Australian Public Service, and as a minerals exploration geologist.

In 1999 he established the Bailey Consulting Group Pty Ltd – a management consulting practice specialising in project management, program evaluation, group facilitation, and executive coaching.

He is currently chair of Australian Business Volunteers (ABV), having joined the organisation as a volunteer in 1992.

He has a passionate interest in the development of organisations through their people, and is very active in the not-for-profit sector. He has previously volunteered with a number of organisations, including the Canberra Hospital Auxiliary, ACT Deafness Resource Centre and Indigenous Community Volunteers.

All stressed out

Reducing the chances of burnout

Not-for-profit and community boards should be at the forefront of any action or initiatives designed to reduce the burnout among those who volunteer or work within their organisations.

CHRIS RICHES looks at some ways your board can play its part.

Time and again we are told about the number of people who, while willing to support not-for-profit groups, end up leaving the sector because they are overworked or over-stressed.

Studies from around the world have told us that well-intentioned and well-meaning volunteers, as well as staff, can be driven from the sector in a hail of stress, low pay and low support.

A recent US study which focussed on young people who worked with not-for-profits found:

- The most common reasons young charity workers leave work in the sector were burnout and low pay.
- The most common reasons young charity workers gave for not pursuing leadership jobs were the heavy work burdens and concerns about the pressure from board members and grantmakers.

The study – compiled by the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network – also found serious concerns over

the fact that those in leadership positions in the sector were either too busy or just unwilling to share responsibilities.

Given this environment of heavy work burdens, an unwillingness to share responsibilities, low pay (if people are being paid) and pressure from internal and external parties, it is little wonder burnout and stress remain such issues.

This means boards must lead the way, be proactive and put in place measures to at least reduce the likelihood of stress and burnout, or their effects.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

There are a number of tools and techniques you can put in your toolbox to help fight burnout; generally speaking they can be divided into two categories: group behaviour/culture and training/resourcing.

Group behaviour and culture

Group culture and attitudes can play a major role in reducing burnout. And in many ways, that culture and behaviour is driven

from the top – at board level.

Some aspects of group behaviour and culture are also intrinsically linked with training and resourcing and can even inform future resourcing and training needs.

Lead by example: Your group can't attempt to reduce burnout if the board is unwilling or unable to lead by example. ▶

“

Group culture and attitudes can play a major role in reducing burnout. And in many ways, that culture and behaviour is driven from the top – at board level.”



Group leaders must practice what they preach. If not, their words will have a hollow ring.

Develop job/position descriptions: One way to clarify what is expected of your organisation's people is to spell it out directly in position descriptions.

These descriptions also allow boards to regulate the tasks for which people are responsible and help avoid overloading any single role or position with too much to do.

Make clear what you expect: A problem can occur when there is confusion over what is expected from people in a certain position or role in your group.

Often people express a willingness to take on a role yet find themselves overwhelmed when the full extent of their responsibilities become clear.

Again, position descriptions clarify roles and responsibilities, and should be provided to people before they sign on.

Encourage a culture where

people can speak up: If your group's culture makes members and volunteers ill at ease about admitting to feeling stressed, or speaking up about issues, the stress will only build.

The board needs to make very clear its desire for people to speak up, as well as its willingness to both listen to reasonable concerns and to try to address them.

Also, proper communication channels and procedures should be established to ensure any feedback is heard and acted on.

Offer variety in roles: Burnout isn't just caused by overwork. Monotonous roles where your supporters do the same thing over and over will very quickly cause dissatisfaction.

Maybe your people can share or swap roles occasionally, and ensure there is sufficient variety within each role to reduce the chance of burnout through boredom.

Have an attitude of “do, delegate or dump”: Everyone, from the board down, should remember the

mantra of “do, delegate or dump”. That means people either:

- Do the job or task;
- Delegate it or perhaps break it into smaller pieces for a number of people to work on, or;
- Dump it, or at the very least re-think both the task and how it should be done.

Entrust and empower others through succession and succession planning: To cater for the time when board members, senior staff, trusted volunteers and other supporters move on, succession plans should be developed to ensure smooth transitions between the outgoing and the incoming.

Groups also need to entrust younger board members, staff or supporters with greater responsibilities if they show a willingness to do them.

This allows “newer” board members to progress into more important roles and improve their skills. It also allows older group ▶

or board members to gradually reduce their role while retaining a constructive presence, –and passing on their knowledge.

Resourcing and training

As mentioned in the previous section, there is cross-over between aspects of resourcing and training, and those of attitude and group culture.

For example, it is impossible to empower younger or less-experienced group members to take responsibility unless there is adequate training and guidance to help them succeed.

Some tools and techniques to consider include:

Clear job and position

descriptions: Position descriptions ensure roles and positions are clearly defined and are not overloaded with too many responsibilities.

This allows those joining your group, or moving within it, to have a clear idea of their role and your expectations.

Induction programs: Induction programs should play a major part in helping newcomers acquaint

themselves with both your group and the role they will play.

For some roles the programs will be longer than others. For volunteers helping in a small role there might only be the need for briefings.

But laying this basis again makes clear the roles and responsibilities newcomers will have, as well as your group's expectations. Clarity in these areas helps reduce the chances of burnout.

Training: Those with training will perform their role better. Logically, this should lead to more efficient, as well as less stressed, staff, volunteers and helpers simply because they know what they are doing.

For many groups training might just consist of an induction program. But sometimes a more intensive training regimen might be needed – including mentoring, external training or a role on a sub-committee to “learn the ropes”.

Regular reviews: Constant feedback is a key part of showing that your group listens to its people and takes note of their opinions, as well as offering your own opinions and viewpoints in return.

Regular reviews also mean your group is actually talking with its staff, volunteers or board members, increasing the chances you will pick up on an issue which has the potential to cause bigger problems down the road if not addressed.

Resourcing: Adequate resourcing is a key to ensuring those who help you, work for you or volunteer are able to fulfil their role efficiently and confidently, as well as reducing the chances of burnout through stress.

It also shows that your group is willing to invest in its “workforce”.

Resourcing can cover a wide range of areas – from up-to-date information technology to good documentation and role descriptions, adequate training opportunities or even just comfortable chairs and half-decent coffee for the office!

Some aspects of resourcing come at a cost, others are relatively inexpensive. But most should be viewed as part of the price to ensure your people can do their job and help your fulfil your aims. ■

THEY SAID IT

“You never reach the promised land. You can march towards it.”

– James Callaghan, British Prime Minister (1976-79).

A handy option

Good advice on advisory committees

US website Blue Avocado provides a good guide for groups which have, or are interested in employing, advisory committees or sub-committees.

There are a number of benefits to considering an advisory committee or sub-committee to complement your board.

They can take a bit of pressure off your group's board, provide a real focus to activities covered by the committee, and give people experience and confidence that may allow them to become great board members in the future.

But with benefits can also come problems.

Sometimes these committees can operate beyond the bounds of their area of responsibility – especially if their terms of operation are unclear.

At other times they can outlive their usefulness and end up “just hanging around”, clogging up decision-making processes and causing conflict and confusion.

US website Blue Avocado has laid out a handy general guide for the formation and use of advisory committees or sub-committees.

SIX KEY GUIDELINES TO COMMITTEE FORMATION

According to Blue Avocado, there are six key guidelines to forming and successfully operating advisory boards.

1. Put in place boundaries and

structure: Groups should develop a written description of the responsibilities, activities and limits on authority of the advisory board. This description should be shared with those interested in joining the committee, and those you are approaching to take on committee positions.

2. Define the separation of board and advisory committee: The lines between the bodies must be clear, with the roles of both bodies easily distinguishable. Spell out this separation and make it clear to everyone involved.

3. Committee leader: Blue Avocado suggests a community leader might be able to head the committee. However, a better suggestion is to have an existing board member chair the committee. That board member can become the “link” between board and committee, as well as easily report to the board on the committee's activities.

4. What's in a name? Plenty! The way the organisation refers to the board and the committee must ensure the separation is clear – don't call both of them “committees”, for example.

5. Ensure you have the time: Committees like these require a

commitment of time and thought. Without either the committee will not function to its fullest potential, nor will it get the best out of those serving on the committee.

According to Blue Avocado: “Too many organisations have erred by creating advisory boards where members felt ignored, or as if they were being asked for donations in the disguise of being asked to advise.”

6. Don't be afraid to disband: Your organisation shouldn't be afraid to disband or wind up an advisory committee or sub-committee if it has served its purpose, or if it is no longer serving the purpose for which it was formed.

Too many groups allow these committees to linger longer than they should, a situation which can cause disruption and hamper decision making.

Putting in place sunset clauses or definitive timelines for disbanding are ways to encourage action on the issue.

The full guide, as well as a sample letter of invitation aimed at people you wish to join your advisory committee, can be found here:

<http://www.blueavocado.org/node/567>. ■

Our Board Doctors help to cure some common Board ills



There is nothing like experience to breed good judgement. In each edition of Board Builder we extract the know-how of experienced “Board Doctors,” finding a remedy for some of the common problems that threaten the health and vitality of non-profit boards and committees.

DILEMMA: “I have been approached to join the board of a local organisation I was once a member of. I don’t think the organisation is heading in the right direction at the present time. Should I join up and try to make a change or steer clear of this one?”

CINDY BAKER:

Cindy Baker is Our Community’s Queensland State Manager of training, a Telstra Businesswoman of the year finalist in 2009 and a Chamber of Commerce Presidents Award recipient. She has held a number of executive positions on community, business and government sector boards and has both Masters Degree in Professional Studies and a Post Graduate Degree in Inter-Professional Leadership.

First Glance – How bad is the problem?

This might be tough, but worthy of strong consideration, because if you’re not willing to step up to the plate to try get things on track, then why should anyone else?

Decisions relating to joining a local organisation, especially as a board

member, should be informed ones. You will need to equip yourself with a range of details about the organisation’s current status, and what they are willing to do in the future, before taking the leap of faith.

Keep in mind, perceptions can be misleading if not based on fact, problems may appear bigger than they really are, and in other cases you will find you were wise to be concerned.

Being willing to join a board to specifically to make a positive difference is a wonderful ambition to have. All board members CAN and SHOULD contribute to make a positive difference, but you cannot be expected to do it alone.

Let’s face it – it can be hard to attract volunteers.

So if we all took the approach

of: “It is not going well”, or “I don’t like what is happening, so I won’t get involved”, then nothing would change. And without a board, organisations fold.

Provided you do not have to compromise your values and any identified risks can be overcome through an agreed process, then it is worth serious consideration but be prepared, change might take time.

First Step – What is the most burning issue? What needs to be done?

First steps in making an informed decision to join a board would include getting the information you need to assess the risks involved and determine the likelihood of you being able to contribute to positive changes. Some of the things you should identify first: ►

- Is there a documented strategic or business plan? Have they consulted with their community and does the plan align with the needs of the community?
- Assess how meetings are conducted and decisions made – ask for a copy of the organisation’s constitution and if possible review minutes of previous meetings.
- What is the financial position of the organisation? Ask for a copy of its annual report and current financial statements
- Does the organisation have insurance and legal requirements covered?
- Are policies and procedures in place?
- What will be your role on the board; do you have the skills and who else is currently at the helm – and what are their roles and skills?

If things don’t look good, it is worth considering approaching other board members to establish some agreed frameworks that you would like to work on together, if you were to become a valued member of their board. Establishing good governance and strategic planning is the key to putting any organisation on the right path.

Before making a decision, explore why the organisation is heading in their current direction and build trust and develop a relationship with the other members on the board. Identify if they are willing to work with you through a team approach to address some of your concerns, because you won’t change things on your own!

Next Steps – What other steps should be taken?

Learn about change management as a useful tool. It is a process

used for a structured approach to transition individuals, teams and organisations from their current state to a desired future state.

It is about empowering others to accept and embrace changes to their current environment. It should not be sold to others, but involve consultation and planning together and will generally only occur when the need for change is both identified and understood.

Develop a suggested strategy for community consultation and identify if the direction the organisation is taking is aligned to the community’s needs. Everyone will need to understand more about why change is needed before it can become effective.

Involving and informing people about the organisation and the services it might offer in the future, also creates opportunities for others to participate in planning and implementing the changes, which lightens your burden, spreads the organisational load, and creates a sense of ownership and familiarity among the people affected.

Training in topics including governance, and strategic and business planning are among those available to boards that can help through the Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance (www.ourcommunity.com.au/training).

Red Flags – How can we stop this happening again?

With good planning that is inclusive of members, stakeholders and the wider community, it is more likely membership is retained and the direction of the organisation is aligned to the needs of the community. If this was sound, you probably wouldn’t have left in the first place.

Planning can be done through a range of stages and consultative approaches which might include:

- Doing some research on what your community needs are, confirm if the demographics are changing and will it affect what the organisation does in the future
- Holding a board retreat to get the planning process started, develop a draft framework and strengthen relationships at the same time
- Running a series of community consultation sessions, allowing for input and feedback or at least send your draft plan to a range of community members and/or stakeholders for comment

Most of all be open minded, prepared and well informed before making any decisions for the future, and don’t expect to make changes on your own. ▶



Decisions relating to joining a local organisation, especially as a board member, should be informed ones. You will need to equip yourself with a range of details about the organisation’s current status, and what they are willing to do in the future, before taking the leap of faith.”

KATE DEMPSEY:

Dr Kate Dempsey is an organisational consultant, as well as an academic – lecturing on organisational leadership and change management to Masters of Education and Masters of Organisational Leadership students at Monash University.

First Glance – How bad is the problem?

You could argue that there is really no problem at all with this situation.

Not-for-profit groups are generally run by committed and passionate volunteers. If you have a desire to help forge the new direction of the organisation, then why not get on the board and be active in planning the way forward?

But I advise a period of reflection before agreeing. Consider the position and knowledge of the person asking and consider his/her motivation.

Also consider your own motivation for wanting to join. Your reflection on these two matters will allow you to decide whether to steer clear or not.

First Step – What is the most burning issue? What needs to be done?

My first question to you is: Why you were asked and by whom?

Does the person asking have the support of members of the board in asking you? Indeed, does the whole board support your appointment (or perhaps just an unhappy minority)?

Does the person know your history with the organisation? Do they know your views about the direction being taken? Are you being set up to drive a wedge

between factions within the board, or between the board and some members?

It is often flattering to be asked to join a board, but there are many powerful and unspoken issues that need to be considered before plunging in. Think about what role you are really being asked to play by this appointment; think about what the ‘right direction’ might mean for the organisation.

In addition to considering the motivation of the person asking you to join, you need to consider your own motivation. If I were to advise you, I would want to know two things: Why are you no longer a member, and how long ago did the break occur?

The answers to these questions go to the heart of the issue.

To know whether to take up the offer, you must know if your decision is motivated by a calm desire to see the organisation grow and prosper or by a personal grudge of some kind for “bad” decisions taken earlier which perhaps led to your departure.

If there is still anger and heat in your feelings, then perhaps it is better to steer clear for a while.

A position on a board means putting aside personal preferences for the good of the organisation as a whole. Are you able to see this clearly at present? Do you have a realistic expectation of your own capacity (and that of the board) to influence the direction of the organisation?

Next Steps – What other steps should be taken?

Personal research regarding the current situation for the organisation may be in order as well as a period of self-reflection.

For example, you may want to correct or clarify some of the impressions you have of the current direction (because maybe you do not know the plans of the board as well as you think).

You may want to see the strategic plan or financial documentation before joining. And you may want to meet and chat with the board and canvass opinion of various members as to their view of its current direction.

You may want to question the person who asked you to join about their views of the organisation and why they have asked you. The best decision will be made after the facts have been gathered and when you have taken time for reflection.

Red Flags – How can we stop this happening again?

Not-for-profit boards are always seeking talented, committed people. ►

“

I advise a period of reflection before agreeing. Consider the position and knowledge of the person asking and consider his/her motivation.”

And often it is difficult to find and attract good people to the board.

From my point of view, there is no problem in asking people known to the organisation to join the board. The key to making it work well is having a transparent process.

An open process of application is the way to go. Having a regular application time – for example, in preparation for the AGM – with a sub-committee of the board charged with creating application criteria and considering applicants on merit is the best system.

Alternatively since the example seems to cite a member-based organisation, candidates should put their credentials forward to be voted on by members at the AGM.

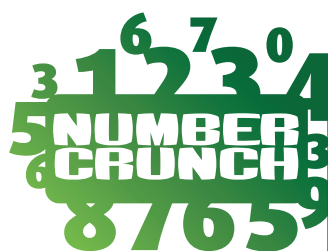
If the board needs to fill a casual vacancy in between AGMs it needs to be very clear as to why a person is approached; the skills that

person offers to the board and what the board hopes to achieve by having them as part of the team.

This needs to be an open discussion with the whole board. Some boards offer candidates the opportunity to sit in on a board meeting before a decision to join is taken.

Conflict of interest is a crucial issue for boards and it is not simply a financial matter. All potential conflicts must be made known from the start.

And as a candidate you need to be up front about your views when interviewed or approached. As a board member you are responsible to the whole membership for the good governance of the organisation. Similarly, the board needs to be clear on what it expects and is looking for in a new board member. ■



46%

Forty-six percent of respondents identified budgetary concerns – most chiefly, a lack of money – as the main obstacle in managing risk. But 24% pinpointed a lack of understanding at board and/or management level as a major issue.

(Source: Not-for-Profit Risk Survey 2010 from PPB. Full report: <http://tinyurl.com/2ff6dhm>.)

A Year of Listening

Knowledge and staff retention key challenges for local boards

Maintaining institutional knowledge and retaining staff remain real challenges for not-for-profit boards, according to a major Australian report.

Lower than required funding levels mean not-for-profit boards face challenges in retaining staff and vital institutional knowledge, according to a research project report from Connecting Up Australia.

What do Australia's Nonprofits Really Want – a Year of Listening is the title of the report, which was compiled from a year-long research project involving interviews and case studies with more than 900 Australian groups.

The research identified four key issues of concern for groups in the sector:

1. Government funding;
2. Fundraising and alternative income development;
3. Human resources – volunteers, staff and board;
4. Research, capacity development and evaluation.

Of most relevance to boards were two broad areas:

NEW SKILL SETS FOR BOARDS

According to respondents, the need for better development of board skills sets is vital, particularly when it comes to their expertise

in areas of emerging importance or specialist areas in which some boards might not have the necessary expertise.

Those areas were identified as:

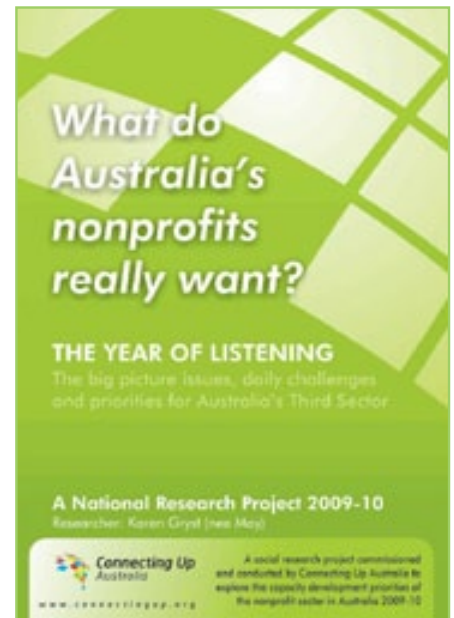
- Marketing;
- Public and media relations;
- Looking for corporate sponsorships;
- Business development;
- Information communication technology management; and
- Financial management.

The inability to attract, afford or find these specialist skill sets means not-for-profit boards and staff are behind the eight ball. And the inability to pay people who have these skill sets makes it difficult to compete with groups in other sectors which can.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The study also identified the challenges boards had in ensuring their groups' human resources were up to scratch.

Groups which responded to the report's surveys felt that funding levels not meeting service delivery requirements was a key part of the ►





problem.

This resulted in underpaid (or unpaid) staff doing more than their fair share of hours, in turn leading to:

- Staff burn out;
- Low productivity;
- Board member burn out;
- High staff turnover.

A constant loss of staff and others with knowledge away from your organisation has the potential to be hugely damaging in terms of the loss of institutional knowledge, inefficiencies due to repetition of training, the constant challenge needed to recruit staff to fill the gaps and the loss of continuity of service at the group.

Respondents highlighted the desire for more capacity building grants. They felt it would help improve groups' skills as well as their knowledge, with the hope that staff and board members would be able

to use these skills to contribute more to their groups.

THE REPORT RESPONSE

In response to the report's findings, its authors have called for action – from governments, funders and the sector itself.

“There is a need for shifts in the way we understand and value this sector – from the views of the government and business sectors through to the nonprofit sector itself,” the report stated.

“One of the most important shifts will need to be innovation through collaboration between nonprofit organisations. There is also a great need for investment from all sectors and stakeholders in capacity development to equip the sector to deal with the contextual pressures it faces and to support it to thrive.”

The full report can be downloaded here: www.tinyurl.com/au/sd6. ■

“

A constant loss of staff and others with knowledge away from your organisation has the potential to be hugely damaging in terms of the loss of institutional knowledge, inefficiencies due to repetition of training, the constant challenge needed to recruit staff to fill the gaps and the loss of continuity of service at the group.”

Can we move beyond ritual?

Strategic planning – a critical examination

The importance of strategic planning is often drummed into boards. But, as Board Scribe ALAN HOUGH found during his PhD research on the role of board directors in organisational performance, strategic planning in and of itself is no guarantee of success.

Have you sat through prolonged strategic planning workshops where people became involved in lengthy debates about the difference between “mission” and “vision”; where there was a great deal of word-smithing of goals and objectives, and then some months

later, wondered what all the effort was for because it did not seem to produce any tangible changes in the organisation?

While board involvement in strategic planning is strongly recommended by some, I wish to be provocative and encourage a

more critical approach.

Of course, there are cogent arguments for strategic planning and for boards to be involved in such planning.

Strategic planning can clarify organisational purpose and ▶



direction, and enhance organisational performance.

The argument for board involvement in strategic planning is that it helps the board focus on the one of the more important governance tasks – clarifying what an organisation is there to achieve – and can allow directors to contribute their expertise towards the achievement of these ends.

Indeed, several research studies have demonstrated statistical associations between board involvement in planning and outcomes such as improved organisational effectiveness.

But just as there are studies that have demonstrated positive associations, there are also fine-grained case studies that demonstrate that there can be also little impact or even negative outcomes from strategic planning.

So what are some of the factors that can make the difference?

In this article, I present data from my research in five not-for-profit boards, all of which were engaged in strategic planning processes at the time of the research.

Over the course of 14 months, I observed 66 board and other meetings in the five organisations.

The research was also informed by interviews with directors and CEOs, and by access to the boards’ papers. For the sake of anonymity, let’s

call the organisations Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta and Echo.

- Alpha and Bravo did not complete their planning processes despite working on them – on and off – for 14 and 13 months respectively.
- Charlie’s board completed its plan, but was slow implementing it.
- In Delta, a plan was completed, but strategising often occurred outside the planning process.
- In Echo, a plan was devised and implemented, but much of the work was done by the CEO and the board’s president, rather than with the active involvement of the full board.

These real-world examples challenge assumptions that planning is a relatively straightforward process which should involve the full board. So what explains these experiences?

STRATEGISING DOES NOT NEED TO INVOLVE PLANNING

While planning allows the opportunity for deliberate strategising, it suffers from what Professor Henry Mintzberg has called the Fallacy of Pre-Determination – that is, just because we plan something does not mean that it can be achieved.

There are many things that can prevent the realisation of an

intended strategy, both within the organisation (for example, a staff member who was passionate about the strategy leaves the organisation) and outside it (for example, you can’t interest funders in a proposed program).

Prof Mintzberg instead proposes a much more fluid approach to strategising, with strategy emerging over time and in response to experience.

A good example of this more fluid and tentative approach to strategising was the way Delta’s board developed and implemented a new fundraising program.

The board initially decided to explore the possibility of the new fundraising program, but also decided it would first investigate some of the basic practical considerations before committing itself. It found that luck was on its side in some of these basic matters.

After checking out these basic considerations, the board then decided to investigate the next level of practical considerations. It was only after some months of investigating these possibilities, in increasing levels of detail, that the board made a firm decision to go ahead with the fundraising program.

The board was able to move quickly to implement the new program, which ultimately proved to be very successful. ▶

MOMENTUM CAN BE LOST

Bravo's board was one which did not complete its planning process, despite over a year of effort.

The issue was first raised at the February meeting, where the board decided to have a joint board-staff planning workshop. This could not be held before April because the busy professionals who constituted the board could not meet until then.

At the April workshop the proposed strategies were agreed in broad terms, but it was decided that they need further development and prioritisation, and this should occur at the May meeting.

The May meeting was cancelled as it would not have a quorum due to the competing commitments of directors. At the June meeting, the Staff Representative reported back that the staff felt the draft objectives were more operational than strategic, and it was agreed that board members should further consider the matter.

The July meeting did not proceed due to lack of a quorum. The CEO suggested that directors should make comments prior to the August meeting, but only a third of directors did so and it was decided the material should be resent.

These phenomena – cancelled meetings and deadlines not met – continued in similar vein until the last meeting observed, the following February, when the decisions already taken were questioned by a newly-elected director.

While there might be advantages in “making haste slowly”, there can be disadvantages as well. There might be little value in spending the entire first year of a three-year planning cycle determining what

the strategic plan should look like if the plan is intended to be a guide to action over all three years. As one of the directors commented, “The shaping of the organisation is happening despite the board, rather than because of it”.

Strategic planning might be more important as a ritual

So much of what happens in organisational life can be considered as routine behaviour, or even as organisational ritual. Perhaps strategic planning is one of those things, assumed to be a value of itself rather than as a means to an end.

Alpha's chairperson considered it “terrible” that the organisation had not previously had a strategic plan, even though its planning process was not completed after 14 months of effort and one of the directors complained more generally of the board's work that “nothing comes of it”.

The strategic planning process in Charlie organisation was said by one director to be “really worthwhile” and “energising”, whereas a director quipped at one board meeting that the board's mission seemed to be “to get through the strategic planning process”.

Indeed, in some of the organisations, the board's extended involvement in strategic planning processes might be considered a drain on the board's scarce time, and a diversion from the possibility of doing other things of value for the organisation.

However, as the churches remind us: Rituals are important. Board involvement in strategic planning met the requirements of the funding department, and was a way for directors to demonstrate that

they were “professional” (to use the words of one director), regardless of the outcomes achieved.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR PRACTICE AS BOARD MEMBERS

So, what are the lessons that might be learnt from the case boards?

- 1. Strategic thinking does not require strategic planning.** As board members, we might recognise that we often strategise across time, and we might more deliberately blend planned and emergent strategising.
- 2. It is vital to maintain momentum in strategic planning processes.** In order for a planning process to be completed on a timely basis, someone – either the CEO or a board member – needs to ensure that the board maintains momentum and completes the planning process. ▶

“

Indeed, the need to maintain momentum does not stop with the completion of the plan, but extends to its implementation.”

Indeed, the need to maintain momentum does not stop with the completion of the plan, but extends to its implementation. One way to help encourage the realisation of the plan is for the board to ask the CEO to report against the plan: this provides the board, CEO and other staff with a constant reminder of the intended strategy of the organisation.

Of course, the board needs to acknowledge that the intended strategy might not always be achievable in practice.

3. Board members might adopt a more conscious approach to their involvement in strategic planning. These choices might include:

- Deciding why planning is occurring;
- What the intended result of the planning process might be;
- What substantive problems and issues the plan is intended

to address;

- How momentum will be maintained in the planning process, and;
- How the board and organisation will move its strategising from paper to practice.

Addressing these questions upfront might assist boards to resist the sometimes alluring appeal of process for process' sake.

The author is grateful to the boards of the organisations involved in the case study for opening their inner sanctum to scrutiny over an extended period, so that the author and readers could be part of their world, appreciate the real constraints they faced, and reflect and learn from their experience. The participation of the directors and boards was a most generous gift. ■

ALAN HOUGH

Dr Alan Hough is a Senior Research Fellow of The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies at Queensland University of Technology. His award-winning PhD thesis examined how boards of directors monitor and influence organisational performance, drawing on research conducted inside the boardrooms of Australian not-for-profit organisations.



Dr Hough has previously served in the roles of CEO and consultant to not-for-profit organisations, and he continues to serve as a director. He can be contacted at hough.alan@gmail.com.

Talking about results

Subheading to go here

Many groups still miss opportunities to tell donors of their work through annual reports, websites and other documents, according to a recent report from the UK.

An examination of annual reports, impact statements and websites of a number of the UK's top 100 fundraising charities has seen New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) call on groups to make a better fist of reporting the impacts their work is having.

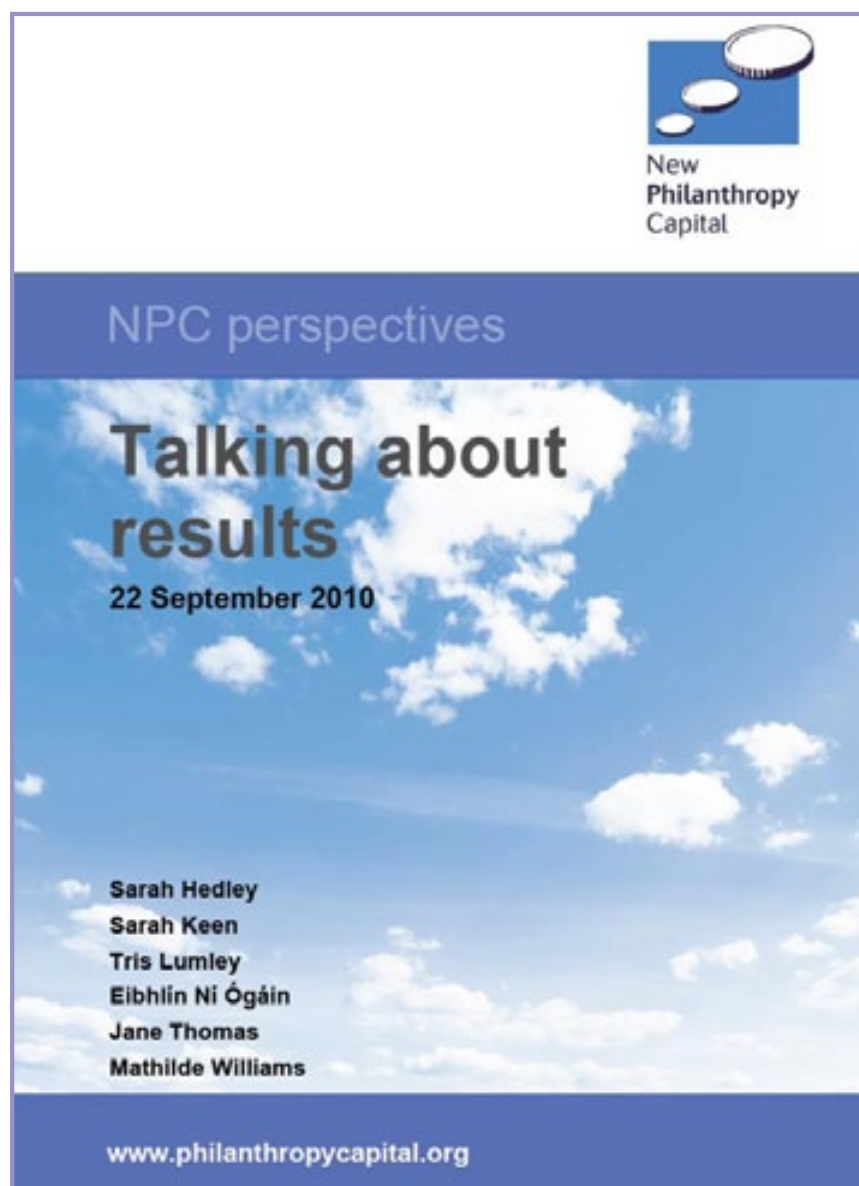
NPC's *Talking About Results* report from New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) looked at annual reports, impact reports and websites from 20 of the UK's top 100 fundraising charities.

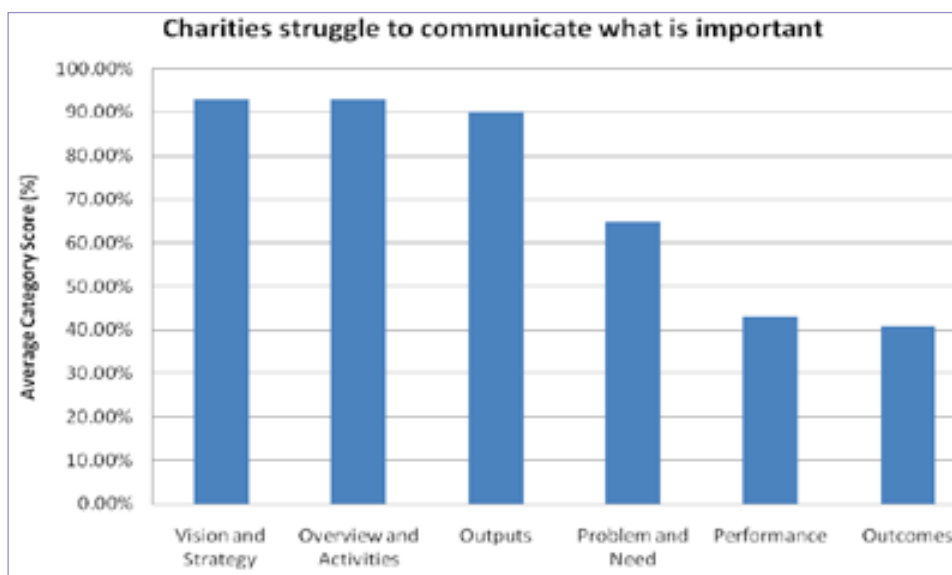
And it found that most, while good at describing what they did – their outputs – were not so good at describing the changes they achieved – their outcomes.

According to the report, 90% of the groups it analysed were good at describing their outputs, or what they actually did. But significantly fewer – just 41% – successfully communicated their outcomes, or the changes they achieved in people's lives.

The problem wasn't one exclusive to a certain size of group either; both the large and small charities NPC examined struggled.

Only 43% of groups showed how their achievements were related to their plans and mission, while just 65% actually talked about the problems or needs their group was addressing. ►





The report said there was conflict between what factors donors thought were important in increasing their trust in an organisation, and what many organisations actually reported on.

“When surveyed, donors consistently say that the two most important factors in trusting charities are how the money is spent and what it achieves,” the report stated.

“For ‘informed donors’, annual reports, annual reviews, impact reports and websites will be their first port of call to find out what they want to know. If charities are not communicating their impact in these materials, donors will look elsewhere for those that are.

“NPC believes the informed donor will become increasingly important. Those that equip themselves now to communicate with these donors will be better prepared to compete.”

THE FIVE KEY STEPS TO MEASURING OUTCOMES

As well as reporting on its survey findings, *Talking About Results* provides five important tips to help organisations measure outcomes

effectively.

The steps come in the form of questions

1. What is the problem we are trying to address? To help those reading your reports it is important your group presents its work in the context of the problem or issue you are trying to address.

2. What do we do to address it? Once your group has described the problem it should clearly explain what it intends to do to create social impact and improve people’s lives. According to NPC, groups should provide a “coherent narrative spanning mission and vision, through to a breakdown of activities”.

3. What are we achieving? A group’s results – the changes its work brings about in people’s lives – should be central to its reporting. This should start with talking about what is produced or delivered (outputs) but must then describe what is actually achieved for its beneficiaries (outcomes and impact).

4. How do we know what we are achieving? Groups must provide

evidence to back up any claims of produced outcomes. And to go one step further, groups should explain how they are measuring impact in order to engage stakeholders.

According to NPC: “Even if most readers will not seek detailed evidence of impact, knowing it is there is vital to building relationships with donors that are based on honesty and trust.”

5. What are we learning, and how can we improve? The final aspect for groups to communicate is how they respond to what they learn about their work, and then to continuously improve so they can meet their long-term goals.

Importantly, the full NPC report provides a number of links to good examples of reports and organisations which have successfully communicated their outcomes, as well as explaining how other groups have responded to these questions and improved their reporting.

To view the report, visit:

<http://tinyurl.com/345fcsr>.

Free registration as a member is required. ■

Making Marketing Work

Ten tips towards effective board marketing

There are some board members who look at marketing with skepticism. But there are ways you can get the board to buy in to the importance of marketing – as this edition of Utopia explains.

1 Board make up (1):

As with many aspects of board behaviour, the make-up of the board and the type of people on it can influence its attitudes – including towards marketing. Having someone with knowledge of, or involvement in, marketing and promotion as a board member will contribute an affirming influence to the board.

2 Board make up (2):

Having a board member with links to marketing or promotions results in another benefit – an increased chance they either have knowledge on the topic they can use to the group's benefit, or know people with this knowledge. Either way, having this type of resource “on tap” will help sway wavering board members as to the value it could bring the group.

3 Inform the board:

Sometimes a point is best emphasised when you hear it from a knowledgeable outsider.

Having a PR or communications person explain the importance of marketing and the benefits it can produce can really provide a helpful perspective for the board. Just ensure that “knowledgeable outsider” can speak with confidence about the not-for-profit sector.

4 Train the board:

Informing the board is one thing. Actually training them is another. Board members should receive some basic marketing training – even if it just a bit of work to help them become better spokespeople or help them understand marketing concepts a bit better. A board that has some training in the area is more likely to look at marketing and its benefits more generously.

5 Ensure the board has a say in the marketing plan:

The board should have a real say in any marketing strategy (or strategies) your group develops. Strategies can cover the marketing of individual events or initiatives, as well as the overall marketing and promotion of your group and online marketing options.

6 Show the board concrete marketing results:

It is no use trying to convince the board of the importance of marketing if you can't show them the results of the group's marketing efforts. Provide evidence of outcomes linked to marketing – increased membership, event attendance, awareness, inquiries, etc. ►

Clearing Confusion

New guide outlines reporting requirements

Confused about the auditing and reporting requirements put forward in new Associations Incorporation Acts? This great chart from CPA Australia can help.

With recent changes to associations laws in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria – as well as the variety of laws applicable in each Australian State and Territory – it is very easy for boards to lose track of what exactly their reporting and auditing requirements are.

The following new short guide from CPA Australia – *Incorporated Associations: Reporting and Auditing Obligations* – can help ensure you are up-to-date on the new laws and compliant with your reporting and auditing requirements.

The guide is also available online through the CPA Australia website: <http://tinyurl.com/3ycrjlb>.

Incorporated associations: reporting and auditing obligations

September 2010



Incorporated associations: reporting and auditing obligations

Summary of financial reporting requirements for unlisted public companies and incorporated associations

	Legislation	Maintain financial records	Lodgement of financial information	Presented to Members	Audit	Accounting/Auditing Standards
Cth	<i>Corporations Act 2001</i>	Yes — Section 286	Yes with ASIC — Section 319(1). Must lodge a directors' report and declaration, balance sheet, profit and loss statement, cash flow statement, statement of changes in equity and the notes to the financial statements.	Yes — accounts must be distributed to members by the earlier of 21 days before the AGM or 4 months after the end of the financial year — section 315.	Yes — Section 301. Audit must be completed by a 'registered company auditor'. * Second Tier Companies limited by guarantee may now choose to have a review engagement instead of an audit. For these review engagements a member does not need to be a RCA but must meet additional competency standards issued by the joint accounting bodies. See Competency requirements for assurance practitioners of second tier companies limited by guarantee , located on the CPA Australia website.	The accounts must be prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards — Section 296. The audit must be conducted in accordance with auditing standards — Section 307A.
ACT	<i>Associations Incorporations Act 1991</i> rgo.act.gov.au	Yes — Section 71	Yes with Register-General — Section 79. Accounts must give a true and fair view of income and expenditure, assets and liabilities and any mortgages/charges on property — Section 72.	Yes at AGM — Section 73.	Yes, but not required to be completed by an accountant — Section 74. Audit by a registered company auditor or a member of the ICAA, NIA or CPAA only required if assets or revenue greater than \$150,000 or more than 1000 members or hold a liquor licence — Section 74 and Regulation 12. If the association has revenue exceeding \$500,000, the audit must be conducted by a registered company auditor — Section 76 and Regulation 13.	Audit opinion of an association with more than \$500,000 in revenue must state whether accounting standards have been complied with and, if not, whether this means they are not true and fair — Section 76.

Financial Reporting by Unlisted Public Companies

Incorporated associations: reporting and auditing obligations

	Legislation	Maintain financial records	Lodgement of financial information	Presented to Members	Audit	Accounting/Auditing Standards
NT	<i>Associations Act 2003</i> justice.nt.gov.au	Yes — Section 41	Yes with Commissioner — Section 45. Accounts must not be misleading and must give a true and fair view of income and expenditure, assets and liabilities, any mortgages/charges on property and the activities of any trusts controlled by the entity — Section 42. Must also be presented with a statement by the management committee — Section 43 and Schedule 4 of Regulations.	Yes at AGM — Section 43. Associations are also required to make members aware of the accounts at least 14 days before the AGM — Section 44.	Yes, but varies on the size of the association. If the association has less than \$25,000 in revenue and less than \$50,000 in assets, it can be audited by a non-associated lay person. Associations with up to \$250,000 in revenue or \$500,000 in assets can be audited by an accountant or a person holding a prescribed class of qualifications and associations over these amounts must be audited by member of an accounting body holding a public practice certificate or a person approved by the Commissioner — Sections 46, 47 and 48.	All audit opinions must state whether Australian Accounting Standards have been complied with. Schedule 4, Regulations. Audit opinion of an association with more than \$250,000 in revenue or \$500,000 in assets must state whether accounting standards have been complied with and, if not, whether this means they are not true and fair — Section 48. Audits of associations with more than \$25,000 in revenue or \$50,000 in assets must be conducted in accordance with applicable auditing standards — Regulation 11
NSW	<i>Associations Incorporation Act 2009 and Associations Incorporation Regulation 2010</i> fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/Cooperatives_and_Associations/Associations.html	Yes - Section 50	Yes with Director-General — Section 45: summary of financial affairs plus financial statements for Tier 1 associations. Section 49: summary of financial affairs for Tier 2 associations. Tier 1 associations have gross receipts of greater than \$250,000 or current assets of greater than \$500,000.	Yes at AGM — Section 44 (Tier 1) and Section 48 (Tier 2): financial statements to be presented.	Yes for Tier 1 associations (Section 43). Audit to be conducted by Registered Company Auditor [Section 51 (1)(a)] or by a member of CPA Australia, ICAA or NIA who holds a public practice certificate issued by one of the bodies [Class Order 10/01 under Section 53(1)].	Financial statements to be prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards for Tier 1 associations [Section 43(2)]. Auditor's report to be prepared in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards for Tier 1 associations [Section 43(3)].

Financial Reporting by Unlisted Public Companies

Incorporated associations: reporting and auditing obligations

	Legislation	Maintain financial records	Lodgement of financial information	Presented to Members	Audit	Accounting/Auditing Standards
QLD	<i>Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (as amended by the Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007)</i> consumer.qld.gov.au	Yes — Regulation 9	Yes with Chief Executive — Section 59, 59A and 59B. Associations are required to lodge a financial statement that outlines the association's income and expenditure, assets and liability and details about mortgages, charges and securities affecting the association's property — Sections 2 and 59.	Yes at AGM — Sections 59, 59A and 59B.	Yes, but varies on the size of the association. If the association has less than \$20,000 in revenue and \$20,000 in current assets, the accounts only need to be accompanied by a statement from the entity's Treasurer or President that the association's books are kept in an appropriate manner. Associations with up to \$100,000 in revenue or \$100,000 in current assets must be accompanied by a statement by a member of the CPAA, ICAA, or NIA, or a registered company auditor that the association has bookkeeping processes in place to adequately record the association's income and expenditure and dealings with its assets and liabilities. Associations above these thresholds (or who are required to have their accounts audited under other legislation) must have their accounts audited by a member of CPAA, ICAA or NIA, or a registered company auditor — Sections 59, 59A and 59B.	No requirement for the accounts to be prepared in accordance with accounting standards.

Financial Reporting by Unlisted Public Companies

Incorporated associations: reporting and auditing obligations

	Legislation	Maintain financial records	Lodgement of financial information	Presented to Members	Audit	Accounting/Auditing Standards
SA	<i>Associations Incorporation Act 1985</i> ocba.sa.gov.au	Yes — Sections 35 and 39C	Yes but only if required to prepare accounts. An entity is required to prepare accounts if it has revenue greater than \$500,000 — section 35. Accounts must be lodged with the Corporate Affairs Commission. The accounts must fairly present the results of the operations of the association and its financial position — section 35.	Yes at AGM but only if required to prepare — Section 35.	Yes (if required to prepare) by a registered company auditor or just a member of the ICAA, NIA or CPAA, a person the Commissioner considers has appropriate qualifications — Section 35.	No express requirement to use accounting standards, but the auditor must attest that the accounts 'present fairly' the results and financial position of the association — Section 37
TAS	<i>Associations Incorporation Act 1964</i> consumer.tas.gov.au	Yes — Section 23A	Yes with the Commissioner (if not exempt by the Commissioner) — Section 24B. Accounts must be adequate to explain the financial transactions and financial position of the association — Section 24B.	No requirement to present accounts to members.	Yes (if not exempt by the Commissioner) — Section 24. The person must be a registered company auditor or another person approved by the Commissioner — Section 24.	No requirement for the accounts to be prepared in accordance with accounting standards.
VIC	<i>Associations Incorporation Act 1981</i> consumer.vic.gov.au	Yes — Section 30A	Yes — Section 30. Accounts must be lodged with the Registrar. Accounts must contain particulars of income and expenditure, assets and liabilities, any mortgages/charges on property and the activities of any trusts controlled by the entity — Section 30.	Yes at AGM — Section 30.	Yes but only if revenue over \$200,000 or assets over \$500,000. Auditor must be a registered company auditor, a member of the ICAA or CPAA or a person otherwise approved by the Registrar — Section 30B.	Accounts must be prepared in accordance with AAS 4, AAS 5, AAS 6, AAS 8, AAS 15, AAS 17, AAS 28, AAS 36, AASB 1018 and AASB 1041 — Regulation 7.
WA*	<i>Associations Incorporation Act 1987</i> docep.wa.gov.au	Yes — Section 25	No requirement to lodge accounts.	Yes at AGM — Section 26. Must present accounts showing the financial position of the association.	No requirement for an audit.	No requirement for the accounts to be prepared in accordance with accounting standards.

*It is noted that WA is in the process of amending the reporting requirements for incorporated associations through the *Associations Incorporation Bill 2006*. This table does not include an outline of the measures proposed in this Bill.

Financial Reporting by Unlisted Public Companies

Great Foundations

Building resilient and effective not-for-profits

The not-for-profit sector is complex, and building a resilient and effective organisation within the sector can be a challenge. In an extract from her new book *Great Foundations*, CATHERINE BROWN provides some great starting points on which you can build your group's resilience.

WHY IS THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR DIFFERENT?

The big picture

Imagine that you are being transferred within your current company from the Australian office to the new European office. You pack your bags and, full of enthusiasm, fly from Melbourne to Munich. You get off the plane, find somewhere to live, unpack your bags and head to the office. (Yes, it's that easy!)

Do you expect the operating environment to be different from the environment in Australia? Do you expect the tax laws to be different? Do you expect insurance to be different? Do you expect that the people you work with will speak a different language? The answer is "Yes".

Imagine you are starting a new job or have taken on a new board role in the not-for-profit sector for the first time.

The questions are the same – and so are the answers. You will be working in a different operating environment, with different sources of funding and different stakeholders.

You will be operating in a different tax regime. Different insurance covers will apply – such as volunteer accident insurance.

The people you work with will ►



WHY IS THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR DIFFERENT?

The big picture

Imagine that you are being transferred within your current company from the Australian office to the new European office. You pack your bags and, full of enthusiasm, fly from Melbourne to Munich. You get off the plane, find somewhere to live, unpack your bags and head to the office. (Yes, it's that easy!)

Do you expect the operating environment to be different from the environment in Australia? Do you expect the tax laws to be different? Do you expect insurance to be different? Do you expect that the people you work with will speak a different language? The answer is "Yes".

Imagine you are starting a new job or have taken on a new board role in the not-for-profit sector for the first time.

The questions are the same – and so are the answers. You will be working in a different operating environment, with different sources of funding and different stakeholders.

You will be operating in a different tax regime. Different insurance covers will apply – such as volunteer accident insurance.

The people you work with will definitely speak a different language. And it is not just the language of the heart based on a social conscience – they will speak different dialects based on the jargon of aged care, health, education, disability services, the arts, the environment, women's issues or the many other areas of community concern tackled by the not-for-profit sector.

Before long, your initial enthusiasm might begin to wane. You might feel frustrated. Hang in there. Things will improve quickly if you approach your move into the not-for-profit sector with the same background research and logic with which you approach your other roles.

The not-for-profit sector is complex for many reasons. You need to understand the overall operating environment. It's not just about mega-fundraising machines and celebrity donors.

The complexity of the not-for-profit sector is what makes it interesting. Here are some of the common reasons for its complexity:

1. Income sources are usually diverse and all require active management. Reporting and accountability requirements vary and the lack of an integrated federal/state approach adds to this complexity.
2. Different parts of the *Income Tax Assessment Act* apply to the not-for-profit sector compared with individuals or businesses.
3. Tackling social, educational, cultural, health and environmental problems is difficult work and often involves many stakeholders, including consumers and government.
4. Salaries are usually below other sectors so staff expect other non-financial rewards for their work. Volunteers also look for 'feel good' rewards.
5. Board members are often not paid for their time or, if they are, it's usually a modest amount. Board and staff roles can easily become blurred in challenging

times, causing conflict.

6. There is pressure from funders on not-for-profits for innovation or at least continual improvement.
7. The public policy environment changes each time there is change in state or federal government, and sometimes even if there is just a change of minister!
8. A not-for-profit is established to achieve certain objectives. This has an impact on tax status, especially as objectives might change over time and the organisation's tax endorsements reflect its purposes and activities.

So let's get to the bottom of all this. There are different aspects to each not-for-profit organisation, and groups can develop a checklist of questions for the CEO and/or the board. ►

“

Before long, your initial enthusiasm might begin to wane... Hang in there. Things will improve quickly if you approach your move into the not-for-profit sector with the same background research and logic with which you approach your other roles.”

If the CEO or board of your not-for-profit spends at least some time reviewing these questions each year, your organisation – and your contribution – will be more effective.

You will identify which areas of your organisation need to be worked on to increase its ability to grow or withstand difficult times.

Taking a bird's-eye view, these are the things you need to know:

- Why was the organisation established? You need to know its history – who holds the corporate memory? Why are things done in certain ways? Should they change?
- Just what sort of legal entity are you dealing with? Is the not-for-profit a charity? Is it a trust, a company, an association? Is it incorporated? Does it own other entities? Is it owned by another organisation, perhaps one based overseas?
- What is the organisation's financial base? Does it receive recurrent government funding? Is it able to receive tax deductible donations? Does it have any partnerships with business, or could it? Does it have any reserves? If so, how are they invested?
- Who actually makes things happen? Are there lots of staff, or one staff member, or a team of volunteers who do the organisation's work?
- Who sets the organisation's strategic direction and checks it is on track? Do the board, council or management committee members have the skills and knowledge that they need?
- Does the organisation keep up-to-date with its policy environment? Does it have useful links with government – local, state or federal? Does it contribute to the development of policy?
- How does the organisation respond to change as it moves forward? Is it a 'can do' sort of organisation or more bureaucratic? Does this matter?
- Has the organisation started anything new in the last few years? Is this encouraged?
- Who does the organisation work with? Are these actually useful collaborations? Are they partnerships of habit? Who should the organisation partner with?
- What is the organisation's image? Does it back up its image with actual achievements? Who needs to know about it?
- Does the organisation or its staff reflect on what you all do? Are you able to learn from successes and so-called failures? How does everyone know when the organisation has done a great job? ■

CATHERINE BROWN

This extract is from Catherine Brown's new book *Great Foundations*. Extract is copyright © Catherine J. Brown 2010, and is reproduced with permission from ACER Press.

Copies of the book (RRP \$A29.95) can be ordered at Ms Brown's website: www.catherinebrown.com.au, via the ACER Shop Online (<http://shop.acer.edu.au>) or by calling ACER Customer Service on 1800 338 40



Drive for diversity

Denver Foundation's guide to board diversity

According to the US' Denver Foundation, full board diversity cannot be realised unless your group is inclusive. The Foundation has compiled a great set of resources to help your group achieve board diversity.

We all know that board diversity is smart, and the benefits it can produce for the organisations being governed immense.

But what is most important is that groups approach diversification with a concerted, organised effort rather than through a series of isolated or short-term activities.

To this end, the Denver Foundation has produced a great resource – the Inclusiveness Project. The project is a series of interlinked guides and resources that build a well-rounded approach to inclusiveness.

While originally aimed at building racial diversity in organisations, the resource can very easily be applied towards building diversity in a number of areas.

According to the Foundation:

- The most important quality that is found in leaders of groups that are highly inclusive is that these leaders take a long-term, holistic approach to inclusiveness and integrate it into all of the work of the organisation.
- Rather than considering inclusiveness to be one more thing that has to be done in a busy day, it is a fundamental part of the everyday work. It is

neither perceived as a burden nor an additional responsibility.

- In highly inclusive organisations, leaders and the teams that they assemble are constantly working with the external world to be responsive to different communities and their needs, and they are intentional about working internally with their staff and board to create a welcoming environment and to expand people's knowledge and awareness of diverse communities.

THE SIX STEPS

The Denver Foundation's guide – and its attitude to an inclusiveness program – is built around a six-step process:

1. Creating a structure.
2. Engaging in inclusiveness/ diversity training (and perhaps hiring consultants or trainers).
3. Defining inclusiveness and diversity and creating the case for inclusiveness for your organisation.
4. Gathering information and conducting research.
5. Creating an inclusiveness ►

What is inclusiveness?

According to the Denver Foundation, inclusiveness goes beyond diversity and towards groups valuing the viewpoints of all people.

“Diversity describes one aspect of inclusiveness: the extent to which an organisation has people from diverse backgrounds or communities involved as board members, staff, and/or volunteers,” it states.

“Inclusive organisations, on the other hand, not only have diverse individuals involved but, more importantly, they are learning-centered organisations that value the perspectives and contributions of all people, and they incorporate the needs, assets, and perspectives of (diverse communities) into the design and implementation of universal and inclusive programs.

“Furthermore, inclusive organisations recruit and retain diverse staff and volunteers to reflect the ... composition of the communities they serve.”

blueprint.

6. Implementing the inclusiveness blueprint.

Structure

The first section of the guide is aimed at helping groups clearly define their structure.

A key part of this section outlines how organisations can set up an inclusiveness committee to work through the process, with tips on its formation and composition.

Consultants and training

Part two of the resource examines why, and whether, groups should hire a consultant to help them with any training needed to establish an inclusiveness program.

For many groups, hiring consultants won't be an option, so the other part of this section looks at how the organisations themselves can deal with training.

Defining inclusiveness and stating the case

Actually stating the case as to why your organisation should embrace inclusiveness means you:

- Establish a basis for doing inclusiveness work.
- Define how inclusiveness can make you more effective.
- Recognise the costs of not being inclusive.
- Make a commitment to do inclusiveness work.
- Communicate your commitment to inclusiveness to its constituents.

Information and research

Step four is to get the facts needed to help your group become more inclusive.

These facts can be garnered from already available information, or by gathering new information.

What is important, according to the guide, is to gain perspectives from your stakeholders – subjective information, including the opinions of your clients, potential clients, staff, board members, donors, etc. regarding the work that you do and how you do it.

The Denver Foundation guide includes worksheets and other documents designed to help groups gather and collate the information they need.

Creating a blueprint

This is where all the work done over the first four steps culminate.

An inclusiveness blueprint provides the breakdown for actions and steps your group will take in order to become more inclusive.

According to the Denver Foundation:

“It is similar to a detailed strategic plan and includes goals, objectives, tasks, timelines, and individuals responsible for accomplishing

each task.

“The blueprint is grounded in data: the priorities your organisation identified in the blueprint will be developed based on the information you collected during the information-gathering phase.

“The wisdom your organisation has had up to this time will be expanded by facts, figures, and perceptions of stakeholders.”

The guide provides a series of sample blueprints for your group to use.

Implementation

Implementing your inclusiveness blueprint doesn't just mean putting it in place and forgetting about it.

As the Foundation guide emphasises, your group has to have an ongoing commitment to the strategy, and must evaluate both the progress of work on the blueprint, and the work of those implementing it.

The guide can be found online here: <http://tinyurl.com/233lhd8>. ■

Benefits of a good blueprint

- Creates internal agreement and clarity about the priorities of your organisation in relation to inclusiveness.
- Ensures that everyone in your organisation understands how specific action items correspond to particular goals and outcomes that you hope to achieve.
- Leads to more successful teamwork and better communication due to common understanding.
- Ensures your group designates appropriate resources to achieve a specific goal.
- Connects action items to achievable milestones with which you will be able to monitor achievements and assess results.

Helping hand

CSA offers free governance support



Chartered Secretaries Australia (CSA) is offering not-for-profits the opportunity to access free governance advice and support.

CSA has launched a program to connect not-for-profits with its members in order to help groups improve their governance efforts.

The program has been in its pilot phase until recently, with groups in New South Wales and Victoria taking part. But the program will now be available nationally.

The process involves CSA members and not-for-profit organisations being matched by a review panel to provide a great fit for both parties.

The same panel also decides which not-for-profits are eligible to take part in the program, based on ant

funding and resource restrictions they might have.

CSA chief executive Tim Sheehy said they were keen to help: “The not-for-profit sector plays a vital role in the Australian society, as they strengthen social inclusion and cohesiveness within Australian communities, and also enhance the economic, cultural and environmental well being in society.

“CSA and its members are working towards improving governance in the not-for-profit sector in Australia, by offering their expert advice, knowledge and skills on a pro bono basis.”

One group which Chartered Secretaries helped recently was Red Dust Role Models, a group which helps young people living

in remote communities.

CSA provided Red Dust Role Models with advice on the importance of understanding the duties of a company secretary, directors and officers.

The work included drafting minutes and developing organisational skills to manage their secretarial work, reviewing their register of directors, providing advice on the principal place of business and making sure details were correctly recorded.

More information on the program – including any queries about your group getting involved – can be gained from the CSA website:

www.csaust.com or by phoning Phone: (02) 9223 5744. ■

Books for Better Boards

Improve
Your
Board

Tick your required option:

The Board Doctor – Expert Diagnosis for Board & Committee Ills

\$36

If you're on a board or committee there will be times when you need advice from somebody who has experience in dealing with the wide range of issues that may arise. The Board Doctor provides tips, ideas and solutions from a range of experts who have contributed to the Board Builder Newsletter and the annual Board Builder Conference. Our Community have brought together these experts to provide answers to a range of easy to follow exercises. They know the law, they know what has worked in practice, and they trust their judgement, because they've been in the trenches.

Transforming Community Committees and Boards - From Hell to Heaven

\$36

Don't be content to sit on a Board that is not working. Make a difference by working to transform your Board into an effective, energetic and productive team that sets the example for the entire organisation. In this guide you will learn how to improve your Board through targeting, recruiting, knowing your responsibilities and capacities and knowing when it's time to act. This is a vital and practical tool for any Board or committee member.

The Board Builder Newsletter

\$65 Individual Subscripition

\$165 Board Subscripition

The leading resource for not-for-profit Boards and Committees
Navigating the maze of financial and legal responsibilities can be bewildering for novice and experienced board members alike. But being a not-for-profit board member means more than just being safe – it also means being effective. The Board Builder brings a new voice and a comprehensive, practical approach to all issues faced by not-for-profit board and committee members. It advances the conversation from merely identifying a problem or issue to offering options for solving the problem or addressing it practically.

1 Enter your Details

Given Name(s)	<input type="text"/>	Surname	<input type="text"/>
Organisation	<input type="text"/>	Position	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>		
	Ph	<input type="text"/>	Fax <input type="text"/>

2 Select Your Payment Options

	Tick	Price \$	
The Board Doctor – Expert Diagnosis for Board & Committee Ills	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$36	} TOTAL = <input type="text"/>
Transforming Community Committees and Boards – From Hell to Heaven	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$36	
The Board Builder Newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$65	
Individual Subscription	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$65	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$165	Board Subscription

- a** Post this form to Our Community, PO Box 354 North Melbourne VIC 3051
- b** Fax order form & credit card details to (03) 9326 6859

CHEQUES Payable to Our Community Pty Ltd.

Where an order is less than \$1000 (inc. GST) this document becomes a tax invoice for GST purposes upon completion of payment. Our Community ABN is 24 094 608 705

3 Credit Card Details

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
Visa	Mastercard	AMEX	Cardholder's Name
<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>
Card Number			
<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Expiry Date	Date	Total Amount	Signature

About The Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance (AICPG)










The **Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance (AICPG)** is Australia's peak professional training organisation for staff and board/committee members and volunteers of community organisations. The AICPG provides accredited training; free information and resources through its Community Practice Knowledge Bank; and as part of its membership service, the quarterly Board Builder newsletter.

There are four key components of the AICPG:

1. **Seminars, Workshops and Conference Programs.**
2. **Certificate IV in Business (Governance)** – a qualification for all Australian not-for-profit and community committee members.
3. **Training services in the eight areas of non-profit curricula**, including tailored training to meet specific organisational, peak body or council needs, linked to the Community Practice Knowledge Bank.
4. **The quarterly Board Builder newsletter**, the AICPG's membership publication.

Explore the benefits of membership at www.ourcommunity.com.au/aicpg.

The **Boards, Committees and Governance Centre** has a wealth of great resources, tools, links and other information to help your board fulfil its role to the best of its abilities. These include:

	The Resource Centre at the Boards, Committees & Governance Centre is where you can obtain a wealth of free information to help you build a better board and be a better board member.
	Great low-cost resources for every board, group or committee. The books include: The Board Doctor, Making Meetings Work, Surviving and Thriving as a Safe, Effective Board Member, Finding the Best People, Ethical Solutions and Transforming Community Committees and Boards, as well as the Westpac Guide for Community Treasurers.
	The Policy Bank is where you can find a great range of free policies and procedures relevant to all aspects of running a community group. This resources is constantly being expanded and refreshed.
	The Australian Institute of Community Practice and Governance has developed a suite of affordable, practical training to help community sector staff, volunteers and supporters keep abreast of their responsibilities and learn how to lift their organisation from ordinary to extraordinary.
	The Board Matching Service helps individuals make a deeper, longer lasting connection with their community by joining a board, and allows community groups to access a new pool of skilled and willing helpers.
	The Diversity on Boards section of the Centre provides resources, tips and links to help your Board or Committee become more inclusive.
	The development of the Code of Governance for the Community Sector was based on the principle of community organisations having a commitment to the public good, a preference for fair dealing and open conduct and a consciousness of the need to embrace diversity. The Code sketches out the rules that follow on from these principles while taking into account the valuable input and insights offered to us by groups across the sector.
	Consult this listing to find a consultant to assist you in developing or improving your community group board or committee.
	The Certificate IV in Business Governance is a practical, accredited training course for the members and supporters of the boards, management committees and councils of Australian community groups and schools.

Explore the centre here: www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards.