BRIDGES STAGE COMPANY

EXPLORING OUR SIMILARITIES & CELEBRATING OUR DIFFERENCES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Whether it's a small or large not-for-profit arts company, to insure its success it is crucial for the organization to have the right group of volunteers acting as the Board of Trustees. Though time and money are extremely important, in the early years' of its existence they aren't the only contributions required of a trustee. In those early years the Board of Trustees is usually a "working board" rather than just a "governance body". It's comprised of people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and help, since the staff is often not large enough to see to everything. This requires individuals who have a knowledge and understanding of special areas; they may be well versed in marketing, fundraising, legal contracts, finance, strategic planning, computers, organizational development, ticketing systems, event planning, or education.

The National Center for Nonprofit Boards has issued a paper on "Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards" by Richard T. Ingram to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the board as a corporate or collective entity and to summarize individual board members' responsibilities. Following that you'll find below a "List of Qualities and Skill Sets" that we at Bridges Stage Company feel are necessary for an individual to possess if they wish to be a successful board trustee. In addition, five assumptions are listed at the very end of this section to reduce the many questions surrounding effective board leadership.

Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards

1. Determine the Organization's Mission and Purpose
2. Select the Artistic and Managing Director
3. Support the Executives and Review Their Performances
4. Ensure Effective Organizational Planning
5. Ensure Legal and Ethical Integrity and Maintain Accountability
6. Ensure Adequate Resources
7. Manage Resources Effectively
8. Determine and Monitor the Organization's Programs and Services
9. Enhance the Organization's Public Image
10. Serve as a Court of Appeal

Preliminary List of Qualities and Skill Sets

This preliminary list of qualities and skill sets that we at Bridges Stage Company feel are necessary for an individual to possess to be a successful trustee. A good trustee should:

1. have a friendly, responsive and patient approach;
2. be honest, sensitive to and tolerant of differing views;
3. have the ability to listen, analyze, think clearly and creatively, work well with people individually and in groups;
4. have community-building skills, personal integrity, and a developed sense of values;
5. have the commitment and willingness to ask questions, take responsibility, follow through with assignments, contribute personal time and financial resources according to circumstances;
6. have a deep understanding and passion for the mission of the organization;
7. have concern for the organization's development;
8. have the ability to participate in Trustee meetings and on committees and to reach consensus;
9. have the capability of being a community advocate, while forging ties to the organization's constituents;
10. serve as a cheerleader to the staff that is providing critical services to the community;
11. have experience with strategic planning for growth purposes;
12. have the skill to help develop fundraising strategies and the willingness to approach your network of contacts for fundraising purposes;
13. have the strategic ability to identify marketing and brand-awareness opportunities; and
14. ensure long-term viability of the organization's leadership, integrity & financial health.

Assumptions:

1. **Board and board member responsibilities are fundamentally the same for all organizations** (although nearly everyone feels that his or her organization is unique and special).
2. **How boards and board members actually fulfill their responsibilities will vary** as a function of many factors. These may include whether the agency is membership or non-membership based, whether its budget and staff levels are modest or substantial, and whether it is newly formed or has a long history of growth and development.
3. **There is no generic model** of board size or composition or organization that has proven itself to be viable in all circumstances. On the other hand, a body of know-ledge has evolved that argues for certain structures, policies, and practices that consistently work better than others.
4. **All organizations undergo a metamorphosis** over time that calls for periodic review, fine tuning, and sometimes major overhaul of their governance structure. Organizational performance, like human performance, is cyclical in effectiveness and in need of renewal as it evolves over time.

5. **Board members begin to reach their optimal levels of performance** when they exercise their responsibilities primarily by asking good and timely questions rather than by ‘running’ programs or implementing their own policies. It is when mutual expectations are agreed upon, that issues and responsibilities are clearly defined and board/staff relationships are what they should be.