

## ...And You Decided to ALSO Serve on a Volunteer Board of Directors

There is no shortage of articles on work/life balance. Enough articles, in fact, that this is clearly an issue for many, or perhaps *most*, since most of us need to balance our paying job with all that needs and deserves attention in our personal and family life.

And then some of us also decide to increase the challenge by adding a third component – serving as a volunteer board member.

It is no surprise that when push comes to shove, the commitment to the volunteer component is going to suffer before the commitment to family and the paying job. There are certainly times when someone who steps up to serve on a board soon finds that s/he cannot fulfill the responsibilities. This often leads to disappointment both for the volunteer and for the rest of those serving on that board.

Just as the success of a new employee is the responsibility of both the employer and the employee, so too is the success of a new board member. What can the nonprofit organization do to improve the chances of success of a new board member? The requirements of participation have to be successfully communicated to the new candidate during the interview process. During that process, the board's Nominating Committee needs to be sure that the candidate is going to be capable of successfully juggling an additional workload. The President of an association once told me, "If you want to get something done, give it to someone who is really busy. They know how to get things done." And then, when the new board member has been elected or appointed, there has to be a plan for helping the new board member insinuate themselves into board work.

One of the links below directs to an article by Cindy Krischer Goodman of *The Miami Herald*, and in it there is advice from an abundantly successful professional who has successfully incorporated being a volunteer into her schedule. She recommends to first target an organization whose mission is near and dear to your heart, understand the time commitment, AND develop a written plan for your involvement as a volunteer. The first two suggestions are pretty common. The last point helps to make the *idea* of serving into a written plan of what success will require.

Finally, we can all improve. Whether you're someone considering serving as a volunteer or someone who is already doing so, we can all improve our systems for monitoring and prioritizing tasks, and managing our time. I want to revisit the observation that really busy people know how to get things done. Several years ago, David Allen published his abundantly successful book, *Getting Things Done*. "GTD," as the system is known by its followers, not only helps with accomplishing tasks, but also relieves stress. Allen's system results in creating places to deposit all of those tasks you have to get to, and

gets them out of your head where they cause stress. As Allen says, “Your mind is for having ideas, not for holding them.”

Recommended Reading:

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/worklifebalancingact/2016/04/yes-you-can-volunteer-and-have-work-life-balance.html>

<https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/nonprofit-board-membership-entail/>

<https://gettingthingsdone.com/>