

## Committees That Work

The Board of Directors, as an entity, should not be the entity that does all of the organization's work. But for many small boards, this is the case.

For everyone's good, that needs to change.

Committees should play a large role in getting things done. High-functioning committees improve outcomes AND lead to more efficient board meetings. As soon as an organization has high-functioning committees, the board can move away from doing committee work during board meetings. The board can then focus on decision-making, based on evaluating committee recommendations. This leads to briefer, more effective board meetings.

I haven't met too many board members not in favor of briefer board meetings.

So, how do we establish successful committees? This isn't "rocket-science" – however, as with most things, it comes down to execution. Here's the plan:

- The board identifies goals of each committee.
  - Write up a few brief bullet items AND figure out what should be included in reports from committees. Better yet, establish the report format.
- A competent team-leader is established for each committee.
  - This should be someone skilled in leading a team.
- Committee members are chosen based on the needs of the committee.
  - For example, is someone interested and skilled in working with numbers necessary on the committee?
- Effective committee meetings are conducted.
  - There should be prearranged meeting times (e.g., "Tuesdays at 10AM").
  - Make sure minutes, agendas, and materials are distributed before each meeting. The leader can't assume all committee members will have the necessary documents at their fingertips. Regardless of how this is accomplished – a cloud-based solution that all board members access, or an email before the meetings with attachments – the leader needs to cover this base.
  - During the meeting, tasks are assigned to individuals for reporting during the next meeting.

- A timely, concise report is sent to the Executive Committee or full board, with relevant updates and request for approvals.

Successful committees may find their meetings last only about 15 minutes. Better still, regular committee meetings can help reduce a two-hour board meeting to just one hour. When “committee work” is being performed where it *should be* performed, both the board and the organization become more effective.

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Three relevant articles are below. The first two focus on issues touched upon in my brief synopsis. The third article focuses on the types of standing and ad hoc committees a nonprofit should consider.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shayla-r-price/build-an-effective-nonpro\\_b\\_4469990.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shayla-r-price/build-an-effective-nonpro_b_4469990.html)

<http://www.tripbuildermedia.com/2017/05/committees-top-five-principles-committee-effectiveness/>

[https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an\\_plus/2015/december/the-basics-of-board-committee-structure](https://www.asaecenter.org/resources/articles/an_plus/2015/december/the-basics-of-board-committee-structure)