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Giving Back

Joining a Nonprofit Board
All Your Questions Answered by BoardAssist

BoardAssist

BoardAssist would like to thank our key partners; without the critical "intellectual capital" they donate annually, by introducing BoardAssist to their employees/alumni who want to be true agents of change in the nonprofit community, our work would not be possible.

BoardAssist

BoardAssist is a New York-based nonprofit corporation with a clear mission: to identify and recruit high impact board members for the nonprofit community on a pro bono basis. BoardAssist is the leading personalized board recruiting service available to the nonprofit community, effecting more matches than any service of its kind.

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Thank You

We are very grateful to all who
have contributed to Giving Back.

November 2007

BoardAssist

Introduction

The fact that you have picked up this brochure means that you may be at a point in your career at which you are considering “giving back” and possibly doing so by joining a nonprofit board. Like most people who reach a certain level of success, you have specific skills and talents that you can share, but you are realistic. You know your time is limited and either you’re not sure where to start or you simply don’t have the time needed to “figure it all out.”

That’s where BoardAssist can help. BoardAssist is a nonprofit organization based in New York City supporting nonprofits that serve locally, nationally and internationally. We are dedicated to helping match the right people with nonprofit boards that need specific expertise and energy. There’s no cost to you or the nonprofit we find for you.

BoardAssist has strong relationships with a growing list of several hundred area organizations that truly need people like you. These groups come to BoardAssist with very specific requests. In most instances, they know exactly what they need. They just don’t know where to find the candidates. By using BoardAssist, the entire process is straightforward and easy. Ultimately, you will be given all the information you need to choose a board that fits your schedule, interests, skills and even your giving level.

Whether you’re interested in youth education, social and health services, or the arts, you’ll have multiple options. If building a nonprofit from the bottom up appeals to you, it’s possible. Or maybe you see yourself at a larger established group like the American Ballet Theatre, the Alzheimer’s Association or New York City Outward Bound. If the interest and fit is there, we can make the introductions.

In the following pages, you’ll find the answers to many frequently asked questions and seven case histories. There’s also a short questionnaire created to help you identify the type of board member you are likely to be – and of course the type of board most suited to you. We hope you will view this as a starting point and the beginning of a larger conversation with us and ultimately with your new colleagues on the nonprofit board we help you find.

Giving back is much easier than you ever thought. If you want to start the process of finding the nonprofit board that works for you, call BoardAssist at 212.605.0165 or e-mail info@boardassist.org. We look forward to getting you on board!

Table of Contents

Defining the Need

Section I:

Most Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Why should I serve on a nonprofit board?*
2. *Why would a nonprofit board want me? What do I have to offer?*
3. *Does it matter that I've never served on a nonprofit board before?*
4. *How can I avoid being an ATM?*
5. *What is my minimum financial commitment?*
6. *If I can only give a minimum amount, am I limited to a "starter" board?*
7. *How do I manage or avoid the awkward "what can you give" conversation?*
8. *What's my minimum time commitment and how much flexibility will I have?*
9. *How does the board matching process work? How long does it take?*
10. *What legal exposure do I have as a board member?*
11. *Has there ever been an instance where the candidate/board fit didn't work out?*
12. *Can I serve on more than one board?*
13. *What if I am interested in a board that isn't on your list?*
14. *Do you ever recommend people to a board and have them rejected?*
15. *How much will BoardAssist charge me to place me on a board?*

Section II:

Finding the Right Fit: The Board Matching Process

Timing is Everything

Choice Locations

The Give & The Get

Mission Critical

Level of Engagement

Established or Start Up

You and the Executive Director

Board Culture

Section III:

Case Studies: Seven Board Members Who Added Value

Programs

Management

Mergers & Acquisitions

Fiscal Management

Governance

Section IV:

Questionnaire: Identify Yourself



Defining the Need

Defining the Need

With over 1.8 million board seats turning over in the U.S. nonprofit community every year, there is a great need for interested, smart, engaged professionals to serve on nonprofit boards. Even if you have never served on a board, your professional skills and business acumen are highly valued assets.

Consider this: Many nonprofit organizations start out with two or three friends who found a group because they are passionate about their mission. Typically, their passion translates into some success and they establish a board comprised of a few more friends, associates and family members. With even more success, organizations quickly reach a critical new plateau. The passion is still there, but the organization can often find itself lacking the financial, strategic and organizational skills needed to get to the next level. Even well established, well-known boards are frequently in need of a fresh perspective and new energy.

Although we work with candidates from all fields, most candidates placed by BoardAssist

are financial services professionals who want to join boards where they can engage and lead. In fact, 70% of the professionals placed on boards by BoardAssist since 2000 were serving as board leaders within twelve months of joining their boards. The average financial commitment to an organization by a candidate – either given personally or raised – runs from \$5,000-\$10,000 per year.

In some cases, our placements are the only people on the nonprofit's board who have read a strategic plan, let alone prepared one. Our placements are sometimes the only ones who have accounting or financial training, which is why so many become leaders soon after joining their boards. They serve as presidents, vice presidents, treasurers, and heads of the strategic planning committee. In several cases, our candidates joined a board and were immediately asked onto the executive committee.

But there are lots of variables and a lot of questions you will want answered before you jump in. So let's get started!

“Because my father was a Foreign Service Officer, as a boy I lived in or visited a range of less developed countries and was able to see, at an impressionable age, how much can be done to improve living conditions in poorer nations. I had maintained a keen interest in such efforts, but the idea of trying to find an organization that I really cared about and could commit to seemed daunting. Within a few months of BoardAssist placing me on the board of an African medical relief group, I was on the plane to Kenya...and able to see firsthand the impact my work had made!”

Chief Risk Officer for major hedge fund

“Thanks so much for all you’ve done for AMREF USA! We are so thrilled by the two great candidates – and now board members – that you’ve introduced us to. One of our BoardAssist placements is on our Finance/Audit committee – and is a great source of info and help. We are delighted to have both of our BoardAssist placements on board!!!!!!” *Executive Director, African Medical Relief Foundation*
BoardAssist Client since 2004

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Why should I serve on a nonprofit board?*

Most candidates come to us with an answer to this question before we even ask. We hear, “My wife is pregnant and I want to model ‘giving back’ for our children,” “I was always a leader in college and business school but until now I’ve been too busy to give back,” “I get paid a crazy amount of money and feel an obligation to share because I’ve been so fortunate.”

Once the decision has been made to “give back” in a real and substantive way, the question becomes what is the best way to do so. Most of our candidates feel as we do: there is no better return on your nonprofit time investment than through board service. The impact our candidates have with two to three hours of board service a month is dramatically higher than they could accomplish with two or three hours of direct service.

Consider this: a recent board placement increased the yield on the \$15 million endowment of his nonprofit by four points, or \$600,000 a year, with just a few

hours of his time. The amount of direct service this \$600,000 will buy is staggering, and much greater than what this candidate’s direct service time would have accomplished. The “return on his time” was spectacular.

For most of our candidates, although they would enjoy teaching computer skills to an elderly person or reading skills to a young child, the truth is that the unique skills they bring to their work on a nonprofit board, in areas such as hiring a new executive director or creating a strategic plan, are the grease that oils the nonprofit’s engines. It allows for the critical direct services to be delivered at maximum capacity.

In addition, there are invaluable skills you’ll acquire serving on a board. In fact, several of the top investment banks send us their professionals for board matching because they believe board service is a powerful management training tool for their employees. Sitting on any board, whether it’s corporate or nonprofit, can teach you a tremendous amount about running a business.

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

Nonprofits have management, marketing, public relations, financial, strategic planning, computer programming, human resources and governance issues. Diving into any of these areas – understanding the concerns and making decisions that will impact a nonprofit – offers you a chance to have a very different role than you may have in your professional life. It's a chance to run a business (albeit a nonprofit one).

Serving on a board is also a wonderful way to meet people and expand your network. Whether it's making new friends (and our candidates do become very close to their board colleagues) or meeting new clients, board service exposes you to other New Yorkers who want to help the nonprofit community. One BoardAssist placement, a media investment banker, joined a small board where the two top CEOs in his sector were involved. The time spent working together on board issues help to strengthen his professional relationship enormously - an unexpected and positive side benefit.

2. Why would a nonprofit board want me? What do I have to offer?

Roughly 1.8 million nonprofit board seats turn over every year in this country. There is an enormous need for engaged board members in the nonprofit community.

BoardAssist candidates tend to be people who have always been leaders and want to be agents of change. This enthusiasm for creative and innovative thinking makes BoardAssist candidates quickly stand out. But your greatest assets are the knowledge and experience you have gathered from working in the for-profit world, skills that many nonprofit boards sorely lack and desperately need. It is not an overstatement to say that, for many of our clients, our candidates' skills are the key to maintaining a financially sustainable enterprise.

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

3. Does it matter that I've never served on a nonprofit board before?

No. Most nonprofit boards want professionals who will grow with them. A good board is diverse. And most nonprofits are eager to hear from people at all points in their career. On a practical note, it's critical for any smart nonprofit to groom their next generation of leadership by bringing new voices to the table. Your relative "inexperience" can be a big advantage!

Many organizations have had less than optimal experiences with well intentioned board members who sit on too many other boards and don't have time to focus in any material way. Other nonprofits value the freshness and energy of someone who has never served on a board. Some of our most engaged, enthusiastic board members are serving for the first time.

4. How can I avoid being an ATM?

This is probably the number one reason people are cautious about joining a board. Everyone knows someone who went on a board where, at the end of their first year of service, they felt like an ATM machine. This should not happen... and it won't if BoardAssist helps you find a board that matches your interests, vision and goals.

Of course, fundraising is an important role for board members, that's a given. But BoardAssist believes this can't be the primary function. In fact, we won't work with a nonprofit if fundraising is the only role of their board. Ultimately, our goal is to put your intellectual capital to work in the nonprofit community, not just your working capital.

At the outset, we discuss your parameters on how much you are comfortable giving, and we make sure that's well understood before we make the match.

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

5. What is my minimum financial commitment?

The nonprofit clients who come to BoardAssist do so because they want engaged, intellectual capital. It's not our mission to fill the coffers. It's our mission to place people – such as you, who care and who want to make a difference – with organizations that need their expertise and insights. As a result, the financial commitment expected of our board candidates can be as little as \$1,000 per year. Though this amount is not insignificant, it helps to look at this figure as the total of what you personally give plus what you generate from friends, your employer and others who share your passion. Here's a quick example: say you write a check for \$400, your employer matches the \$400 and your college roommate kicks in \$200. Between your “give” of \$400 and your “get” of \$600, you've met your total financial commitment of \$1,000 for the year for your nonprofit.

6. If I can only give a minimum amount, am I limited to a “starter” board?

Let's define “starter boards.” When people ask us this question, they typically mean a board without “boldface” names who appear every day in The Wall Street Journal. But some boards with recognizable board members are quite small in terms of budget.

One of the largest nonprofits in New York, with a budget of over \$100 million a year, has not one household name on its board. Now, however, it does include four candidates placed by BoardAssist. These candidates committed to generate between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a year when they joined and had never served on any other nonprofit boards.

Another board we assisted that did include heavy hitters came to us because they needed someone who would actually attend the board meetings and help with the financials. The “big names” on this particular board were not always available to show up. And no one wanted to review financials or even hear about them. These board members enjoyed socializing

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

with each other and hosting several well-attended fundraisers each year, but they were less enthusiastic about board meeting attendance. Again the financial commitment was between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a year. We found them two board members.

A third example was a major national legal reform nonprofit. This board included four former state governors and a law school dean at Harvard as well as one at Yale. Again, no one wanted to review financial statements and there was no one on the board under the age of fifty. Our candidate joined the board, committing \$1,000 a year, and immediately became treasurer. He helped build the next generation of leadership for this organization – a very real concern for all nonprofits and one our younger candidates can address.

7. How do I manage or avoid the awkward “what can you give” conversation?

You don't avoid it. You let BoardAssist lead the way. Negotiating the financial commitment upfront for nonprofit board membership is one of the most valuable services BoardAssist provides to board candidates and nonprofits alike. Although confirming the financial expectations is ultimately the responsibility of each candidate, BoardAssist gets all the specifics for you ahead of time so your conversation with the nonprofit becomes a simple confirmation on your part, not a negotiation. The Give & The Get, starting on page 24, offers examples of what can happen if these discussions are not explicit.

BoardAssist asks the leadership of each nonprofit we work with the hard questions and gets a specific amount – in writing – so our board candidates know at the outset what they're committing to financially.

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

8. What's my minimum time commitment and how much flexibility will I have?

Most BoardAssist candidates are concerned that, because of time constraints, they won't be as engaged as they'd like and so will be relegated to raising money. Depending on the board, time commitment can be minimal or quite substantial. Once you've determined how much time you do have, BoardAssist will find a board where your availability matches their needs. There are boards where you don't need to serve on committees and meetings are held quarterly, rather than monthly, for example. There are even boards that accept members phoning in, rather than attending all meetings in person.

One of the biggest surprises is just how effective you can be attending four board meetings a year. Reading the materials circulated in advance, formulating your questions and outlining suggestions for a course of action – prior to the meeting – will allow you to have a considerable impact. Remember, you're the eyes that aren't immersed in the day-to-day operations of the organization.

You're the person offering a broader perspective. That's your strength and that's where your time is best spent.

Aside from attending board meetings, the bulk of nonprofit board service is project, based and, as such, can be planned around your schedule. In many cases, this is a boon to our candidates. If you have a two-week lull between deals and can jump in you might say, "Let me do the strategic plan," or "I've got some time, I'd like to overhaul our website." When you account for this flexibility factor, most of our candidates have more than enough time to give and serve effectively.

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

9. How does the board matching process work? How long does it take?

When you explore joining a nonprofit board with BoardAssist, it takes an average of two months to be matched. BoardAssist will guide you every step of the way – leaving the final decision to you.

First, we help you identify the type of board member you want to be – this includes looking at your interests, your schedule, availability, goals and even your level of financial contribution. A complete description of the criteria we will use is found on pages 42-44.

Based on your choices, BoardAssist will review the positions available on our hundreds of nonprofit boards to identify two or three that represent the best fit for you. The next step includes interviews at these nonprofits with their executive director, board chair and nominating chair. Invitations to join the boards usually follow. Then the hard work begins. The theoretical becomes real and you will have to choose which board offer to accept. BoardAssist will work closely with you to determine which offer is best for you. To give you a clear idea of what you need to consider, go to Section II, Finding the Right Fit.

10. What legal exposure do I have as a board member?

To get an overview of a board member's legal responsibility, we turned to the law firm of one of our own board members. Here is the direction we have been given from Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP:

Nonprofit board members do have legal responsibilities. Most nonprofits, like for-profit corporations, typically seek to limit the potential liability of their directors for various corporate activities and may limit or eliminate a director's duty of care. In most cases, nonprofit boards also have Directors' & Officers' insurance for their board members. If the board you are considering joining does not, many of our candidates will find their legal liability is covered under the umbrella policy of their homeowners' insurance. This is something you should definitely explore with your insurance provider. In the event the nonprofit does not offer D&O insurance, and your umbrella does not pick up this coverage, if you are still interested in joining a particular nonprofit's board, you will need to assess how likely you think it is you will be exposed to legal liability

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

for wrongdoing. Ultimately, this decision is yours to make and not one to make lightly. If you go down the path of joining a board where there is no insurance coverage, we highly recommend you speak to legal counsel first.

11. Has there ever been an instance where the candidate/board fit didn't work out?

We spend so much time thinking through which board will be the best for our candidates, this situation rarely happens. That said, a bad fit can be made, as rare as that is for us. If the board you select isn't what you thought it would be, you can resign. Once we determine why it wasn't a good fit, we would help you find another, more suitable board.

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

12. Can I serve on more than one board?

Yes. In fact, many candidates who start a dialogue with us thinking they are going to join just one board end up joining more than one. When you start talking with the leaders in the nonprofit community, and hear in detail how much change you can personally effect by joining a nonprofit board, it is quite hard to stop at just one.

13. What if I am interested in a board that isn't on your list?

BoardAssist's mission is to serve the nonprofit community by harnessing the intellectual capital of the private sector for nonprofits everywhere. While we can only introduce you to organizations that have approached us, completed a questionnaire and requested specific types of candidates, we encourage a candidate to join a nonprofit board which best suits his or her requirements, even one that is not on our list.

Section I - Most Frequently Asked Questions

14. Do you ever recommend people to a board and have them rejected?

This can happen but rarely does, if we have done our job properly. We work hard to learn about a nonprofit's needs before we introduce it to you. Our goal: to introduce you to those nonprofits we know will be enthusiastic to learn of your interest. This may fail if there is an unexpected change at the nonprofit, such as if the board chair resigns and the rest of the board thinks it unwise to add another board member until a new board chair is chosen, or if the executive director becomes ill and board additions are placed on hold until they recover. Absent a change in circumstances at the nonprofit, it is quite rare for our candidates not to be invited on the board where we have made the introduction.

15. How much will BoardAssist charge me to place me on a board?

Absolutely nothing. BoardAssist is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. Our services are available to both our candidates and nonprofit clients on a no-fee basis. The best way to pay us back is to join a board and make a difference!



Section II

Finding the Right Fit: The Board Matching Process

“As an investment banker, time constraints make even doing the research to find an appropriate nonprofit board seems, like an insurmountable obstacle. BoardAssist takes away that excuse for not getting involved. They gave me all the relevant information I needed to make a wise decision. Two years into it and my only regret is that I didn’t sign on earlier.”

Goldman Sachs professional

“Our BoardAssist candidate has been an amazing addition to our board of directors. She brings enthusiasm and dedication to our agency and believes in our mission. In these tough and competitive times, it is wonderful to know that we have a resource to turn to in our efforts to recruit board members with the ‘time, talent and treasure’ we need.”

*Executive Director, Good Shepherd Services
BoardAssist Client since 2001*

Section II - The Board Matching Process

Timing is Everything

No matter how connected you may feel to the mission of a particular nonprofit, if the time commitment expected of you is different from what you can realistically deliver, it won't work. The fit is wrong. We ask our board candidates to consider (a) how often a board meets, (b) at what time of day, (c) whether you also need to serve on a committee, and how often committees meet, and (d) whether you can phone in to board meetings and still be considered an engaged board member (and do other board members phone in).

If you work on a trading floor and need to be at work by 7:30 every morning, pick a board that meets in the evenings. Do you routinely leave the office at 10 p.m., but come in at 9:30 in the morning? Perhaps a board that meets early in the morning would work best for you. If realistically you can attend only four board meetings a year, don't pick a board that meets monthly.

Phoning in is always an interesting issue. In the board courting process, boards will assure potential trustees that it's perfectly acceptable to call in to board meetings. The reality, however, may be different. If you are the only one routinely calling in to board meetings, it's quite possible you will antagonize the rest of the board and you won't accomplish as much as you would like. Find out how many other board members typically phone in rather than attend in person.

Section II - The Board Matching Process

Choice Locations

This factor is often overlooked, but if you work downtown and are interested in joining a charter school board, since we can offer you several options, why not pick the one that is closest to where you work or live?

Many nonprofits hold their board meetings off-site. Just because a nonprofit is located in the Bronx, doesn't mean the board meets there. It is very possible the board meets in midtown Manhattan, perhaps even in the office building where you work. Be sure to find out before ruling out an organization that has a mission near to your heart.

The Give & The Get

This is a conversation that most nonprofits and board candidates would rather avoid. Many nonprofit leaders feel uncomfortable talking about money. It seems impolite. But nonprofits need money, we all know that. What you must know BEFORE you join a board is exactly how much money this particular board needs from you so there are no unexpected surprises when the basket is passed around.

At BoardAssist, we get in writing what each nonprofit client expects from board members. This number is made up of two pieces: what you personally give, also known as "the give," and what you generate from others, known as "the get." Most nonprofits don't care how you reach your total GIVE PLUS GET, just that the net number is in-line with what others on the board are giving and getting. That said, there are boards that demand board members give a certain number, no matter how big their get is.

Here are four extreme, but plausible, examples that illustrate why it is critical to know exactly what is expected. (These are not examples of experiences of candidates placed by BoardAssist, but situations you want to avoid.)

Section II - The Board Matching Process

Example: One woman – call her Anna – joined a board where she had committed to GIVE PLUS GET \$5,000 per year total. Instead, by restructuring how the organization's endowment was invested, she generated an additional \$400,000 in revenues and gave \$5,000. At the end of the year, the board chair called her and asked if she could increase her personal giving from the \$5,000 check she had written the year before. Anna was furious. In her mind she generated \$405,000, which was a lot more than she had committed when she joined the board and at least \$400,000 more than the other board members.

Example: Bob joined a board and committed to GIVE PLUS GET \$2,500 per year total. Bob got married that year and asked his friends to donate to his charity rather than give wedding gifts, and these donations generated \$25,000. At the end of the year the executive director sat down with Bob. She was disappointed Bob's personal give had not been higher. He personally had given only \$1,000.

Why do some nonprofits insist on a significant personal give in addition to whatever get you generate? Some nonprofits see

this as a gauge of your level of commitment. Unless you personally contribute, they are disappointed – regardless of the fact that your employer, college roommate, and family members have given record donations to this same organization.

The lesson: Make sure you understand the different components of what you are required to GIVE plus what you are required to GET.

The corollary of a nonprofit being disappointed in your GIVE is when they are disappointed in your GET.

Example: Susan joined a board where she was asked to GIVE PLUS GET \$5,000 per year. To show how excited she was about joining, the first day on the board she wrote a check for \$10,000. At the end of the year, the rest of the board was disappointed with Susan. She had generated no GET. No other board member had come close to generating what Susan had (the next highest board member was at \$5,000 total of give plus get), but Susan had generated no GET so others felt she had not done her part.

Section II - The Board Matching Process

The lesson again: Make sure you understand the different components of what you are required to GIVE plus what you are required to GET.

It's critical to understand exactly what is the financial commitment expected of you. Many of our candidates will be joining boards where they have the highest income. Other board members will be leaders in academia, government, the nonprofit community, and other corporate sectors that don't pay as well as the financial services sector (where the bulk of our candidates come from). In situations where you are the highest earning member on the board, it's important the board not expect you to be the "deep pocket of last resort."

Some boards will try to avoid locking in a firm give/get number. They may be concerned that you will be more generous without a set firm number. Or they may have the issue of board members with vastly different abilities to generate capital. We recommend board candidates approach such boards cautiously.

One common suggestion from boards that do not want to set a financial commitment number

will be for the board to suggest you generate something that is personally significant to you. (Or the board may suggest you commit that this charity be one of your top three charitable recipients.) But this may become a problem if your idea of "personally significant" differs from what the rest of the board thinks is significant. The difference between what you earn and what the rest of the board earns can be quite large and can raise unrealistic expectations about what you will generate financially.

Example: Alexa joined a board where she was asked to commit "something personally significant." Alexa was the only member of the board who earned more than \$60,000 a year. In fact she earned a little over a million dollars a year. At the end of the year when the budget gap was roughly \$100,000, the rest of the board wanted Alexa to make up the difference. The rest of the board were generating about \$3,000 each and thought that at a minimum Alexa should generate \$50,000, or 5% of her income. Alexa felt she had been quite generous donating \$30,000, or ten times more than anyone else on the board.

Section II - The Board Matching Process

Many of our candidates are comfortable joining a board where they are required to give more than other board members. The point is they want this disclosed. They don't want to feel manipulated or surprised. BoardAssist asks all of our clients to share with us the average amount their board members generate in terms of both "give" and "get," and then to tell us what is expected of you. You can then decide whether you want to join a board where everyone else is giving \$1,000 per year and you are being asked to give \$10,000. Again, this may be acceptable to you, as the ability for others to give may not be there and you may care deeply about the organization's mission.

The final point on financial commitment is whether you want to join a board where your ability to generate capital is the lowest on the board. You may be assured this will be fine as you are coming on as the only one who can read a financial statement, or create a public relations program, and your skills are so important the monetary considerations are secondary. This may be the case. But, be sure when you speak to the board chair and executive director that everyone is on the same page. Then ask yourself if you will feel comfortable in this scenario.

Mission Critical

Mission is the most important criterion to consider when choosing a nonprofit board to join. Given that there will be many options available to you through BoardAssist, it is important to fine tune your thoughts on mission as much as possible.

Do you want to join a board that is a direct service provider or an advocacy group? Ask yourself if you want to be involved with a group that is providing health care services to inner city New Yorkers, or one that lobbies Albany or Washington for global health care legal reform. Do you want to serve families living in the South Bronx or families in Darfur? These are all important mission questions we will need to explore together.

Along the same vein, do you want to help one hundred children by housing them and providing medical and psychological support for all the challenges in their day? Or, with the same budget, would you rather help educate one thousand inner city kids by serving on a charter school board? Or would you rather help ten thousand children learn to read by working with them for an hour a day? In other words: would you rather

Section II - The Board Matching Process

impact fewer children in a big way, or have a smaller impact on the lives of many more children?

If your mission is to help inner city youth, once you determine how many children you want to help and to what extent, you might consider whether you'd like the focus to be on babies, toddlers or teenagers. Do you have a specific ethnic group you want to help? Perhaps you want to help strictly Latino youths. The choice is yours. Many youth-focused candidates are flexible on the youth demographic they want to help, but if you have a target group in your mind, there should be no trouble matching you to that group.

A preliminary question around mission is whether you would prefer to join a multi-service agency or a single issue nonprofit. A single issue nonprofit might do a terrific job teaching English to new Americans. But it may be that a multi-service agency actually does just as much to help a new American learn English in addition to teaching him how to write a resume, interview and find a job, all while caring for the new American's children in an after-school program and a grandmother in a senior center.

An interesting mission question for many is whether they want a board that draws on the skills of their day job, or if they prefer to draw on some skills which aren't being used. Sometimes the varied backgrounds of our candidates help us find a fit that's ideal because it taps into a past experience. For a banker who had been in the Peace Corps before business school, it was wonderful to hear from us about an international youth service board. For a private equity professional who had been a jazz musician in college, a jazz board was a terrific fit. For all the former teachers we work with who are now financial services superstars, education boards are a compelling draw and rewarding fit.

Section II - The Board Matching Process

Level of Engagement

Most BoardAssist candidates choose to serve on a board because they want to be engaged agents of change with the boards they join. They are concerned about how much they will be permitted to do. BoardAssist works hard to screen out boards that only want financial capital from their board members and do not value their intellectual capital. To be sure you can engage as much (or as little as you want), it's important in the interview process to ask what other board members have done over the last three years (other than raise money). If no one else on the board has done anything other than fundraise over the last three years, will you really be able to engage as much as you would like?

Established or Start Up

Many BoardAssist candidates come to us with a firm idea of whether they want to join the board of a start up or a well established nonprofit. For some, the thought is that they will engage more actively with a start up. While this is often true, it is not always so. Younger, small budget nonprofits don't always offer the greatest opportunity to engage.

Joining a young nonprofit does offer the chance to build something from the ground up. That's exciting for a lot of candidates, but comes with the related frustrations of working in a smaller organization. An organization with a smaller budget is going to have a smaller staff. That means when you have an epiphany at a board meeting for some great new program, there are less people available to can help you make this dream a reality. You may either need to dig in yourself, or be patient until your idea is executed.

On an older, more established board one question to ask is whether board members really play an active role. Or does everything run so well with the two hundred fifty person staff that the board does little but rubber stamp the

Section II - The Board Matching Process

executive director's ideas? One of the great situations for a candidate can be a large, established board that is in a major transition.

Perhaps the executive director is stepping down after twenty years and now all programming decisions are going to go through a six-month review. That could be a very exciting time to join. Or maybe the board chair, who has held that position for ten years, is stepping down. Perhaps the nonprofit is about to merge or acquire another charity. Or the board is all retiring and a whole new board has to be built. Often an established nonprofit board in flux can be as entrepreneurial an opportunity as a young start up.

You and the Executive Director

Having a strong partnership with the executive director is one of the most important things that influences whether someone has a rewarding board experience. Most executive directors in the nonprofit community are smart, committed and highly professional. But does their management style work well with yours?

Are you an email person while the executive director prefers the phone, only checking her email once a day? We have worked with executive directors who don't check email more than that. If you are someone who is on your Blackberry all day long and rarely able to make a phone call, this board would probably not be a great fit for you.

Are you someone who has an idea and wants to act on it immediately, or when your calendar permits, between deals? If the executive director is someone who prefers to work through her "to do" list in chronological order, as she built it, this could be frustrating.

Are you someone who would be offended if it took the executive director a week to return your call? Has this been your experience with this executive director during the

Section II - The Board Matching Process

board courting process? If so, it's not likely to improve once you are on the team.

Does the executive director inspire you? Since there are so many executive directors who will, we firmly believe you should not partner with someone who may be professional, but does not truly inspire you.

What's the executive director's relationship with the board? With the board chair? We have worked with more than one board where the board chair and executive director were literally not speaking to each other. And hadn't been for months. You may decide you like the board enough to proceed, but it's important that you know what's in store for you. Perhaps you will be the one to broker peace between the two. If the executive director does not enjoy the confidence of the board, board meetings can be very tense and a lot of unnecessary frustrations can stand between you and what you want to accomplish on your board.

Is this an executive director who really values the input of the board? One executive director confided in us, "the board has such confidence in what I do; it never questions any of my decisions." For most of our candidates, that's not the type of board they want.

What is the background of the executive director? Is she a former McKinsey consultant who later in life decided to start a nonprofit, in which case you can feel confident you'll speak the same language? Or is his background so different you feel he will see you as heartless when you propose sticking to the budget because the agency is operating in the red? We had that situation with a charter school board where the founder and executive director wanted to buy new books for the students. The finance committee board members were painted as uncaring when they pointed out that the school was close to shutting down, reserves were low, and in order to stay open they couldn't afford new books.

A final and important question is: how long has the executive director been in the job? If she is retiring in three years, after having served for twenty years, is she going to be amenable to making lots of changes in her final years? Or is he new to his job and eager to explore ways to improve how the nonprofit serves its consumer base? To be clear, there are many seasoned executive directors who are very amenable to change, but it's wise to get a sense of whether your particular executive director is one of them.

Section II - The Board Matching Process

Board Culture

Although most of us join nonprofit boards because we want to give back, given how many boards will be interested in you, why not pick one with people who make good partners, who you sincerely like and enjoy seeing?

Are you interested in working with people who look like those you work with? Perhaps you are a banker and you would feel most comfortable on a board that includes a consultant, lawyer, a few private equity professionals, and a few corporate professionals? Or perhaps you would prefer to take a break from your professional life and meet people from different backgrounds? Many of our candidates enjoy working with actors, writers, directors, doctors, educators, leaders in the nonprofit community and government, and entrepreneurs. The point is that the choice is yours.

An important question to ask in the board interview process is what the board turnover rate has been for that organization. If more than 50% of the board has resigned in the last six months, you would obviously want to know why. Is it because board members can't partner with the board chair?


Or the executive director? Do they feel there is no real role for them? Are there financial issues that have not been disclosed? Why is the board adding now?

Take a hard look at the board chair. Many board candidates will look at the board list and see a group of professionals that give them comfort, but not focus on the fact that the board member least qualified to lead is the one serving as board chair. This does happen. Often the board members most qualified to lead just don't have the time to commit to serving as board chair. As a result, the board meetings take three hours when they could be done in an hour and a half. Is the board chair someone you have confidence in to be the watchdog of the organization?



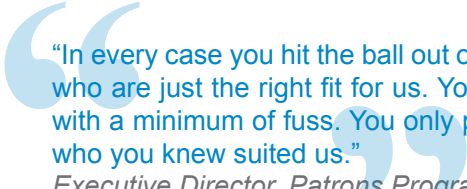
Section III

Case Studies: Seven Board Members Who Added Value



“Before I worked with BoardAssist, I was quite skeptical about how substantive my role would be on a nonprofit board. I didn’t want to sit on a board where I just went to a lot of parties and wrote checks. After three years of active membership on the board where BoardAssist placed me, I see clearly all that we have accomplished. We’ve really made a difference.”

Hedge fund partner



“In every case you hit the ball out of the park, identifying individuals who are just the right fit for us. You made the entire process easy with a minimum of fuss. You only put us in contact with individuals who you knew suited us.”

Executive Director, Patrons Program

BoardAssist Client since 2001

Section III - Case Studies

PROGRAMS

Case Study #1

Lisa J. joined the board of a major urban university. She quickly learned that there was virtually no system in place for alumni of this university to help with networking and job placement of current students. The university was not an Ivy League college, but one that focused on helping kids from lower income families get an education. A great number of the students at this school were the first in their family to attend college. Lisa was herself a Harvard College and Harvard Business School alum. She knew just how much Harvard's network had done to help her and her husband (another Harvard alum) and wanted to create a similar network for this university.

Impact:

Lisa created a Marketplace Advisors group to work with the school's alumni to help students find business internships and jobs. She designed the logo for the new group, hired a staff member to run the group, and put together an advisory board of impressive local business leaders to add credibility to the effort. She also organized several career panels for the group. Lisa's efforts will lead to jobs for countless inner city New Yorkers.

Case Study #2

Seth R. joined the board of an inner city school. The school did not have the budget to offer any after-school programming for their students and yet most of the children had no supervision available to them when they got home, because their parents were working. Seth partnered with the investment bank where he worked to create an after-school program. He polled the other senior bankers at his firm to find out what classes they would be willing to teach and created a schedule where these bankers would (at no cost to the school) offer classes in everything from cooking to computers every day after school.

Impact:

At no cost to the school, Seth created a high quality after-school program for children who would have otherwise been unengaged after school and, in many cases, unsupervised.

Section III - Case Studies

MANAGEMENT

Case Study #3

Sandra L. joined the board of an organization where the founder had been the executive director for the last twenty years. The founder was now ready to retire. Sandra developed a succession plan and job description, researched salary norms for an organization their size in their mission area (until now, salaries had been set without any market due diligence), and lead the search committee for the new executive director.

Impact:

Sandra was responsible for assuring a smooth transition when the founder of this twenty plus year old nonprofit retired.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

Case Study #4

Robert M. joined the board of a medical research organization that was struggling to raise enough funds for its work. This organization was nearly one hundred years old, but its work was less “sexy” than it had once been and finding funding for it was difficult. He and the rest of the board had exhausted their funding ideas and were in real danger of having to shut down. Robert found another health-related nonprofit that was operating in a complementary sector and convinced the group to take over his nonprofit. Robert’s nonprofit offered certain grants that were quite valuable to the new parent nonprofit, and several redundancies could be eliminated by merging, making both entities more productive and efficient.

Impact:

Robert’s work identifying the need for a merger partner, and negotiating the merger, helped keep the research efforts alive of this New York-area institution.

Section III - Case Studies

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

Case Study #5

Beth B. joined the board of a sports enrichment organization with a budget of \$9 million a year. The organization offered sports programming on a no fee basis to inner city kids, only charging New York residents who were in a position to pay. For the last several years, the organization had been operating in the red.

Beth was determined to find a way to get this organization into the black. She spent a week at the organization interviewing the various department heads on the programs they offered and how fully subscribed they were. Beth determined that a huge amount of staff and facility space were being used for low-demand programs. By offering more of the programs that consumers did want (in fact, there were wait lists for several high-revenue generating programs) and cutting programs that no one was choosing, this organization was able to generate an additional \$450,000 in revenues.

Impact:

Beth's reshuffling of the programming will ultimately generate \$450,000 a year for years to come. She created, in effect, a \$450,000 annuity for this organization. At the same time the organization served its constituents better by offering more of the services that were really wanted.

Section III - Case Studies

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

Case Study #6

Marcus T. joined the board of an inner city parochial school. This was a school where parents pay a fraction of what they would pay in tuition at a traditional private school. The school was attended by inner city children, and tuition was waived when necessary, but required for the families who could afford to pay. The school felt the required financial commitment ensured it would only attract local families seriously committed to partnering with the school on their child's education.

Within one week of joining the board, Marcus learned that the school used index cards to track delinquent tuition. There was no electronic system for tracking tuition and delinquent tuition was a major problem for the school. Marcus created a computer-based tuition tracking system for the school that has helped enormously with tuition collections.

Impact:

Marcus's tuition tracking system was not just used at the school where he was a director, but was so successful it was replicated in other inner city schools around the city. With just a few days of Marcus's time, he was able to impact the way inner city schools across the city stay financially healthy.

Section III - Case Studies

GOVERNANCE

Case Study #7

Cara M. joined the board of a children's advocacy nonprofit. She quickly learned that the board members were not as engaged as they should be. Less than half attended board meetings and even fewer attended committee meetings. Cara hired a pro bono board consultant to work with her to reinvigorate the board. She drew up a list of board responsibilities and had all current board members resign and rejoin after they had agreed to the new board responsibilities. She also worked closely with BoardAssist to replace the board members who chose not to rejoin because they did not want to engage as much as the board responsibilities would require.

Impact:

Cara's work literally saved this important advocacy group from having to close its doors. Without strong board support, this organization was floundering. The work Cara did to strengthen this organization's board gave it a new life.



Section IV

Questionnaire: Identify Yourself

Identify Yourself

Ask yourself a few key questions and you'll quickly learn what kind of board you're looking for and what sort of board member you're likely to be. This simple exercise is just one way BoardAssist helps you find a nonprofit board most suited to your interests, skills, giving level, and goals. If you prefer, just call us at 212.605.0165 or e-mail us at info@boardassist.org. We'll get started right away.

■—————■
Name: _____

Title: _____

Employer: _____

Job description: _____

Contact info: _____

1. How often can you attend a board meeting?

- Once a month: sometimes via conference call
- Once a month always in person
- Every other month
- Four times a year
- What, I have to show up?

2. What is the best time for you to meet?

- Doesn't matter
- Between 8-10am
- 12-2pm
- After 5:30pm

3. How many hours per month could you devote to your nonprofit board work?

- 1-3 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 5-10 hours
- Other: Please specify: _____

Identify Yourself

4. Where would you prefer the organization hold meetings?

- Downtown
- Midtown
- Uptown
- Brooklyn
- Other
- Doesn't matter

5. What size organization do you prefer?

- Large established organization that is recognized in its field
- Mid-sized organization in transition
- Small start-up with lots of room for growth
- Size doesn't matter

6. If the board requires you to sit on committees, can you?

- Yes No

7. What areas are of most interest to you, place in order of preference:

- Inner city education
 - Youth skills development/mentoring
 - Health and social services
 - Justice services
 - Arts Please specify:
 - Visual Arts Theater Music
 - Dance Other _____
 - Adult skills development
 - Other: If you have another area of interest not listed please describe: _____
-
-
-

8. Are you interested in a particular consumer demographic?

If so, please specify:

Identify Yourself

9. How much financial support can you comfortably commit to? (This includes both your give and get. See page 24 for a description of give/get.)

- \$1,000 per year
 \$1-5,000 per year
 \$5-10,000 per year
 \$10,000 and over per year
 I have no limit and it would be determined by what was needed.

10. Are you comfortable asking others for money?

- Yes No. I will meet my financial commitment myself.

11. Some board members want to use skills different from those used during their professional day. If that applies to you, what would those skills be? Please be as specific as possible: _____

12. Would you eventually like to be the Board Chair of the nonprofit organization you join?

- Absolutely
 Yes. But I doubt I would have that amount of time.
 No

Contact BoardAssist and let us help you connect
with a nonprofit board that works for you.

Call 212.605.0165

or e-mail info@boardassist.org.

The BoardAssist Story

One of the first questions we hear when we meet with nonprofit board candidates is not “how do I join a board,” but “how do you come up with the idea for BoardAssist; it’s an incredible service!”

BoardAssist was formed to harness the tremendous untapped intellectual capital of New Yorkers who wanted to give back: private sector individuals who have enormous talents to share with the nonprofit community, but don’t have the time to figure out how to commit these skills wisely. Too often these talented New Yorkers were supporting the nonprofit community below the board level, in roles that did not fully leverage their time and abilities, when they should have been serving as board members reviewing financial statements and preparing strategic plans – taking the burden off hardworking board members whose expertise might not be in the financial sector.

Enterprising New Yorkers who wanted to make an impact, and wanted to join a board, had to settle for a board where they had a personal contact, but not necessarily a personal connection.

BoardAssist believes that if we place New York’s best and brightest at the board level, and engage them in a mission that speaks to their specific interests and passions, we can grow the amount of intellectual capital in the nonprofit community. It’s that simple. And we’ve proven repeatedly that it works.

At any moment in time, BoardAssist is working to fill hundreds of nonprofit board openings. With requests from nonprofits that serve locally, nationally and internationally, we’re certain we’ll find a board that’s perfect for you. Whether you’re interested in an exciting new nonprofit or one of New York’s oldest and most established ones, there is a board that needs you, your expertise and your passion.

Contact BoardAssist and let us help you connect with a nonprofit board that works for you. Call 212.605.0165 or e-mail info@boardassist.org.

BoardAssist

