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Special Report

Characteristics of Effective Boards

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Is Your Governing Board Effective?

 **Latham**
Consulting Group
Make Decisions, Resolve Conflict, Move Forward



Characteristics of Effective Boards

Is Your Governing Board Effective?

Effective vs. Ineffective Boards

Is your Governing Board effective?

- Effective Boards keep the decision making process confidential. Ineffective boards have limited or no confidentiality.
- Effective Boards focus on the needs of the group. Ineffective Boards focus on the needs of the individual (often themselves).
- Effective Board members support the decision of the Board or resign (the best Boards present decisions as unanimous). Members of ineffective Boards only support decisions they agree with.
- Effective Board members show up, show up on time, and show up prepared. Ineffective Board members sporadically attend meetings, come late, leave early, and typically are unprepared.

Support of Board Decisions is Key

Of key importance is that Board members should agree to support all Board decisions, not just the ones they agree with. When a Board member says “well, I voted against it, but they out-voted me” it kills a Board’s effectiveness and dramatically reduces the chance that decisions will be implemented.



Every Board member should memorize the following statements when they communicate Board decisions:

1. “We thoroughly discussed the issue...”
2. “The Board agreed it was the right thing to do...”
3. “I plan to support the decision...”
4. “And you should to.”

How Do We Remove Dysfunctional Board Members?

How do we remove dysfunctional Board members? There are several steps you can take to either get a Board member to change their behavior or be removed from the Board:

1. The first step is to define the performance criteria for each Board member. Typical criteria can be found in Table 1 shown below.
2. Once performance criteria have been developed, the Board should periodically conduct peer evaluations using Table 1.
3. If there is no change in behavior based on peer evaluation, it’s time for the group’s chairperson to step in and counsel the dysfunctional Board member.
4. If the Board member is still exhibiting dysfunctional behavior, they should be voted off the Board per the group’s by-laws. Board meeting time is too precious and life is too short to let dysfunctional Board members continue to plague the Board.



Table 1 - Performance Criteria for Board Members

Scale:

3 = Usually

2 = Sometimes

1 = Rarely

Performance Criteria	Score
Good attendance habits (at most meetings, arrives on time).	
Comes to meetings well prepared, having reviewed agenda and materials.	
Actively participates in meetings.	
Follows meeting ground rules and does not attempt to dominate discussions.	
Expresses his/her opinions, votes his/her own mind.	
Supports the organization's mission/vision.	
Actively supports Board decisions and does not sabotage Board efforts.	
Keeps decision-making confidential.	
Has a group (rather than representational) orientation.	
Total	

As you might expect, our knowledge in this area is based on the fact that Latham Consulting Group has substantial experience in assisting medical groups with improving their governance through our **Governance Services**.

If we can provide assistance or answer any questions you might have, please contact us at 704/365-8889 or e-mail us at wlatham@lathamconsulting.com.