

# Choosing a Leadership Team for Your Nonprofit Group

## By Carol Topp, CPA

It takes a team of leaders to successfully manage a nonprofit group. A nonprofit is different from a for-profit business in that it is run by a group of people, not a single owner. The leaders share a common purpose whether it is charitable, educational, religious or humanitarian. Nonprofit board members usually serve because they care about the cause and purpose of the nonprofit, rather than any personal gain.

### **Forming a Board**

Assembling a team, sometimes called by its more formal name, Board of Directors, does not have to be a formal procedure when you are starting out. Simply choose people of integrity with gifts of organization and discernment. Look for people who show an interest and commitment to your mission. If they have experience in serving on a charitable or church board it, would be extremely helpful to your group. Look for a variety of skills including fund raising, networking, legal and organizational skills. Later on, you may consider a more formal procedure of forming a nominating committee to add board members.

### **Just Ask**

Approach potential board members personally, emphasize their strengths and contributions to your organization, and ask if they would be willing to help in a leadership role. I had a nonprofit leader tell me she was surrounding herself with intelligent, wise people and she wanted me! I was flattered and naturally supported her efforts.

### **Keep it small and form committees**

Keep your board small, so decisions can be made easily. Every board should have at least three members, a president, a secretary and a treasurer. Some boards prefer to add a vice president who will succeed the current president. As responsibilities increase, the size of the board should increase. Many boards like to add program, planning, or fund raising duties to board members. Most boards assign committees to handle many tasks. Committees meet outside of board meetings.

### Potential Committees for a Nonprofit Group

- Membership
- Event Planning
- Fund raising
- Finance
- Legal
- Personnel
- Nominating

**Define the task**

Keep tasks well defined and limited. Some people are reluctant to volunteer for leadership because they fear there is no getting out later! If you define their role specifically and limit the term to one year, they may commit freely. One nonprofit organization found their director had too many responsibilities. The board looked at the volunteers and noticed that one particular woman was very active and was already organizing events. They asked her to take over some of the director's tasks. Her organizational skills and dedication were complimented and she agreed, lifting a huge weight from the director.

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