

Your Most Valuable Partnership



Agenda

- Speaker Presentations – 25 minutes
- Break Out Sessions – 15 minutes
- Sharing – 10-15 minutes
- Q & A – 20 minutes

Your Most Valuable Partnership:
Engaging Your Board to Ensure
Success and Sustainability

Chad Roberts, President
Ramsey County Historical Society
Saint Paul, Minnesota

My Experience

- The Ramsey County Historical Society has a board of 27 directors that are all privately selected.
- I started by museum career working with an American Indian Advisory Council of 15 members and in the years since have had to privilege of working with and serving on boards in higher education, parks, and museums.
- Service on these boards has dramatically improved my perspective and shaped my expectations.

Role of the Board

You've heard these all before...

- Governance
- Financial Oversight
- Strategic Direction
- Resource Generation
- Hiring the Executive
- Self-Perpetuation (varies)

Communication

as much as possible

- Adds value for board members
- Structure your communication strategy to meet the needs of each board member
- Ensures your organization is “top of mind”
- Creates opportunities

Committees

vital, but get a bad rap

- Engage board members in meaningful work
- Built in champions for proposed board actions
- Tests leadership capacity of future chairs
- Use “Task Force” model whenever possible

Lead

inspiration is for everyone

- You share the board's responsibilities, always
- Cultivate a culture of *Thankfulness*
- Create positive shared experiences
- Ask for (at least) one significant, non-cash contribution from every board member annually
- Participate actively in recruitment

Better Board Meetings

because no one has time for bad ones

- Share the good work of individual board members with the full board
- Don't dominate the board meeting
- Have champions lined up for all significant actions
- Add fun & keep under 90 minutes

Ensure Success

success breeds success

- Ask board members to complete specific tasks, *in small parts*
- Provide extraordinary support
- Follow up frequently
- Brag about your board

Thank You!

Chad Roberts

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Your Most Valuable Partnership:
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Success and Sustainability

Scott Stroh, Executive Director

Gunston Hall

Mason Neck, Virginia

Introduction

Context and Background

- All boards are as different as the people they include and the organizations they represent
- There is a huge and diverse collection of resources to inform and educate us all about boards; use these resources and adapt what you learn to your circumstances.

My Personal Experience

- Gunston Hall features a national governing board of 51 ladies, a three person appointed Board of Visitors, and an independent Board for the Gunston Hall Docents Association.
- Previously worked with locally based and state-wide boards, externally appointed boards and internally recruited boards, organizations with up to six boards and organizations with only one board, non-profit and government boards, and I have served on a diverse array of boards separate and distinct from where I have worked.
- Experienced some tremendous successes and some colossal failures.

And, I am still here and loving life!

Strategy 1

Take Action on Your Passion!

- Nothing galvanizes or motivates a board more than vision, energy, and enthusiasm.
- Be the CEO = Chief Excitement Officer.

Strategy 2

Articulate the Vision

- Do so regularly, routinely, and repeatedly.
- Never let the Board lose sight or perspective on the big picture.
- Take advantage of opportunities to educate the board about trends in the field, share relevant articles and information, report on what you learned at conferences, and do whatever else you can to share, teach, and enrich the board's understanding and knowledge of the broader field.
- But, also do so in the context of understanding and advancing your organization's path and vision forward.

Strategy 3

Communication

- Weekly or bi-weekly updates with the board and as appropriate with former board members.
- Send exciting news, use visuals, inspire a feeling of connectivity through communication.
- Use the messaging to reinforce strategic goals, an understanding of roles, and ways to support the organization.
- Regular, weekly discussions with chair or Executive Committee
- Monthly performance dashboards.
- Discuss and understand roles and responsibilities with the board and with staff.
- Utilize staff liaisons to board committees and task forces.
- Always follow up promptly.

Strategy 4

The Yogi Theory or “You can Observe a lot by Watching”

- Listen, observe, learn, and seek understanding.
- Every interaction or connection offers insight on how you can engage the board.
- Be intentional about documenting these insights, write them down, refer to your notes regularly, “be a sponge”, and seek actionable opportunity.

Strategy 5

Channel Your Inner Rocky Balboa!

- Boards are hard work.
- Take time to nourish your own ability to effectively engage the board.
- Find a mentor or professional support group.
- Exercise your mind, body, and spirit to maximize your effectiveness.
- Understand the natural ebb and flow of board engagement.
- Run all the way up the steps and then jump for joy!

Thank You!

Scott Stroh

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Breakout Sessions

1. Identify two challenges or questions
2. Identify 3-5 strategies for addressing each challenge

Any Questions?

