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**Co-Leading Your Organization: A Guide for the Board Chair and Executive Director**

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Nonprofit Network

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STRENGTHENING NONPROFIT  
GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

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**What do you hope to learn?**

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## Latest Trends in Governance Best Practices

- The pace of change is accelerating
  - Boards need to think and work together to stay current and relevant
- Board members are becoming strong advocates and ambassadors for their organizations
  - How can you bring social capital to the organization?
- Strategic Alliances – Intentional partnerships
  - Internal: Chair and CEO
  - Planning that can look around corners for new opportunities and realities

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## Seeking

Nonprofit organization seeks talented and visionary leader with program expertise, a commitment to its mission, management and supervisory skills, and financial acumen.

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## Position also requires...

strong communication skills, including writing and public speaking. The successful candidate will be responsible for closing a significant annual gap between the organizations financial resources and the work it hopes to do....

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### And must be willing to...

be supervised by a group of volunteers whose role is loosely defined and who composition changes regularly.

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### Team

a group of people who collaborate on related tasks toward a common goal

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### Value of teamwork approach

- It takes advantage of multiple skills sets
- It increases learning opportunities and builds organizational morale
- It can solidify accountability
- It lets people share the lows and highs
- It promotes synergy

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### Five Characteristics of Cohesive teams

- They trust one another
- They engage in unfiltered conflict around issues
- They commit to decisions and plans of action
- They hold one another accountable for delivery against those plans
- They focus on the achievement of collective results

Patrick Lencioni, Five Dysfunctions of a Team

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The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team™ Model

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*As you go to work, your top responsibility should be to build trust*

– Robert Eckert, CEO Mattel

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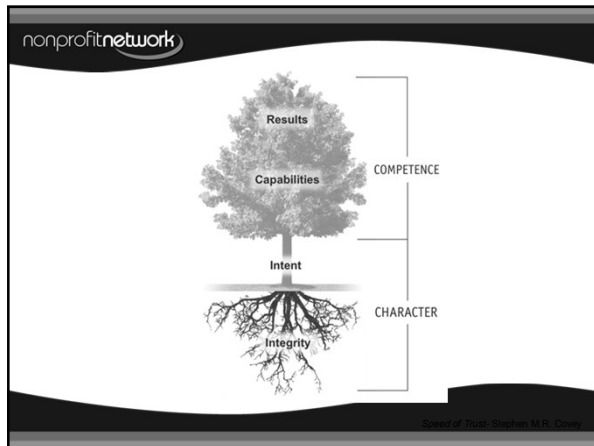
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## Trust

- Absence tears down, presence builds up
- Absence slows things down, presence speeds up
- Absence increases cost, presence reduces cost

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## Tend to the Top...Chair & CEO

- Hire (Recruit) well
- Evaluate well
- Support well

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### Who's in charge?

- A certain amount of ambiguity around that question can make an organization stronger: Although clarity about roles is important, **it's often beneficial if both parties believe that they shoulder ultimate responsibility for the organization's impact and effectiveness.**

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### Key elements of a successful Chair-CEO Partnership

1. Both are crazy about the organization
2. Chair wants and understand the job
3. Chair/CEO plans meetings (Board/Committee) together
4. Chair/CEO meet regularly

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### What the Chair/CEO talk about...

- **CEO anxiety.** Discussion about something the CEO is worried about that can be problem solved together.
- **Personnel.** Both on the board and staff side. New hires, open positions, challenges, board recruitment.
- **Fundraising.** Not just how the staff and board are doing, but any requests CEO has for the Board Chair
- **Sector education.** Give Board Chair some info about the sector to keep her up to speed on the context in which the work is being done.
- **Financials.** Quick finance update and any red flags.
- **Key priorities.** Each partner shares key priorities for the week.
- **Action items.** Meeting ends and an email is sent RIGHT AFTER THE MEETING with any action items that each has committed to –shared accountability.

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High Stakes

Opposing Opinions

CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

Strong Emotions

**Whenever you are not getting the results you are looking for, its likely a crucial conversation is keeping your stuck**

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### Crucial Organizational Moments

- Performance issues with board of staff
- Staff evaluations and board self assessments
- Budgets and cash flow
- Program modifications
- Perceived conflicts of interest

*Tip: Schedule your crucial board governance conversations on your board meeting calendar*

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### Skills to benefit crucial conversation

- Being self aware (motives and intent)
- Being group aware for cues
- Making it safe
- Enhanced listening
- Path to action

*The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place- George Bernard Shaw*

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### Discussion Starters for Chair/CEO

- How often should we connect with each other to plan our work?
- How can we best support each other?
- What do I need from you?
- What will we do if we find ourselves stepping on each other's toes?
- What criteria do you use to judge my performance?

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### Recipe for Success

- Frequent Communication
- Mutual Respect and Trust (*how do you build this? How do you maintain it?*)
- Good sounding board and support
- Common passion and vision
- Clarity of roles
- Openness

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### Frequent Communication

- Weekly, if not daily – phone, email or in person
- Jointly develop strategy
- Act as a sounding board
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
  - *Who should....?*

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### Mutual Respect and Trust

- Emphasize mutual respect and care for the future of the organization
- Chair is accessible, likes to know what's happening and is ready to offer help
- Chair's role is coach to an extremely smart, connect and scrupulously honest ED.

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### What Challenges the relationship?

- Differing approaches or expectations
- Lack of role clarity
- Ill-prepared for the role
- Personalities and personal agendas
- Lack of time and access

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### Key Challenges for Board Chairs

- Lack of time
- Misalignment between board culture and current stage of organizational development
- Boards willingness to grow beyond the current stage of development.

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### Board Chair Governance Responsibilities

- ✓ Preside over Board meetings
- ✓ Preside over Ex. Committee meetings
- ✓ Know By-Laws
- ✓ Know policies
- ✓ Appoint committee chairs
- ✓ Recruit board members

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### Micromanagement

- The unexpected, hidden reason for micromanagement is a lack of confidence in the executive
- If you want micromanagement to stop – tackle the real issue. What signals is the board receiving that would make them wonder?
  - Remember: Little things matter

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### Important ways the board chair and the executive director work together:

- Partnering to make sure board resolutions are carried out.
- Appointing committee chairs and recommending who will serve on committees.
- Preparing strategic agendas for board meetings that are geared to decision-making.
- Conducting new board member orientation.
- Each acting as spokespersons when necessary

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### Performance Evaluation

- Part of the board's evaluation of the executive director should include the performance of the board

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### Purpose of Succession Planning- Board leadership & CEO

- Illustrates a commitment to sustaining a healthy, function organization
- Insures organization has adequate information to maintain momentum
- Others can effectively manage the organization in event of absence

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### Outcomes of succession planning

- Prevent panic
- Be planful and strategic
- Minimize disruption
- Consider key position transitions as opportunities

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## Recipe for Success

Successful, mission-driven nonprofits have two things in common:

1. a strong executive director
2. an engaged, collaborative board chair

Without exception, the role of board chair is paramount to ensuring an active, focused and supportive board. This in turn ensures a healthy, happy nonprofit.

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## Thank you for serving your community



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