



# Beyond Basics: The Guide to Accelerating Board Performance



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The relationship between a nonprofit organization and its board can be interesting. On one hand, nonprofit employees and volunteers are on the ground every day doing the heavy lifting to keep a nonprofit on its feet, while board members are making long-term, strategic decisions that may impact daily operations. On the other hand, the future of a nonprofit rests on the board's shoulders, so it's important that every board decision is made thoughtfully, after careful deliberation.

We're here to tell you that a relationship between a board and a nonprofit doesn't have to be black-and-white. Nonprofit boards are in place to help drive the success of a nonprofit, not just to make decisions for the sake of making them. While there has been a lot of talk about building a professional, [business-focused board member experience](#), it's important not to lose sight of how a professional board can help motivate and drive the success of a nonprofit. After all, shouldn't success be the end goal of any board meeting?

By putting strategic measures in place to level up your board operations, nonprofit boards should start to see changes in the overall management of the nonprofit itself as well. Every decision made at a board level should trickle down to the nonprofit level, which, in theory, means that developing a professional board experience will level up the overall nonprofit experience for employees, volunteers, and beneficiaries.

This guide will show you four ways to go beyond the basics and have your board – and the nonprofit itself – operating at a higher level.





# 1. Be on the lookout for outside subject matter experts to fill gaps.

In every business, there are areas of opportunity that leaders would like to address with more resources or more focused strategy. This is just as true – if not more so – for nonprofit organizations.

Let's say, for example, that a board is struggling with communication. If a board position opens up (or an internal position, like Executive Director), communication needs might sway the hiring decision one way or another. If a candidate has extensive experience working with teams, mitigating negotiations, or public speaking, he or she would probably rank higher on your list of highly qualified candidates.

On the other hand, a nonprofit that struggles with fundraising, both on the grassroots level and at the board level, might look for a fundraising expert to do some consulting work. Someone who can come in and work with both the board and the nonprofit would be ideal. Boards can treat such a consulting expense as an

all-around win because it will impact both sides of the nonprofit equally.

Outside of hiring staff with specific skills to fill gaps, here are some examples of consultants a board may need to accelerate progress:

- Governance experts to advise board leadership
- Tax or legal consultants to weigh in on major decisions
- Communications specialists to implement new initiatives
- Emergency preparedness experts to help draft response plans
- Educational professionals to assess curricula or programming
- Regulatory officials to advise on facility upgrades or property use
- Workplace culture consultants to safeguard against employee or board member burnout



## 2. Add additional structures and committees to be more inclusive.

Another great step boards can take to level up their nonprofit's presence is by introducing additional structures and external groups to the community. Increasing brand presence and recognition will set up your nonprofit as an inclusive leader in its local community.

Unfortunately, when many people hear “nonprofit board” they immediately think of a good-old-boys club. Wealthy, connected, and more interested in the networking aspect than the nonprofit aspect – these are all common misconceptions associated with nonprofit boards. Opening up the board experience to those who might otherwise not have a chance to be involved can help eliminate these inaccurate views and set your board up for long-term success.

There are a few ways your board can be more inclusive and positively impact both your board and your nonprofit. As an added bonus, these methods are a great way to identify, mentor, and recruit future board members, too.

- **Set up a Young Professionals or Young Leaders Board.** This type of associate board is made up of young professionals (typically under 30 years old) who are interested in becoming involved with nonprofit boards. While your Young Professionals Board doesn't have to meet with your larger board every month or quarter, they should have separate meetings throughout the year and then present to the larger board at combined meetings. Who knows? You might learn something from them!
- **Set up advisory committees.** Advisory committees are made up of people from the community who might not be ready to join the board but are able to help shape the strategy of the nonprofit. The advisory committee could include volunteers, past beneficiaries, and even employees of the nonprofit. Advisory committees come up with new, fresh ideas for the board that can help jump-start strategic decisions and ideas.



### 3. Implement research tools that facilitates organization and communication, both internally and with the board.

One thing about nonprofits that many – even those serving on nonprofit boards – tend to forget is that nonprofits are, first and foremost, businesses. They are revenue-driven, service-focused organizations that have clear thresholds and boundaries that must be maintained or exceeded. For more corporate-minded board members it's easy to think of it this way: would you want the employees at your business using outdated technology that is incompatible with your needs? Of course not. This same criteria for technology applies to nonprofits.

There are certain software tools that any nonprofit must have to be successful: fundraising solutions that allow volunteers to process donations from anywhere, marketing tools that make it easy to communicate with prospective donors and supporters, and CRM

platforms that help executives and directors manage contacts and workflows. These tools are all critical to the success of any nonprofit, and to this end, nonprofit boards should have access to these tools as well. **By expanding the use of technology** across all areas of a nonprofit – including the board – organizations can be more cohesive and operate more efficiently.

And don't think there isn't anything here for nonprofit boards as well. **With a dedicated board management solution**, boards can be more organized, more transparent, and more effective. But just as board members need insight into the day-to-day operations of a nonprofit, boards should make sure the Executive Director of their nonprofit has access to the management tool as well for increased transparency.







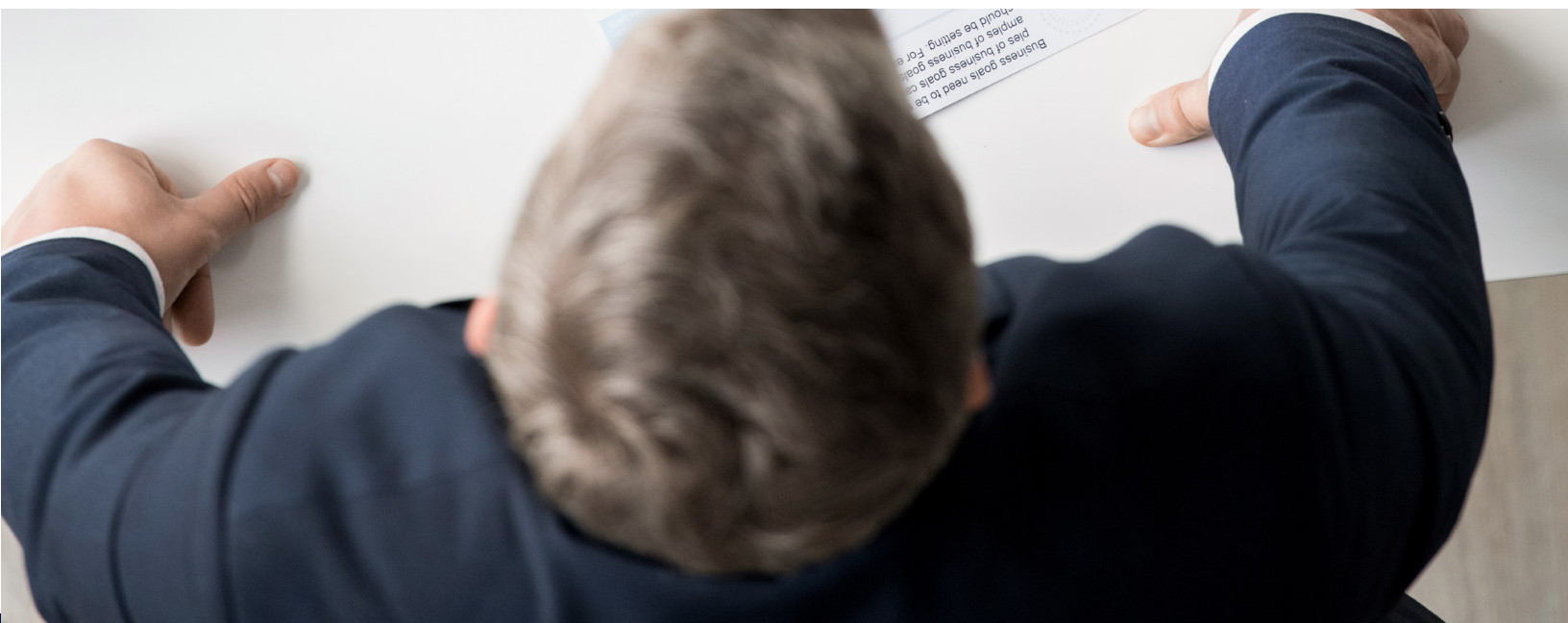
## 4. Measure and report on mission outcomes more thoroughly.

Another crucial step to accelerating your board performance is to **take metrics and reporting seriously**. While many corporations live and die by analytics, nonprofit organizations are not always as rigorous about reporting outcomes. Both boards and nonprofits themselves could level up their data analytics. It's easy for nonprofit boards and leaders to say, "Oh, we'll reach our fundraising goals next year," or "That's okay; we'll try harder in Q3," but in reality, brushing off what the numbers are actually telling you won't resolve shortfalls.

To really take your board and nonprofit to the next level, metrics and reporting must be a top priority for

everyone, in every position, across the organization. To make reprioritizing data a reality, nonprofit teams should start tracking things like reach, repeat donors, resource expenses, and more. Once this information is gathered, sharing these numbers with the board for review is a must. To complement the nonprofit's reporting, boards should track plans, decision outcomes, and fundraising numbers to ensure the long-term goals of a nonprofit are reachable and viable.

A nonprofit can't accelerate growth with a board that is still operating on low speed. By using this ebook as a guide, your board – and organization – can go beyond the basics and achieve more than ever.



# About Boardable

**Built by nonprofit leaders, for nonprofits.** Boardable empowers you to work more effectively with your boards and committees. We know the frustration you feel (and the hours you lose) just from organizing a meeting via email, phone, and text. We've lived it. We're from the nonprofit world, too. After looking around for the right tool but not finding it, we decided to build it. Boardable is a software platform that centralizes all communication between you and your board. Find the best meeting times, securely store all of your documents, archive discussion threads and more—all in one place.

For more information, to schedule a demo, or to sign up for your FREE 14-day trial, visit us at **[boardable.com](https://boardable.com)**.



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