


**The Strategic Board Member Call Summaries**

<b>Governance Capacity Assessment<sup>1</sup></b>		WA NPOs	Norm Grp
<b>A Clear, Elevating Goal</b>			
1.	We have a clear understanding of the mission and goals.	3.0	2.8
2.	We view our mission and goals as important or worthwhile.	3.6	3.3
		3.3	3.0
<b>A Results Driven Structure</b>			
3.	We have clear roles and accountabilities.	2.3	2.4
4.	We have an effective communication system where credible information is easily accessible to all team members.	2.4	2.5
5.	We have an effective communication system where opportunities exist for members to raise issues not on the formal agenda.	2.9	2.6
6.	We have an effective communication system to document issues raised and decisions made.	3.0	2.7
7.	We monitor Individual performance and provide feedback.	1.7	1.9
8.	We make decisions based on sound facts and interpreted without predisposition.	2.7	2.8
		2.5	2.5
<b>Competent Team Members</b>			
9.	We possess the relevant skills, abilities, and knowledge.	2.6	2.9
10.	We possess a strong desire to make a meaningful difference to the cause.	3.8	3.3
11.	We are capable of working well with each other.	3.3	3.1
		3.2	3.1
<b>Unified Commitment</b>			
12.	We make serious individual investments of time and energy.	2.7	2.5
13.	We do not pursue individual objectives at the expense of the cause.	3.4	3.1
		3.0	2.8
<b>A Collaborative Climate</b>			
14.	We have a climate of honesty – integrity, no lies, and no exaggerations.	3.4	3.3
15.	We are open: a willingness to share, receptivity to information, perceptions, ideas.	3.2	3.1
16.	We are consistent: predictable behavior and responses.	3.0	2.9
17.	We are respectful: treating people with dignity and fairness.	3.5	3.4
		3.3	3.2
<b>Standards of Excellence</b>			
18.	Our standards of performance are clearly and concretely articulated.	2.5	2.2
19.	Individual members require one another to conform to the established standards.	2.4	2.3
20.	We exert pressure to make changes that constantly improve our standards.	2.4	2.3
		2.4	2.3
<b>External Support and Recognition</b>			
21.	We celebrate our successes and have the tools we need to do our jobs.	3.1	2.9
<b>Principled Leadership</b>			
22.	Our officers keep the vision of the future alive and in mind.	3.1	2.8
23.	Our officers inspire us to make changes when needed.	2.8	2.6
24.	Our officers unleash the energy and talents of the members.	2.5	2.4
25.	Our officers suppress their individual egos on behalf of all of the members.	3.1	3.0
		2.9	2.7
<b>Average</b>		70.2	68.3

<sup>1</sup> Adapted by M. Light from Larson, C. E., & LaFasto, F. M. J. (1989). *Teamwork: What must go right, what can go wrong*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

## Open-ended Questions

Like About the Board	Don't Like About the Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work that we aspire to do is valuable and important.</li> <li>• We're passionate about the vision and are working collectively to bring it into reality</li> <li>• Great bunch of talented committed people</li> <li>• new energy and passion for the mission</li> <li>• We are passionate about our mission. The individuals on the board are professional and easy to communicate with.</li> <li>• Generous, committed.</li> <li>• Desire to make an impact.</li> <li>• All our board members are respectful, kind and dedicated. What we may lack in experience, we make up for in passion.</li> <li>• I am new to the board - this will be my 3rd month. I appreciate the mission and passion behind the organization It exists.</li> <li>• Lots of smart people. Lots of great networks. People believe in the cause.</li> <li>• The board members are wonderful people. We just have one that can be a wee rogue.</li> <li>• Open to new ideas</li> <li>• very committed</li> <li>• Working with people who all agree on the important vision and mission of our organization.</li> <li>• Variety of professional and personal backgrounds that leads to a diversity of perspective; passion for and/or commitment to our mission.</li> <li>• Everyone is committed to the mission of our organization.</li> <li>• Everyone share an intense passion to bring music to children.</li> <li>• Opportunity for experts to guide our program.</li> <li>• open discussions</li> <li>• Great group of people all with good intentions and a wide variety of skill sets and experience</li> <li>• They are honest, hard-working people who are sincere in their desire to achieve our organizational mission</li> <li>• desire to do "something good," willingness to learn</li> <li>• Committed group of people.</li> <li>• Clarity of and commitment to mission and purpose.</li> <li>• We went to a really dark place, but we've come out stronger than ever, focused on the work, and really cohesive.</li> <li>• they listen and reason well. Give additional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All resources are sadly lacking (time, funding, energy) and we're always scrambling for a quick fix to the most recent emergency, usually one caused by lack of resources.</li> <li>• Leadership isn't as transparent as ideal; sound governance practices aren't consistent; part of the board is fundraising, part not</li> <li>• People's lives are too busy, which results in attendance being spotty, some people sometimes not reading things, prepping for meetings, and/or not responding to requests.</li> <li>• lack of clear roles for many board members</li> <li>• We are lacking in numbers and in some specific areas of expertise.</li> <li>• No racial diversity.</li> <li>• Often too "political" in the sense that for the good of the whole is not always an option.</li> <li>• I would like to see more Board involvement with fundraising and strategic planning.</li> <li>• Each member has a different view on how to get where we want to be.</li> <li>• Individuals like to 'run the show' and have things 'their way'. Board members are not engaged outside board meetings, yet want to have control over how staff execute plans</li> <li>• That I as Chair wear so many hats because I haven't been able to recruit people for certain positions yet. So I feel overwhelmed.</li> <li>• need more enthusiasm for helping with fundraising</li> <li>• Not efficient, systems not well developed for recruiting new members, for fundraising, for understanding financial status.</li> <li>• Do not self-direct; ED must prompt agenda development &amp; follow-through on tasks.</li> <li>• I really can't think of a thing. Our current board is wholly committed to the mission and goals and willing to take the time to carry them out.</li> <li>• We lack expertise that would enable us to advance our mission and vision. We are an all-volunteer board, basically parents, who have little to no non-profit management expertise.</li> <li>• Feels ineffective.</li> <li>• may reach too much discussion; difficult to reach consensus</li> <li>• Only reactive; don't really come up with any ideas; a few members do a lot of work and many members don't do any</li> </ul>

Like About the Board	Don't Like About the Board
<p>thinking to an issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We work well together and are open to all opinions.</li> <li>Good mission focus and willingness to take action</li> <li>Everyone is committed to the mission, and they like it.</li> <li>Meeting with a common goal and vision to make a significant difference. Voices and ideas are heard.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We vary in ways we want to accomplish our mission and do not have enough insight to understand how best to do this.</li> <li>homogenous, not actively connected to our cause, lack understanding of capacity and potential</li> <li>Decisions driven by one founding member.</li> <li>Each one has strong opinions and reaching consensus and working in cooperation is difficult.</li> <li>I like our board quite well.</li> <li>Lack of time commitment. Not as involved in supporting of events or in fund raising.</li> <li>We lack the skills to complete all types of actions necessary for a Board.</li> <li>"Sometimes gets in the weeds on small, operational issues--don't have a personal investment in fundraising.</li> <li>Board has difficulty understanding the cost to do business and lack of unrestricted funding to address operational and development capacity building."</li> <li>They don't meet often enough and they tend to not collaborate in between meetings, except for the officers.</li> <li>Timing of process and best approaches - having to find balance of not shooting down an idea (from new members) because it has been attempted or not aligned with our mission and also looking at appropriate changes (with founding/older members).</li> </ul> 

Like About Being a Board Member	Don't Like About Being a Board Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working as part of a team - when that happens, that is.</li> <li>• Creating a strong foundation on which worthy causes can become real or become stronger</li> <li>• having a chance to discuss the issues and make a plan for how to proceed</li> <li>• Working for something I believe in.</li> <li>• Recognition for individual leadership.</li> <li>• The opportunity to use my skills in ways that help strengthen the board.</li> <li>• We are making a positive difference in the world each day and have an outstanding organization.</li> <li>• The opportunity to make a difference, and the ability to expand my personal skill set</li> <li>• Seeing the project go forward.</li> <li>• The opportunity to shape our community thoughtfully with others. The opportunity to network with lots of people.</li> <li>• The comradery of like-minded folks who are doing the best they can with the time they've got to do good work that benefits our community.</li> <li>• Ability to grow in skill set and grow in capacity</li> <li>• Contributing to and supporting a cause that is important to me.</li> <li>• Working with a dynamic, commitment group of people committed to a mission I believe in.</li> <li>• I have an opportunity to make real change in my community.</li> <li>• The end product is always incredibly inspiring.</li> <li>• Opportunity to learn from fellow members.</li> <li>• sharing the big vision with others</li> <li>• Enjoy working with others to make things happen</li> <li>• working with the people on our board and working towards making a change in people's lives</li> <li>• not a board member (staff)</li> <li>• Good people. Great secretary and treasurer.</li> <li>• We see the results of our efforts on a daily basis.</li> <li>• Feeling like I'm making a difference for kids who are deaf and hard of hearing.</li> <li>• N/A I am staff of the organization</li> <li>• Helping shape the direction of the organization.</li> <li>• Am not a board member, am an Executive Director</li> <li>• I am not a board member, but a staff support person. On boards I have been on, I like</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor communication and difficulty knowing what work I should be doing.</li> <li>• Sector is all over the board about deploying governance or not, sound/best practices or not, fundraising or not, etc.</li> <li>• Slowness of the process of change</li> <li>• Fits and starts on our way to realizing our full potential. Ambiguous communication and lack of follow through from the operating arm of our organization.</li> <li>• Not enough generative discussion at meetings for all to speak &amp; be seen/heard.</li> <li>• The drama that often occurs.</li> <li>• Sometimes I feel like people will always go along with what I say (as the nonprofit founder). I would like to receive more constructive criticism and feedback.</li> <li>• Takes too much time/ energy.</li> <li>• Stifling individuals. Nay-sayers. Bringing about positive change is hard work!</li> <li>• Feeling inadequate as Chair because I've never been the Chair of anything but no one else would step up to take the job. I have put my heart and soul into project managing to get a LPFM signal up for our nonprofit community talk radio back to our community. Then when I did to everyone's surprise many have been supportive but no one would take Chair position and I knew nothing about governance so I'm literally learning as I go. I don't totally understand what I'm doing. Worrying about policies procedures, by-laws, IRS deadlines, FCC inspections makes me literally lose sleep at night and feel scared because I've taken money from sponsors for operational costs and so failing is not an option. I don't regret a thing though because I'll figure out how to run a smooth working board eventually. The community is so excited to have community radio back on air in a time when it's needed now more than ever. I have so many people counting on me to make this work so again it feels overwhelming sometimes.</li> <li>• Wish I could be more involved in day to day operations of organization</li> <li>• More work than I want sometimes. Not comfortable with fundraising.</li> <li>• I don't like being on Boards that simply rubber-stamp staff decisions.</li> <li>• The amount of time needed to carry out the goals.</li> </ul>

working towards taking the mission into the future and building organizational strength.

- Honor to advocate and represent the cause in the community.



- I don't like seeing board members pour themselves into this project and yet we barely get by year after year. This program, for the good it does, should reach ten times more children than we reach.
- Lack of clear expectations and direction.
- we need more board members with a wider community input
- There is never enough time to actually discuss things that are important. Still have a working board but not enough people working. Need more of an Executive
- the endless work there is to be done
- not a board member (staff)
- I can't give the amount of time I would like. Would rather be on a board closer to my home.
- Work load is not evenly distributed. Too much falls to me.
- Wouldn't still be involved if I didn't like it.
- I have trouble with board members that don't step up beyond attending a board meeting.
- sometimes overwhelmed with personal time constraints and expectations from those that do and those not as engaged.



## Other Comments

- Thanks for hosting conversation about boards!
- we are a young organization and our board serves as both governance and performs many operational roles especially as it relates to fundraising.
- We are a start-up board. We are tasked with a very specific mission in the next year to fund raise and purchase the business we will be governing. This is a challenging position to navigate.
- I am interested in the presentation!
- Sorry for the many "" answers...
- Help!
- I'm not super computer savvy. All the younger members like Google Docs for example so they can be manipulated and shared. I just hate it. I just want an old school binder w tabs that spell out our policies and such to refer to. Is that so wrong? I will be taking some more excel and other computer courses soon to try and get with it. Things seem harder and take me longer than most to figure out sometimes because I'm at real disadvantage not being fast with computers.
- We have so many problems right now that I feel overwhelmed.
- I am an ED and would like to learn about how to strengthen Board governance and engagement.
- Our board is under transition after a difficult year of change, in which several board members resigned. We will be bringing several new members on board, who will require orientation and training. So we will be starting afresh with some continuity from members who are committed to our mission.
- I have struggled for 11 years with this group, and am almost ready to throw in the towel. The community does not see what we do, nor does it value what we do. We are are passionate about the profound effect music can have in the lives of children, but our message is encapsulated in us and we can't seem to break out.
- The board is struggling with lack of effective leadership from the ED and Board Chair leaving the board looking ineffectual to staff.
- with a small board, the interactions constantly change with personal situations
- We are transitioning from a hands on board with no staff to having staff and needing to move toward being more strategic and less involved in the day to day.
- Our Executive Director is amazing.
- Board needs help in understanding basic nonprofit accounting and reporting and how it differs from for-profit enterprise.
- Thank you.



## Sample Attendance Assessment

	Jan	Feb	May	Jun	Aug	Oct	Dec
Board Member A	√	√	A	√	√	A	√
Board Member B	A	√	√	√	A	√	√
Board Member C		√	A	A	A	√	√
Board Member D	√	√	A	√	√	√	√
Board Member E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Board Member F			A	A	√	√	√
Board Member G				√	√	√	A
Board Member H	√	A	A	√	√	√	√
Board Member I	√	√	√	A	√	√	√
Board Member J	√	√	√	√	A	√	√
Board Member K	A	√	A	A	A	√	√
Board Member M	√	A	A	A	A	A	A
Board Member N	√	A	A	√	√	A	√
% Present	73	73	31	60	60	73	86

√ = Present, A = Absent

## Sample Board and Board Member Meeting Assessment

Board Guidelines (4=best)	Jan	Feb	May	Jun	Aug	Oct	Dec
• We did important work.	3.9	3.0	4.0	3.9	3.0	4.0	3.9
• We became better informed.	3.8	3.3	3.7	3.8	3.3	3.7	3.8
• We were focused and efficient with the use of time.	3.8	3.4	3.1	3.8	3.4	3.1	3.8
• We were results oriented and effective.	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.5
• We had a give-and-take atmosphere.	3.8	3.6	3.1	3.8	3.6	3.1	3.8
• We built community with each other.	3.3	3.3	2.8	3.3	3.3	2.8	3.3
Board Member Guidelines (4=best)	Jan	Feb	May	Jun	Aug	Oct	Dec
• I put the organization first, ahead of my own interests including disclosing conflicts of interest and avoiding personal agendas.	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.9
• I spoke with my voice inside the boardroom, always showing respect for others.	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8
• I spoke with the board's voice outside of the boardroom including fully supporting majority decisions not personally backed.	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.9
• I honored the mission.	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.0
• I respected the chain of command.	4.0	4.0	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.8	4.0
• I modeled the way a board member should conduct him/herself.	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.6
Comments							
<b>What did you like?</b> Great discussion Getting to know each other Really focused Stayed on topic	<b>What didn't you like?</b> Chair needs to get everyone's opinion Too much minutia Room was stuffy Went too long			<b>What would you like?</b> More about the deficit ED's compensation Board orientation Plan for new building Snacks would be great			



## The Strategic Board

Four Complaints, Seven Realities,  
Five Great Questions, and Two Easy Fixes

August 10, 2017  
Presented By

Mark Light, MBA, Ph.D.  
President, First Light Group LLC



**FIRST LIGHT**  
Group LLC  
Putting "Your Future  
Within Reach"

Slide 1, © 2017, [www.firstlightgroup.com](http://www.firstlightgroup.com)

5/15: 12:15

## 7 Realities

- Time**  
6.9 meetings x 3.3 hours = 22.77 hours  
x 71% = 16.17 hours
- Knowledge**  
Imperfect
- Size**  
Mean = 17
- Composition**  
Most effective = 15 to 22  
Not wealth, work, and wisdom  
Give, Get, or Get off
- Fund Ability**  
Give: Less than half do  
Get: Only 40% are okay with asking
- Continuity**  
71% attendance rate  
+ Term limits = Déjà vu all over again

Slide 3, © 2017, [www.firstlightgroup.com](http://www.firstlightgroup.com)

10/10: 12:10

## Introductions

### Four Complaints

- Harvard**
  - Boring meetings
  - Awash in information
  - 1+1+1=1
  - No red meat on the table
- Drucker**
  - Executive: *Board meddles*
  - Board: *Executive usurps*
- Light**
  - 80 percent of a good board . . . comes from not being a bad one.
- BoardSource**
  - 2,152 nonprofit leaders
  - "Nonprofit board performance is mediocre at best."
- Bailey Bros.**

Slide 2, © 2017, [www.firstlightgroup.com](http://www.firstlightgroup.com)

10/25: 12:25

## ED Experience

- Stress**  
Burnout 26%
  - Pay**  
Career Opps 26%  
Board Relations 22%
  - First Timers**  
George \$39,000  
Nonprofit CEOs  
2 in 3 are new  
4 or fewer years
  - Tight Money**  
77% < \$1 million  
67% < \$500,000  
30% < \$100,000
  - Lean Crew**  
1 in 2 have 5 or fewer  
1 in 3 have 1 or none
  - Once is Enough**  
First-timers: 4 years of experience  
Once is enough: 5 in 6 take a break  
Only 1 in 3 come back
- Median: 64,057
- |                              |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Less than \$199,999          | \$60,206  |
| \$500,000 to \$999,999       | \$81,991  |
| \$1,000,000 to \$2,499,999   | \$103,704 |
| \$2,500,000 to \$4,999,999   | \$125,899 |
| \$5,000,000 to \$9,999,999   | \$153,858 |
| \$10,000,000 to \$24,999,999 | \$184,926 |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999,999     | \$226,023 |
| \$50,000,000 or more         | \$317,024 |
- Burnout Better job Board

Slide 4, © 2017, [www.firstlightgroup.com](http://www.firstlightgroup.com)

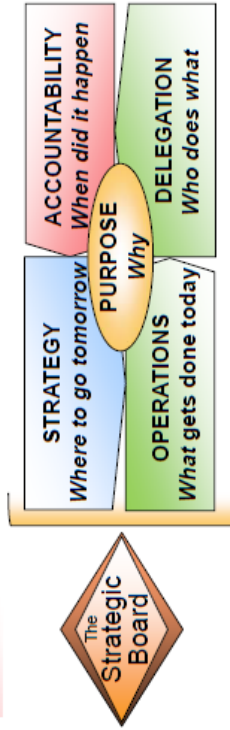


5/30: 12:30

**Three Possible Solutions**

- BoardSource**
  - Whatever works... works
  - Any good effort delivers (Nobbie, Brudney, 2003)
- Policy Governance**
  - Boards sets the ends
  - Staff delivers the means (Carver, 1997)
- Board-Centered ED**
  - Executive Director should lead but be board centered (Herman and Heimovics, 1991)

**Five Great Questions**



Slide 5, © 2017, [www.firstlightgroup.com](http://www.firstlightgroup.com)

10/40: 12:40

**Two Easy Fixes**

Goal	Clear Elevating	Climate	Us 70 Norm 68
Climate	Collaborative Respectful	Members	3.3 3.2
Structure	Results Driven Fact-based	Goal	3.2 3.1
Members	Competent Right #, mix	Commitment	3.3 3.0
Commitment	Unified Participative	Leadership	3.0 2.8
Standards	Concrete Enforced	External Support	3.2 2.6
External Support	Support Recognition	Structure	2.9 2.7
Leadership	Principled Capable	Structure	2.5 2.5
		Structure	2.4 2.3

Slide 6, © 2017, [www.firstlightgroup.com](http://www.firstlightgroup.com)

10/50: 12:50

**ED ROLE**

Board members and staff expect chief executives to take responsibility for success and failure. (Herman and Heimovics, 1991, p. xii)

Help me help you

Show me the money

To the executive director who asks "What good is the board?" comes the answer that he or she alone is largely responsible. (M. Light, 2001, p. 145)

**Executive Director Duties**

1. Deliver Results Now "What gets done today"
2. Enable the board
  - a. Facilitate interaction
  - b. Show consideration
  - c. Envision change
  - d. Provide useful information
  - e. Initiate structure
  - f. Encourage success (Herman & Heimovics, 2005)



Slide 7, © 2017, [www.firstlightgroup.com](http://www.firstlightgroup.com)