

The Do's and the Don'ts of Bringing on New Board Members

Board members leave. And whether that's due to an expected departure at the end of a term or an unexpected exodus, new ones join. For a board to be successful, all of its members must be fully engaged, up-to-speed, and excited. Including the new ones.



Those new board members often come in at a disadvantage. They were excited to join, but now that they've said yes, they may begin to feel a bit uneasy, as they don't completely understand their role, what's expected of them, or how they fit in with the rest of the board. And, they may not know where to go or who to talk to get the details they need.

Without the proper supports, your new members will never fully engage with your board. At the least, they may grow frustrated, concerned, and withdrawn. At the worst, your board may begin to splinter and disintegrate.

There are a number of things you can do to get them up to speed and maintain their level of

engagement, before, during and after their transition. There are also some things you should definitely avoid.

Things to do for a new board member

- **Give them a proper welcome.** Celebrate a new board member. This welcome will help all of the board members feel more connected to each other. It will also help the new person feel more connected to the board and the chapter and motivate them to do a good job; as they connect to others on the board, they won't want to let them down. Consider having some sort of "board only" get together as soon as possible, to give everyone a chance to get to know each other.



- **Provide appropriate training.** Training helps the new member more clearly understand their role as well as the board's expectations, getting them up-to-speed quicker than if they were left to figure it all out on their own. Be sure any training includes a review of the association and the chapter's vision and mission and an understanding of how their position fits into the board and the chapter. Give them copies of past meeting minutes, so they can see how an actual meeting operates.

- **Connect them with a mentor.** Consider introducing them to a current or previous board member, to answer questions and support them when and if they're feeling a little stressed or unsure. If possible, help them remain connected to the person they're replacing.

Things not to do for a new board member

- Let too much time pass. Keep the momentum and excitement going by getting them involved as soon as possible. You may be able to start activities like the training and mentoring before they officially start in the role.

- Forget to give them homework. Give them things to read – like marketing materials and

articles written about the chapter and the parent organization – and the names/contact information of current and former board members and committee heads to talk to. And follow up to ensure they've completed their assignments.

- **Limit their participation when they start.** Just because they're new doesn't mean their points aren't valid or important. Early on, start asking for their input. As a new member, they may have unique points of view and/or think of things your more senior members haven't.

All of your board members, new and old, and your committee members, need the proper tools to understand their jobs and execute them effectively. Chapter toolkits can help ensure everyone has the same access to these tools. Toolkits offer consistency, critical for organizational success. Consistency leads to stronger engagement with members and prospects and tools that make boards and committees more effective, streamlining, standardizing, and minimizing the time it takes to get things done.

Welcoming and on-boarding new board members correctly is essential to their success and to the success of your board. Do it right and you'll engage them for the long-term. Do it wrong and they'll be gone before you know it.

