

# **Notes for *Board Nurturance***

## ***Slide 1***

This presentation focuses on the role of the Board in organizational effectiveness. Traditional governance assumes that board members know their job, but the fact is that most boards do not explore the proper role of members nor put expectations in writing. Effective boards spend intentional effort on learning the role of the board in governance and on building a leadership team.

## ***Slide 2***

The board's leadership role is starkly stated on this slide.

(Read slide).

Although this statement is broad, it incorporates the concepts that the board acts on behalf of a larger group and that it must assure accountable organizational performance. Noting the name "Enron" makes the point. This statement introduces the notion of unacceptable means to achieve the ends. Instead of listing all acceptable actions, it is useful to state the unacceptable means of achieving ends relating to ethics, legal standards, and financial practices.

"No job exists to do anything. A job exists for the result of the doing" (Carver)

## ***Slide 3***

These three principles set the tone for the relationship. Rather than concern with individual tasks, the board looks at the bigger picture. Board members always have a desire to contribute to the organization—they want to make an impact. With board training to understand their role and the linkage with the CEO, they will be able to develop group responsibility for strategic leadership rather than administrative detail.

## ***Slide 4***

These five elements contribute to a healthy relationship. Without a value for board training, these concerns are often unstated—thus not given appropriate consideration. Let's look at each one

## **Slide 5**

CEOs often refer operational issues inappropriately to the Board & Board Committees. This draws the board into areas that are meaningless and devalue the real work of the Board.

The Board should have **high-level** conversations with organizations that have mutual impact on the same population of customer, discussing how it might collaborate on addressing the real issues of the customers, rather than deciding what color the brochure should be for the upcoming educational event.

The Board must be empowered to be the link to the external environment--not on operational issues, but to better understand the long-term needs of the community of members.

## **Slide 6**

The Boundary can be set wherever the Board feels comfortable, but then put it in writing so the expectations are clear and performance can be monitored based on the set boundary, NOT on experience in other organizations.

CEO Integrity: Don't ask the board to address issues that you should be deciding.

Board Integrity: Don't tread on the CEO for making decisions you delegated!  
BUT there must be monitoring of the results.

If means are important, address them from the worries rather than from the how-to's. *Worries* are what define the "unacceptable situations." Just because one board member might be worried does not mean that others have the same worries. The whole board should decide its collective and substantive worries, defined in the broadest possible terms.

## **Slide 7**

National boards require more written than face-to-face communication. When boards meet only once or twice a year, consideration must be given to how communication will be handled. Some CEOs submit a written report six times a year, addressing each agreed-upon end goal and priority. These reports contribute to the annual monitoring of the CEOs performance.

## **Slide 8**

Garden fences, like boundaries between the board and the CEO, are low and can easily be stepped over. Keep in mind what you are trying to accomplish for the *total* organization. Board empowerment and appropriate CEO delegation and accountability are important for long-term growth, stability, and perpetuation of the organization.

This requires that the Board hold itself accountable to that which it says it will do. The board also needs to be empowered to keep its own discipline and decide *ahead of time* how it will handle a situation where one board member wants to violate the boundaries.

The CEO also needs to honor the Board's accountability for the total organization and work to keep the Board informed on operational activities in the context of meaningful data, rather than meaningless anecdotal information.

This might require the CEO to create ways to demonstrate that the organization is achieving meaningful outcomes.

## **Slide 9**

Earlier we identified the elements of a healthy structure. But how do you get there?

## **Slide 10**

Alignment means more than talking about it. It requires that policies be written so that there is no question about clarity.

## **Slide 11**

The board defines the priorities and parameters of the work of the organization by determining which human needs are to be met, for whom, and at what cost. The bottom line is what impact, difference, change, benefit, or outcome should result. One honor society may decide that recognition is the benefit. That cost is determined by the monetary expense and by its relative worth. Another honor society, which chooses to encourage scholarship or research, must determine the expense and relative worth of the impact it wishes to make. What's important is that the honor society delivers on the expectations it communicates and that the Board has written priorities and parameters so that the CEO doesn't have to deliver on unstated and unwritten expectations. (Examples can be exchanged for the above so that they are appropriate to the organization.)

## **Slide 12**

The win-win relationship develops from clarity of policies and expectations. If they aren't written, they're not clear.

## **Slide 14**

The CEO must recognize that the internal focus is only one way to look at the world. The Board focus should be differentiated and should bring the external view for a two-dimensional view of issues.

## **Slide 15**

This presentation advocates for significant board training. Board members have had various prior experiences, some of which have been negative or unsatisfying. The bias of this presentation is that training is an integral part of board work and that it isn't just for the new board members. Each time a member leaves and a new one joins the board, the culture is changed. Together, the Board and CEO create a new working relationship and culture based on learning about the board's role and examining and changing its policies, end goals, and priorities to fit the needs and mission of the organization. "Board leadership requires, above all, that the board provide vision. To do so, the board must first have an adequate vision of its own job. That role is best conceived neither as volunteer-helper nor as watchdog but as trustee-owner" (Carver).

## **Resources**

Carver, J. (1990, 1997). *Boards that make a difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Carver, J. (1992-2002). *Board leadership* (6 newsletters per yr.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Carver, J. (1993). *John Carver on board governance* (video). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Carver, J., & Carver, M. M. (1996). *Carver Guide 1-12*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.