

Guidelines for Avoiding "Role Problems"

1. When board members get "out of role," it is the Board Chair's job to handle the problem by talking to the individuals involved privately, or discussing the general topic at a board meeting.

Example: a board member brings stories back to other board members, or the board itself, about something they thought was mishandled by staff.

Appropriate Response: the Board Chair points out that this is not an appropriate topic for board discussion; that it is the CEO's responsibility to manage staff performance; that if the information is important for the CEO to know about, that it should be communicated to the Board Chair to discuss with the CEO (or, in some circumstances, the board member should speak directly to the CEO).

2. When a staff person gets "out of role," it is the CEO's job to handle the problem by talking to the staff member.

Example: a staff member approaches a board member with a complaint about the way the affiliate is being managed.

Appropriate Response: the board member interrupts to say "That is not something you should be discussing with me. You need to discuss that with the appropriate person and that is your supervisor or the CEO."

Note: It is the Board Chair's job to coach board members how to handle those situations.