

GUIDELINES FOR THE NOMINATING PROCESS

Virtually all experts on boards and board development agree that the most important committee on board of directors is the nominating committee. This is the case, because the primary factor that affects the quality of a board is the quality and appropriateness of the people who are brought to it through the nominating process. The Board Nominating Committee thus has a very important board responsibility to carry out.

The guidelines that follow were developed to help focus the nominating process. They will be reviewed and reaffirmed by the Board Nominating committee before each nominating process begins. The Committee will then assure that its activities and the nominating related activities of the Board remain consistent with the following guidelines.

1. We need to develop a Board composed of people who others want to work with.

This doesn't mean a purely power or prestige board. It does mean a board that has impressive, committed people that are both stimulating and rewarding to work with. We want people who take positive approaches to issues, who are team players, who can constructively disagree, and who keep conflicts issue-centered as opposed to people-centered.

2. We must let people say no for themselves.

Sometimes people aren't asked to join a board because others fear that they will say no. This is not a good reason to not ask someone. If they are right for the board, we should tell them that and let them say yes or no.

3. We need to make sure that candidates are committed to our organization as well as to our issues.

Often people say yes when asked about board membership because they feel so strongly about the issues. That is important, but it isn't enough. If people aren't also committed to the work of the affiliate and the board, they won't be committed to working for us.

4. Criteria for selection of board candidates should be based on a thorough analysis of the current Board.

The job of the Nominating Committee should be to assess our shortcomings as a board and compile a list of criteria that would then be used to make board member selections and to assure that we only add people to our board who meet those criteria.

5. Decisions about new board members should be based on the established criteria. We must not slip into just filling board slots.

The Nominating Committee should decide, based on the criteria established and the people suggested, who will be considered for board membership.

6. We should establish an expectation that all board members will be involved in the nominating process.

Every board member should be expected to come up with at least one suggestion of a friend, acquaintance or other person who could significantly strengthen the board. We should get people thinking about this on a year-round basis. This person must, in some concrete way, make our board and our organization better. It could be name, position, skills, personality, background, perspective, motivation, whatever, but it must be something and it must be consistent with the priorities for new board members that have been established by the Board.

7. Committee members should work closely with Board members.

Nominating Committee members should be assigned board members to talk with to get their nominations. They should be clear that the selection, or non-selection, of their candidates for the slate will be determined by the Committee. There should be no expectation that because a board member nominated somebody, that person will be on the slate.

8. We need to be crystal clear with candidates about what is expected of Board members.

Very succinct, clearly written materials should be prepared and consistently used with people. Those materials should include a position description and expectations for board members, a statement of our purpose, principles, and precepts, and our positions on key issues. Each person should be asked to make a commitment to meet these expectations and operate consistent with these principles.

9. Each candidate should have a face-to-face meeting with a committee member prior to nomination.

In all cases, a prospective candidate should have a face to face meeting with a Nominating Committee member prior to nomination to the board, It may work best if the person who suggested this potential board member could set up a joint lunch, meeting, etc., between that person and the committee chair.

10. We must be clear and consistent in communication with candidates.

Standard introductory and follow-up letters, which can be personalized, should be used for the formal communication between the board and potential candidates. In addition, Nominating Committee members should be clear about the objectives for any contact that they have with potential board members. This would help assure that everyone is saying the same things hi the same way.