TIPS: Successful Written Board Communications

Communicating effectively with your non-profit Board is no small task, whether you are the Board chair of an all-volunteer group or the staff member responsible for facilitating meetings. Here are a few tips to streamline Board communications.

Tip #1: ***Build the relationship face to face.*** When people know and trust each other and understand one another's communications styles, miscommunication in electronic channels becomes less common.

Tip #2: ***Establish communications protocols***. Create written policies and procedures for board and committee communications, reporting, and decision-making.

Tip #3: ***Use email sparingly.*** Multiple emails are likely to be lost in the in-box. When you have a simple, timely message that is best delivered by email, cut through the clutter by using clear subject headings and keeping the text concise. Bulleted points are effective. Provide links to detailed information and online documents.

Tip #4: ***Make it easy to share information.*** The Board should receive packets prior to the meeting so they have time for review. In addition, they should have convenient 24-hour access to orientation materials, corporate documents, financial information, policies, and marketing materials. Consider setting up a secure board-only password-protected page on your website or use a web-based document hosting site to post all of your board documents online.

Tip #5: ***Avoid jargon and acronyms.*** If you must use internal terms, make sure that you spell them out or provide a glossary, especially for new board members.

Tip #6: ***Clearly articulate your request.*** Let your board members know what you need from them and why their input/response is important. Always share a deadline and a best method of responding.

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