How to Conduct a Successful Board of Directors Meeting

I have attended my share of Board Meetings with various organizations over the years. Each one has been met with some degree of success. Many could have benefited from taking the time to be organized properly.

The three obvious factors that contribute to a successful meeting are, Preparation, Execution and Education.

Preparation

Most Directors of a charity are volunteers, with the exception of the Executive Director. This means that members have a life, family and a job outside of the organization. As a result, many come in ill-prepared for Board Meetings. As a result, a lot of the actual meeting time is spent doing what should have been completed in the 30 days since the last meeting. It's kind of like the young student that completes his homework in the first 15 minutes of the class when it's due. A lot of time is wasted and nothing is accomplished. The issue that should have been addressed during the meeting are then pushed to the following month's agenda. Take the time to complete your responsibilities before the meeting and make everyone happy.

Execution

Some Boards are very informal. However, due to some of the legalities that hold charities accountable, board meetings should follow some sort of formal format. This ensures that you meet all of your legal requirements and it also helps to keep everyone on track.

Education

Many Board members are actually very unfamiliar with Board processes. There are guidelines that direct votes, nominations, discussions and issues. This often means that these individuals do not become involved in the process and are essentially ineffective board members. A Board of Directors Manual is a great resource for them to learn on their own, but there should also be some mentoring and hand-holding for new members (or even existing members).

I recently came across this Free Booklet published by CGA of Ontario and I found it to be a great resource. It is concise, yet pretty comprehensive. So, if you don't feel like sitting down and reading Robert's Rules of Order, then download and take a look at this one.

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