

Board Member Motivations

Volunteer board members often have a number of reasons for joining and serving on a non-profit board. What is important to you about being on this board? Check those that are important (✓) and those that are not (x) at all. Rank the three that are most important to you.

- Developing new professional relationships
- Learning more about the issues
- Meeting new people
- Working with others as a team member
- Healing myself (e.g. an opportunity to develop new patterns or avoid old patterns, of thinking or behavior)
- Learning new skills
- Responding to a community issue that I care about
- Advancing my career (e.g. I want to be seen as someone who contributes to a good cause)
- Helping to improve our community
- Involving myself in something different
- Feeling needed
- Bringing my own perspective to the work of shaping the organization
- Making new friends
- Relieving my guilt over being more fortunate than others
- Helping individuals who need support
- Broadening my perspective
- Taking on more responsibility
- Being challenged

Guide to Using the Board Member Motivations Exercise

Individual reflection and completion: 5-10 minutes

Group sharing and discussion: 15-25 minutes

This exercise is intended, at the very least; to help board members to get to know each other better, build trust and cohesiveness.

The sheets (p. 1) should be distributed to all board members, noting that they are **not** to be collected or handed in. Also, the exercise should not be sent out in advance of the board meeting, as there is value in the board reflecting together.

Each board member should take a few quiet minutes to indicate their own motivations and then the responses should be discussed as a group. Board members should be asked to volunteer their responses.

To lead off the sharing of responses, the chair could say:

- *There is some evidence that the most motivated board members are often those who multiple reasons for serving on a board, both altruistic and personal. We can go around the table. I am hoping people will be willing to share their top ones.*

A question that might be asked of the group:

- *Are there any motivations on the list that are inappropriate to serving on a board? Are there any motivations that are missing?*

A follow-up question to board members might be:

- *Was there any expectation or hope you had about serving on this board when you joined that has been especially well met and any that have not yet been realized?*

This exercise is adapted from Sue Inglis and Shirley Cleave (2006) "A Scale to Assess Board Member Motivations in Nonprofit Organizations" in Nonprofit Management and Leadership, Vol 17, No.1, Jossey Bass-Wiley. The authors taught at McMaster University and the University of New Brunswick respectively.