

Recruiting a Purpose-Driven Board

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Purpose is about contributing to something that is greater than yourself. It's about being a meaningful part of something. It's about making an impact. People generally want to contribute to something bigger. As philanthropy leaders, you must tap into that intrinsic motivation of others to create an impactful board of directors to elevate your mission work.

Bestselling business author Dan Pink wrote a book called *Drive*, in which he says the secret of high performance is in meeting deeply human needs. The book draws on four decades of scientific work on human motivation to illuminate three specific elements that motivate people. He says each person's own intrinsic, inner drive pushes them to seek *autonomy* to direct their own lives and control their own decisions, *mastery* to learn and create new things and *purpose* to do better by themselves and their world. He says true motivation to action depends on first meeting these three very basic human needs.¹

Gallup research also validates a universal desire among individuals for their lives to have purpose and to matter. When asked, "How important to you is the belief that your life is meaningful or has purpose?" an astounding 98% said it was important to them. They wanted their lives to make a difference. They wanted meaning. They wanted purpose.²

How can philanthropy leaders connect this internal motivation, drive and purpose with the organizational purpose and mission? First, skip over potential board members who want to join at the behest of their employer, to pad their resumes, to seek business leads or out of any other

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form of self-interest. Passion for mission is a baseline for recruitment of any board member. Identify board members who want to achieve positive impact, to fulfill their purpose, to advance their core values and to pursue their passions. Then, tap into those aspects.

Consider the operating system on your computer. It's that thing in the background that helps everything else run smoothly. It's a baseline from which everything works. You have an opportunity to create a board with a baseline that honors the purpose of each individual member and to create a new paradigm for board engagement and mission achievement. You must shift the focus from being a group who checks off a litany of tasks to, instead, connecting the individual motivations and passions of each board member with the mission. Make this the baseline from which everything else works.

Take the opportunity to talk to people about where their hearts are and the impact they want to achieve. Ask how they want to be involved. Discuss how they envision opportunities to extend their own values and beliefs to benefit the organization and even the community at large. Ask about the legacy they want to create. This may be much different than recruiting boards of the past. It must now start with individual purpose and beliefs and applying them for mission impact.

Next, discuss personal experience. Ask how they have interacted with your health care organization. Inquire about how the organization and cause are close to their hearts. If they don't have an answer for you, they are probably not well-suited to be board members. If you cannot connect personal passion with mission impact, it's time to continue your member search.

When you start having conversations with people about values, you quit chasing potential board members who simply have money. Having the financial wherewithal and inclination to invest is wonderful, but having someone with power, prestige and pocketbook potential who does not also have aligned purpose is likely not someone you want to recruit to your board. Why would you invite someone with all those other attributes who doesn't really care about your work? Some people simply won't fit into a meaningful board of directors that is rooted in purpose.

Purpose must be your new baseline. Purpose can provide a new operating system for your boards that establishes a solid platform on which to build everything else. Lead with purpose. Be the connector that aligns individual passion and purpose with organizational mission. Fundamentally change the way you partner with your boards and experience how purpose-driven board members can achieve greater impact.

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¹ *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Daniel H. Pink, Penguin, 2011.

² Rodd Wagner and Jim Harter, Gallup Business Journal, "The Eighth Element of Great Managing," December 13, 2007.