

The Healthy Board Notebook

November 12, 2007

The healthy governing board embraces and regularly reviews a vital, clear mission and vision for the organization.

Mission and Vision (part 2)

In our last conversation, we talked about the healthy board making certain that your organization has:

- » a compelling mission;
- » a strategic sense of direction;
- » a multi-year roadmap for action; and
- » an understanding of the core values that support all three.

Understanding where the organization is going and why that is beneficial helps the organization focus on the programs and activities that contribute most powerfully to success. In focusing on those programs and activities, the organization can more effectively allocate its resources to those areas with the most important returns. It just makes good sense to operate efficiently and effectively in the context of fulfilling a mission that makes the world a better place.

Some would say that this is a high-minded stance and ask if we shouldn't be focused on the practical matter of delivering services. While delivering service is essential, we know that the number one reason that donors will support your organization is that they believe in its mission. If for no other reason, the healthy board will make sure that your mission is vital and clear, so it will attract and retain the donors needed to fund your services.

You see, your organization has a life force, a vitality of its own. In keeping the organization's mission and vision fresh and lively, the board helps you unlock your organization's charisma—its ability to arouse loyalty and enthusiasm. At the same time, it reinforces your organization's capacity to lead and to serve those for whom its mission is intended.

For the same reasons— attracting resources and delivering benefits—the healthy board will make certain that your organization has a vital, clear vision for the future. They know that, in the crush to deliver services, it is important to keep the larger context in sight and avoid letting the organization become static and lose its competitive position.

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The healthy board also sees that the process of reviewing the organization's mission and vision is an ongoing component of its responsibility to the organization. Regular review allows the board and the organization to take advantage of changing conditions, develop its capacity to anticipate new circumstances and manage them effectively, and engage its donors and stakeholders in fostering a bountiful future.

So, where do we begin a conversation? Here are a few questions I have found to be effective starting points for discussion:

- » Is your governing board really involved in achieving a lively strategic position that strengthens your organization and enhances its mission?
- » How has your board embraced your mission and vision to help your organization thrive?
- » How have you used a fresh, up-to-date mission and vision to attract new board members and engage new donors?
- » How have you achieved an effective balance between the practical matters of day to day operations and the maintenance of a lively dialogue about mission and vision?

In our next conversation we will continue to explore the dynamics of a vibrant mission and vision, looking especially at how it influences fundraising.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

All the best!

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