

# How to Get Your Nonprofit Board Members to Give

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As leaders of your organization, board members should be the first individuals to make a donation to support your mission. Many board members do not understand how important their funds are. It's very important to pursue board giving because:

- Grant funders want to know that board members aren't just seat holders and decision-makers. Your board should be passionate enough about your cause to put their financial resources behind it.
- Similarly, keen major donors will want to know that board members are committed enough to the organization and its programs to make a large personal contribution.
- Board giving sets the stage for capital campaigns and annual giving.
- Board giving also shows your staff that the board are in this with you, as partners.

But how do you get your board members to understand this? How do you get them to donate without having to chase them down?

### Role of a nonprofit Board of Directors



Boards serve a vital role in supporting the mission and vision of your organization. Their main role is to be the interface between your organization and the community your organization serves to ensure the mission is carried out, funds are handled appropriately, and to establish trust and credibility.

Individual board members should be used to help in a variety of ways, including:

- Volunteer their time on a committee
- Help promote and raise awareness about your mission
- Open doors to potential donors, sponsors, and volunteers
- Help obtain or give gifts in-kind
- Advocate for your organization's cause both inside and outside of your community
- **Strategize and advise organization leadership planning for the future.**

Board roles vary and change depending on the specific board member and their individual strengths, connections, and interests. Ideally, you should have a diverse group of individuals to serve on your board who have an array of resources **and skillsets** to bring to the table.

That being said, all board members should be willing to make a personal financial contribution to the organization. Regardless of how much they are able to give, it's important that each member of your board makes a financial donation to your organization.

### What does 100% board giving mean?



100% board giving means that every member of your Board of Directors is donating personal funds to your organization each year. Whether they choose to give \$10 or \$10,000 doesn't really matter, although you should encourage your board to give as much as they are able to. What really matters, though, is that everyone is donating something.

In order to be successful, it's critical that you help your board members understand why it's important that they give.

### Why it's important for board members to give



There are a few key reasons why it's important that you have 100% board giving. Describing these reasons to your board members will help them understand why you're asking for their personal financial support, and it will pave the way for an easier board giving campaign.



### Some grantors require board giving

If you want to apply for and have a better chance of obtaining grants, you may need to answer the following question on the application of grantors: "Does 100% of your Board give?" If you are unable to answer "yes" to that question, it may disqualify you from receiving the grant. Help your board understand that if they don't make personal financial contributions, it could keep you from getting some grant funding. That's usually a significant enough reason to motivate your board members to donate.



### It should be an expected part of their responsibilities

Fundraising has to be one of the main responsibilities of your board. It should be their job to ensure that the organization has sufficient funds to operate. They can help accomplish this by giving themselves, helping with fundraising, and hiring a consultant, contractor, or staff member to focus on your organization's fundraising efforts. Teamwork is crucial, especially for nonprofits just starting up, and you should have all of your board members commit to helping raise funds to support your organization's programs, starting with their own donations.



### Leaders should be the first givers

Leaders in your organization should always provide the example for others to follow. If you want your staff, volunteers, and the community to give more generously, your leaders need to be the first to give. Board giving sends a strong message that your organization's leadership believes in your mission and is financially committed to helping make a lasting community impact.



### Askers should always be givers first

Before your board members invite others to give to your organization, they need to make their own gifts first. It just makes sense - if your board hasn't made personal financial contributions, how can they responsibly ask others to do the same? **A board members ability to sit down with someone and say "I donated. Here's why you should too," is extremely impactful on a potential donor.**

## How can you acquire 100% board giving?



Like any other donors, board members most likely won't remember to give on their own, so they'll probably need your help remembering their responsibility and knowing how much they should give. To this end, there are two main things that you will need to do:



### Set the expectation during board recruitment & onboarding

Starting the conversation around board giving when you are recruiting and onboarding new members will make it so much easier to be successful. Set expectations as you are talking with individuals about the possibility of their joining your board. If there is hesitancy, push back, or they have an excuse as to why they cannot give, you may not want them on your board.

When you tell prospects upfront what exactly you're expecting from them as a member of your board - to make a personal financial contribution - they're more apt to do it. As far as they will be concerned, it's just the way things are done in your organization.

You should put this expectation in writing, so they have it to refer back to later. You can **include it in your board member agreement**, make board giving a part of your board handbook if you have one, or you can simply provide them with a form detailing the expectations you have for your board. As a part of this package, you have received a Board of Directors Engagement Form that you can also ask your board members to fill out, allowing them to decide how they'll be involved in contributing to your organization and helping to raise funds. Have your board members sign any forms you ask them to fill out, so they have the chance to document their commitment.



### Run a board giving campaign at the start of your fiscal year

In order to get 100% of your board members to give each and every year, you have to ask them each and every year. Most of them won't remember that they're expected to donate, or they can get busy with their personal lives and forget that they didn't give yet. Make a quick annual board giving campaign part of your fundraising activities at the start of each fiscal year - this will make it easier for them and for you to be successful at it.

To make an annual board giving campaign a success, be ready with the following:

- Decide on start and end dates for the campaign - it should be no longer than 60 days, but the shorter the better. People work well with deadlines, and this will help wrap the campaign up in a timely manner.
- Give your board pledge cards or forms to fill out. By putting the pledge in writing, it will make the donation more real for both the individual who is giving and your organization. Make sure you provide the board member with a copy of the pledge for their personal records.
- As frustrating as it might seem, you most likely will have to make phone calls to several of your board members following up and reminding them that it's time for them to give - be prepared to do this up front.
- You have to be crystal clear with your board members regarding how they should give to your organization. Do you want them to give online or should they hand you a check? Can they sponsor a table at your event for their board gift? Can they provide you with gifts in-kind in lieu of monetary donations? You should think about this before asking your board to give.

Once you have figured out the details of your board campaign figured, kick it off using these steps:

- You should verbally announce the campaign at your organization's first board meeting of the fiscal year. Remind your board that it's time for their annual gift and give them pledge forms to fill out and sign. Talking about this at the first board meeting also gets the information in the meeting minutes, which can serve as a good reminder for those who read the minutes or for any board members who were unable to attend.
- Make sure you send a follow-up email to your board after the meeting concludes. Reiterate what you said at the meeting, attach a copy of the pledge form, and remind them of the deadline to give.
- Start making follow-up calls about halfway through the campaign and remind those who haven't given yet that they need to act soon.
- Send a final email reminder a couple of days before the campaign deadline, reminding your board members to turn in their pledge forms and make their donations.
- You should always call in reinforcements if you need to. If there's a straggler or two who haven't responded throughout the campaign, get your board chair or other board leader involved. Sometimes, a peer-to-peer call is the only way to achieve the results you're looking for. If the person still doesn't respond, it might be time to gracefully remove them from your board.

### The Bottom Line



Having 100% board giving is critical to the success of your nonprofit for all of the reasons discussed in this document. In order to get your board members to give, you must set the expectation during recruitment and onboarding. Then, remember to ask them at the start of each new fiscal year to donate to your organization.

By establishing a well-thought-out and formal board giving process, every year you should be able to reach your goal of receiving personal financial donations from every single one of your board members.