Board Meetings that Inspire

Presenter

David Tabak

Tabak Nonprofit Strategies
The End of the Bored Meeting
We Gather Here – The Plan

- Fulfill the board’s fiduciary duty without boring everyone.
- Monitor the strategic plan without undermining it.
- Carve out time for meaningful discussions that lead to meaningful and impactful action.
- Empower committees and task forces
- Use project management tools and communications strategies to share information and ensure progress between board meetings.
So What’s the Issue?

We put a lot of effort and anxiety into compiling materials and developing an agenda, and yet the meetings rarely meet expectations, and board members feel like they’ve wasted their time.
A 20th Century Format for the 21st Century

In a world without conference phones, video chats, email and project management tools, the board meeting was the only way to get things done.
Technology as Tool and Competitor
No-one Ever Went to College on a Board Member Scholarship

Are you:

- Training your board members?
- Evaluating your board and its members?
- Giving your board members clear expectations of their roles and responsibilities?
- Providing your board members of what success looks like?
- Keeping them informed?

2020 AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
BAR LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARCH 11-13, 2020 • CHICAGO
Let’s Talk About Who’s Around the Table

Lawyers, yes.

But what kind of lawyer?
Score very low on openness to change
Tend to be risk averse
Focus on what can go wrong as opposed to what can go right
Afraid to be criticized
The adversarial system, which focuses on assigning fault or blame, hardly encourages risk taking or clear channels of communication
Tough Times for Bar Associations

- Consolidation of law firms with greater price sensitivity
- In-house counsel are less likely to outsource legal work
- More law firms do not support participation in association work, especially for associates
- Young lawyers are likely to leave firms and thus there is less loyalty to law firms
- Technology is affecting the practice of law, the availability of CLE credit and networking
24/7/366
2020 AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
BAR LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARCH 11-13, 2020 • CHICAGO
Engagement to the Rescue!
Engagement to the Rescue!

An engaged board/board member:

- knows and understands his or her role and responsibilities
- understands what is happening and what needs to be done
- feels comfortable and confident about making the decision and making decisions stick
Governance as Leadership
Governance as Leadership

Three Modes of Governance
- Fiduciary
- Strategic
- Generative
Governance as Leadership

Type I - Fiduciary Mode

- Stewardship of tangible assets.
- Board oversees operations and ensures efficient and appropriate use of resources, legal compliance and fiscal accountability.
- Most organizations have boards that focus almost exclusively on Type I concerns.
Governance as Leadership

Type II - Strategic Mode

- Ensuring a winning strategy for the organization.
- Core work includes setting priorities, reviewing and modifying strategic plans, and monitoring performance against plans.
Governance as Leadership

Type III - Generative Mode

- What to pay attention to, what it means, and what to do about it.
- Central purpose is to be a source of leadership for the organization, and its principal role is as a sense maker.
- Board decides what to decide; discerns challenges and opportunities; and probes assumptions, logic and the values behind strategies.
Fiduciary Mode in the Agenda

- Board’s central purpose is stewardship of tangible assets
- Board’s core work is technical
- Board’s principal role is as sentinel
- Key question: what’s wrong?
- Problems are to be spotted
- Way of deciding: reaching resolution
- Way of knowing: it stands to reason
Fiduciary Mode in the Agenda

Strategic Mode in the Agenda

- Board’s central purpose is strategic partnership with staff
- Board’s core work is analytical
- Board’s principal role is as strategist
- Key question: “what’s the plan?”
- Problems are to be solved
- Way of deciding: reaching consensus
- Way of knowing: the pieces all fit
Strategic Mode in the Agenda

Performance Metrics: strategic indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Assigned to</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>5/1/16</td>
<td>Membership Vice President/Director of Membership VP/CIO</td>
<td>X, Y and Z Sections have not submitted statement of needs. Chairs have been contacted to submit by 7/1/16. Tabled until September Board Meeting.</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5/31/15</td>
<td>Membership VP/Treasurer/CFO, CFO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>6/1/16</td>
<td>President/Executive Director</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7/1/16</td>
<td>Director of Membership/CIO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>9/1/16</td>
<td>Director of Membership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goal 1: Be the preferred bar association for the state (or specialty bar).

Objective 1: increase section memberships by 15 percent

Strategy 1: Work with each section to determine its core strengths.
Generative Mode in the Agenda

- Board’s central purpose is leadership
- Board’s core work is creative
- Board’s principal role is as sense maker
- Key question: What’s the question?
- Problems are to be framed
- Way of deciding: grappling and grasping
- Way of knowing: it makes sense
Generative Mode Meeting Items

Performance Metrics: signs of learning and discerning
Governance as Leadership

Fiduciary
Strategic
Generative
A board meeting is essentially a sense-making and plan-making activity as opposed the time to do all the things that were supposed to be done in between.
Mixin’ it Up

- Start with a mini essay or a pre-meeting survey
  1. What do we need to do to be more efficient/effective?
  2. What is the one question we should be asking ourselves?
  3. What is the next thing we need to do?
- Start in mode III and work backwards
- Good and Welfare
Board Agenda

The strategic plan is the board’s agenda
Goal I: Programs and Services
Goal II: Finances
Goal III: Governance
Goal IV: Communication
Board Agenda

The strategic plan is the board’s agenda
Goal I: Programs and Services (30 minutes) - VP1
Goal II: Finances (30 minutes) - VP2
Goal III: Governance (30 minutes) - VP3
Goal IV: Communication (30 minutes) - VP4
Translating Theory to Practice

Make sure your agenda
- puts the good stuff first
- liberally uses a consent agenda
- has time limits for discussions
- assigns responsibilities and deadlines
- identifies the action required and its goal
- uses process as prophylaxis
Evaluate Every Meeting

1. This meeting was a good use of my time Y/N
2. Are we using all modes of governance? Y/N
3. What should be on next meeting’s agenda?
4. What is the most important decision facing us?
5. Anything else we should be talking about?
Speaking of Evaluations

- Annually have every board member evaluate themselves and the board as a whole.
- Discuss results using the Governance as Leadership modes.
Speaking of Evaluations

1. How clear is our governance structure?
2. How well do we respond to our members’ needs?
3. How well are we spending our meeting time?
4. How well are we collaborating?
5. How well are we planning for the long term?
6. How well are we addressing the most pressing issues facing the association?
Speaking of Evaluations

1. How well prepared am I for meetings?
2. How engaged am I in the discussions?
3. How willing am I to acknowledge to dissenting views?
4. How willing am I to explore alternate strategies?
5. How well do I focus on the strategic rather than operational?
6. How well am I communicating with our members?
7. How well am I communicating with my fellow board members and the staff?
8. How well do I understand my role and responsibilities?
9. How well do I understand the issues facing our association?
10. How well was I trained to serve on the board?
Speaking of Evaluations

Report on the evaluations
Act on the evaluations
Lather, rinse, repeat
Committees vs. Task Forces
Trust Your Committees and Task Forces

- Delegate decisions to the lowest level where there is sufficient diversity, confidence, and trust
- Committees decide, task forces do
- Rotate and engage committee/task forces membership
- Define success
- Set and respect deadlines
The **Negative Positive Spaces**

- Promote multilateral communications
- Keep everyone up-to-date
Accentuate the Positives

Ultimately, we are communal in nature and there are some things that are better done face-to-face:

- Identify and solve problems
- Come to consensus
- Discover new possibilities
- Celebrate successes
- Garner the will for the next challenge
Get thought leaders on board. When a thought leader agrees to behave differently, other lawyers will follow.

Good leaders listen. When a leader listens in a neutral way and lets the speaker know that he or she has been understood, it increases the speaker’s comfort in changing.

Lawyers hate to be the first to do anything. If you find examples of changes that have already taken place with positive outcomes the argument for change becomes more convincing.
President and CEO Roles
Board and Staff Roles

Board

What

Staff

How
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Board President</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy and Planning</td>
<td>Facilitates board involvement in planning, policies and mission</td>
<td>Implements strategic plan and provides support to board policy making</td>
<td>Drafts policies, mission statements and organizational vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget and Finances</td>
<td>Guides board in approving and overseeing budget. Ensures board has ultimate</td>
<td>Proposes budget and manages programs according to financial policies and budget</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>authority and responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Meetings</td>
<td>Chairs board meetings</td>
<td>Ensures board members have materials and attends meetings except executive</td>
<td>Develop meeting agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Work</td>
<td>Oversees committee work and is ex officio member of all committees</td>
<td>Sits on appropriate committees and ensures they have staff support</td>
<td>Review committee system to ensure alignment with mission and strategic plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## What the What?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Board President</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board Development</td>
<td>Leads development of an effective board and cultivates leadership in individual board members. Makes board development a priority</td>
<td>Keeps board members informed and active</td>
<td>Keeps all board members engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Recruitment and Training</td>
<td>Works with nominating committee to identify, recruit, train new board members</td>
<td>Works with nominating committee to identify new board members and assist in new member orientation</td>
<td>Identify skills, expertise and attributes need for the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Assessment</td>
<td>Ensures regular board and director evaluation</td>
<td>Assist in the board evaluation process</td>
<td>Suggests improvements in board function</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# What the What?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Board President</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff Oversight</td>
<td>Oversees hiring, evaluation compensation of CEO and ensures CEO succession plan exists</td>
<td>Oversees and evaluates all staff. Sets staff salaries according to approved budget</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>Solicit contributions from board and ensure board participation in fundraising</td>
<td>Oversees all fundraising efforts and ensures staff support</td>
<td>Solicits support from external donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Promotes the work of the organization and speaks for the board in a crisis</td>
<td>Official spokesperson and coordinates communication</td>
<td>Develops messaging that conveys mission that can be used by board and staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nothing says please like thank you
Questions and Answers
Handouts
Thank you
Tabak Nonprofit Strategies

david@tabaknonprofitstrategies.com
www.tabaknonprofitstrategies.com

Doing good better