



## What Effective Board Members Do

### *Behaviors and personal characteristics that make leaders stand out*

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Individuals bring a lot to their role as nonprofit board members. Personal commitments of time and financial resources. Professional expertise and skill. Connections in the community. And yet, these important things in and of themselves are limited in value to the nonprofit organization if board members aren't effective as part of a collective governing body. How board members conduct themselves – their individual behaviors and personal characteristics – as they execute their individual and collective board member duties make the difference in driving effectiveness in a board position.

#### **An effective board member is someone who:**

- Understands and is passionate about the organization's mission
- Takes his/her decision-making responsibilities seriously
- Understands legal and fiduciary responsibilities and holds themselves and the organization accountable
- Comes to meetings on time, well-prepared and is attentive and engaged in discussions
- Asks questions and investigates assumptions rather than accepting the status quo
- Seeks out diverse perspectives, new information and advice and makes decisions based on his/her own best judgement
- Stands up for his/her convictions, even at the risk of misunderstanding or disapproval from colleagues
- Respects the rights of other board members to disagree, have different perspectives and to speak their point of view
- Keeps disagreements and controversies impersonal and promotes unity
- Honors commitments and recognizes the pitfalls created by over-committing when time and energy are limited and/or not following through with commitments
- Supports board decisions, even when he/she disagrees with the majority
- Maintains confidentiality of board discussions and speaks with one voice when outside of the board room representing the organization to the community

*Adapted from: "The Dynamic Board: Lessons from High-Performing Nonprofits" McKinsey & Company*