

What Makes a Great RTDNA Board Member?

Focus on Listening, Not just Participating

To encourage robust discussion during board meetings, board members must be prepared to listen as well as engage. Exceptional board members are careful not to dominate discussions and ensure that everyone, including quieter board members, have a chance to share their opinions. Additionally, it is important to understand the reasoning behind individuals' comments, even when board members do not agree. After listening carefully to others' views, the board can work together to build consensus.

Ask “Naïve” Questions That Others Want to Ask but May Shy Away From

One of the most important roles of nonprofit board members is to ask questions. The board should constantly assess current and proposed projects to ensure they serve the organization's mission and are setting the organization up for success. In addition to bigger picture questions, exceptional board members are not afraid to ask what may seem to some as simple, more straightforward questions as well. Oftentimes, a more nuanced organizational business practice can take time to understand, or a new board member might not be familiar with the organization's history. Great board members are not afraid to ask naïve questions because they trust their own instincts and want to improve their knowledge of the organization.

Serve as Ambassadors for the Organization and Understand the Responsibility that Comes with that Role

As ambassadors, board members represent the board outside the boardroom. This can range from talking with colleagues and friends about the good work the organization does to attending meetings with legislators or other advocacy connections. Board members serve as a link between the organization and its members, stakeholders, constituents and clients and are responsible for educating influencers and the community about the importance of the organization's work.

Bring Innovation & Remain Energetic

It's critical that board members bring new, fresh and out-of-the-box ideas to the table. Associations should lead, and that can't happen without standing at the forefront of innovation as an organization and within the industry. Above all else, good board members enjoy their role. They are passionate about the work of the organization and interested in learning more about its mission and the community served. Board meetings should not be seen as a chore; instead, they can help board members connect with their peers and maintain enthusiasm for their important responsibilities.