

Creating and Sustaining High Impact/Performing Boards

(Best Practices)

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In order to illustrate this more fully, the following is summary listing of **best practices** for consideration:

- The school Board of Directors should be comprised of representatives from the parent body, lay leaders, rabbinic leadership and community members-at-large who are strong and forceful day school/yeshiva proponents and advocates and who value their sense of obligation and responsibility on the Board;
- Specific requirements, term limits, Board nominations processes and obligations are clearly described in the Board's By-Laws which are developed by the Board for the Board, in consultation with legal council. These By-Laws are essentially legal *playbooks* or *roadmaps* for the manner in which the Board functions and conducts its business;
- To be effective, the number of Board members who serve on the Board at any one time should not exceed 12-15 members (smaller School Boards are best);
- All members of the Board, as well as the Board Chair or President should participate in Board training and development opportunities in order to more fully understand and appreciate their individual and collective roles, responsibilities, limitations and breadth of authority.

- Specific working committees (physical plant, fundraising, marketing, etc.) should be established as well as the creation of a Board **work plan** which sets in motion a sense of direction for the Board as it relates to policy determination, oversight and review.
- One of the most essential roles and responsibilities of the Board (either via a Budget and Finance Committee or the Board as a whole) is to oversee the creation of the school's budget, **not operations**. The Board approves the budget and ensures the highest level of transparency and accountability regarding budgetary expenditures and allocations;
- The Board is the governing body which oversees and evaluates the performance and effectiveness of the Head of School. This is the only professional whose performance review falls within the purview of the Board of Directors (a topic for a separate article or post);
- The Head of School is responsible for school operations and policy implementation; while the Board of Directors determines and approves the school budget and the school's policies.

Characteristics of Effective School Board Members:

Although many of the characteristics which follow may seem obvious, experience dictates that in an effort to recruit high level Board members, many of these traits are either overlooked or not taken seriously when recruiting individuals to the school Board.

Remember, school Board members should be one of the most visible “ambassadors” for your school. As such, they should represent your school in the best light possible. The manner in which they conduct themselves publically and privately, should be a reflection upon how they will be viewed in the Board room.

The following are those Board member characteristics or traits which are essential and which deserve primacy when recruiting people to serve on your school Board:

Board member candidate must:

- Participate and attend all Board meetings;
- Be dedicated, committed and supportive of the Day School's mission, value proposition, educational philosophy and vision;
- Have the ability to lead effectively, including the ability and capacity to inspire, lead and motivate;
- Be straightforward and inspirational;
- Be knowledgeable and willingness to learn;
- Possess high moral values, discretion and confidentiality;
- Possess positive and trusting relationship between the Head of School and President/Chair of the Board;
- Have the ability to provide the school with a **quality capacity** annual gift; and
- Have a true willingness and ability to participate in all Board development and training offerings.

This list of Board traits or characteristics, albeit not exhaustive or comprehensive, should serve as a *recruitment checklist*.

Always keep in mind – not unlike the Head of School, Principals or senior school professionals, the people who serve on your Board are a reflection of the values, philosophy and character of your school. Ensuring that you recruit wisely is in your school's best interest.