

THIRD MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WHY JOIN THE BOARD?

It may feel like an honor to be invited to join the Board of a nonprofit. But don't let ego influence your decision. While being a BOD member can be rewarding, especially if you are passionate about the charity, it is important that Board members fully understand what is expected of them.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Make sure you are comfortable with the mission, governance and finances before you sign on.

Ask FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

1. What's the financial commitment?

Unlike directors of for profit companies, nonprofit BOD members are typically called upon to make financial contributions.

What are my fundraising expectations?

If you have a prominent position in a corporation for example, the Board may assume you have the ability to secure donations from your company or that you have wealthy friends whom you will ask for help.

What is the target? Some nonprofits have a "give or get" number, a target for each member to hit in terms of direct contributions or money raised. Ask about that.

Ask if another Board member will know how much you give. If you contribute an expertise, the Board also may be hoping to use those skills. Make sure you are on the same page as to what your talents are and what demands will be placed on your time.

2. What's the term duration?

Make sure you are clear on the Board's expectations before you sign on to prevent misunderstanding.

3. How active are the BOD members?

It's important to know what kinds of jobs you will be expected to perform. Knowing such details will help you gauge your level of interest in the work and determine if you have enough time to devote.

For example, will you be assigned to a committee or can you select your own program?

4. How well is the Board working and where does it need to improve?

Have a clear understanding of any problem areas before your join. Find out if the decision-making process of the Board is one that fits with your own approach and personality. Attend a meeting first.

Try to understand the strengths and weakness of the board. Will the weaknesses in the leadership likely to generate drama in your life or do the strengths support your sense of enjoyment?

Talk to people in the organization to see its if it is the right fit.