

Davenport Asset Management presents:

# Virtual Investor Summit Series



## Thriving Nonprofit Boards: Post Presentation Q&A

*During our call on January 21st, 2021, Katherine Whitney and David Charlton addressed a number of post presentation questions; however, there were more questions submitted than time to answer. After the event's conclusion, Katherine and David shared their responses to the additional questions listed below.*

**Q: Could you share your thoughts on term limits?**

A: We see a majority of nonprofits leaning towards term limits, and we think this is a good thing for several reasons:

- It makes space for new points of view.
- It facilitates the addition of board members who can help extend the reach of the organization into different parts of the community.
- It expands the base of people who care about and support an organization, especially if there is an effort made to keep former board members engaged.
- It gives a natural off-ramp for board members.

It is important to note that transitioning to term limits, if the organization has not had them, requires extra thought and effort; especially, in the beginning as the organization learns how to identify, cultivate, and onboard new members.

**Q: Can you give us your opinion on re-electing previous Board members after they have rolled off for a time? And also the use of an Advisory Board?**

A: There are occasions to re-elect previous board members if their continued service will strengthen the organization. However, this should be the exception rather than the rule. It may make sense to create a separate group for former board members to help keep them engaged.

Advisory Boards can be very useful as long as their role is clear and the people involved are engaged. We advise using the term "Advisory Council" instead of "Board" because the term "Board" connotes certain rights and responsibilities that Advisory Councils do not typically have.

**Q: Can you recommend a good Board portal software (other than Google)?**

A: I have clients who use Box.com and BoardEffect. Other recommendations from people on this call include a folder provided through Microsoft Teams.

**Q: Can you give some ideas about camaraderie during COVID & Zoom meetings? Difficult to have the engagement that we've had in the past.**

A: Yes, there's probably not a perfect answer here, but consider using video conferencing breakout rooms to allow more small group discussion. Also, when the weather allows it, outside Board meetings might help. Reserving a shelter at one of the area parks is inexpensive.



**Katherine M. Whitney,**  
Co-Founder, Owner, & Director,  
Warren Whitney



**David H. Charlton, Ed.D.,**  
President, Church Schools in the  
Diocese of Virginia

**Q: Is board evaluation done with a questionnaire, online, and evaluated by the CEO and Chair prior to sharing the results with the board? Potentially confidential?**

A: Yes, we typically use an online survey that asks board members to evaluate their own work and satisfaction with being involved as well as the work of the board as a whole. A Governance committee is typically responsible for initiating the assessment and would review results to determine the best presentation approach and follow up steps. The survey can be anonymous.

A more in-depth assessment is available through BoardSource<sup>1</sup>. The results compare the answers from the particular organization with others in the sector.

**Q: Do you have any tips for those of us who serve on multiple Boards?**

A: Good Board service takes time, so it's important not to over-commit. Also, there can be a perception of conflict of interest or a challenge in fundraising responsibilities if you are on boards with overlapping missions.

**Q: What is the ideal size of a Board?**

A: According to BoardSource's governance survey, the average is 15. I tend to use a very mathematical starting place since I like to try to have balanced board classes (in size). If you have 2 to 3 people in each new class, and they can serve two three-year terms, then the board size is between 12 and 18. It's also important to think about the work that needs to be done and the size of the Board needed to do it. Generally, a larger board requires more investment of time from the CEO and management, so there needs to be a good return on that investment.

**Q: What are your thoughts on the importance of following Robert's Rules<sup>2</sup> in meetings?**

A: Robert's Rules are helpful in facilitating a formal discussion. However, most board members are not fluent. More often, we see an abbreviated version used. For Boards that want to use Robert's Rules heavily, there should be regular training in the procedures and/or a designated Parliamentarian.

**Important Disclosures:**

<sup>1</sup>**BoardSource:** Envisions a world where every nonprofit organization has the leadership it needs to fulfill its mission and advance the public good. BoardSource offers consulting services, publications and a membership program to increase the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations by strengthening their boards of directors.

<sup>2</sup>**Robert's Rules:** Robert's Rules of Order is a manual of parliamentary procedure that governs most organizations with boards of directors. It was developed to ensure that meetings are fair, efficient, democratic and orderly. It informs members how to voice their opinions in an orderly manner so that everyone in the meeting can hear and be heard.

Any opinions expressed here are that of Katherine Whitney and David Charlton and do not necessarily represent the opinion of Davenport & Company LLC. These are statements of judgment on this date and are subject to future change without notice.

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