



Where's the

NEW GUY?

MOVING YOUR MEMBERS SUCCESSFULLY FROM
VOLUNTEERING TO BOARD LEADERSHIP



NICE JOB!

Your volunteer program is working well. Members are stepping up to volunteer, fulfilling their responsibilities, and bringing on other talented members with them. The next step is to get these hard-working individuals onto your board. And keep them there.

How confident are you that you can count on your volunteers to be ready, willing, and able to step into board roles?

Most likely, the new guy doesn't have a clue when it comes to the needs of your board.

The new guy isn't so new anymore. He's an active member and is in a volunteer role that suits him.

What's next for him?

He could be a great addition to your board. But, if he has no idea how your board works, where the needs are, and where he could be a fit, will he ever make it there?



DOES ANY OF THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

- **The new guy doesn't know anything about your board.** He might know the names of the board members and the names of the board committees, but that's about it. He's looked on your website, but all he finds is a list of names and their titles. There's no one to contact and none of their names are linked to email. He's got other things going on, so he forgets to ask. No one talks to him about it or mentions upcoming openings or elections in chapter meetings or communications.
- **He wants to get more involved but has no idea what the board position entails.** He's worried he might be overwhelmed in a board role, in addition to his work responsibilities and his life at home, so he doesn't ask.
- **You don't know enough about the new guy to know if/where he'd be a fit.** You've heard from the head of the committee he's on that he's doing a great job and has some new, unique ideas, but that's about it. No one on the board really knows him, and as a result, they have no idea if his skills are a fit for the board.
- **The new guy joined your board, but things aren't working out so well.** He was excited to be asked, so he said yes without completely understanding the responsibility he was taking on. As a result, he's feeling overwhelmed and experiencing conflict with others on the board. Knowing he can't step down till the end of his term, he begins to do just what's minimally required.



Board Volunteers Are **UNPREPARED & OVERWHELMED**



64% say demands on their board members have increased in the past five years.



Only 50% of nonprofit boards receive some type of formal orientation.



Less than 50% feel their onboarding experience prepared them to be effective board members.

But, They're Still Willing **TO STEP UP & SERVE ON THE BOARD**

92%

feel the commitment is a good use of their professional time.

91%

say they serve because they support the mission of the organization.

68%

believe they can make the organization more effective by being on the board.

With proper onboarding, a fully staffed and trained board, and sharing of responsibilities, you can significantly improve your board dynamics and its ability to deliver on your chapter's mission.



Finding, developing, and keeping the right board members can be difficult and time-consuming for all members of your board, not just your VP of Membership. Developing a strong, effective board takes thought, foresight, and strategy.

Having the wrong board members or having roles open for too long can deter a board's ability to support the chapter and carry out the organization's mission. Board members must be team players, open, communicative, and supportive.

While recruiting board members might seem a little daunting, it's important to take the time to find candidates with the right values, skills, attitude and level of commitment. Board positions are crucial leadership roles; solid direction and a well-written plan can go a long way.

1

Start Recruitment Early

Cultivate potential board members far in advance; don't wait till you have a need. Prepare your board members before they're board members.

Consider Board Member Candidates Training (BMCT).

Give your members the information they need well in advance of your need. BMCT is a short, open discussion led by current and past board members, where members learn the basics of board work and what being on the board means, for the individual, the chapter, and the entire association. Members hear different perspectives, get more of their questions answered, and gain the insight they need to determine if becoming a board member is right for them. These sessions can make your members more aware of the culture of the board and show them how being on the board can be personally and professionally satisfying.

Require your board members to start looking for their replacements as soon as they join the board.

Current board members can clearly communicate the benefits of being on the board as they are experiencing it themselves, and this notice gives them ample time to find people like them, with the same positive attitude and work ethic. It also means that the people you're considering have the time they need to make an informed decision, which might include talking to their boss at work, if the role could require some time during their workday. This extra time also allows you to create a mentorship program within your board recruitment process, as board members will work alongside their recruits to mentor them before they transition into the position.

2

Generate Interest

Often we hear that current board members are waiting for members to offer to join their board. But if you look at the history of your board, how often has that happened? How did members end up on the board? Did they ask to join, or did someone reach out to them? Start by asking new chapter members to gauge their interest in board roles, or asking committee chairs and current board members to look for their potential replacements. If not, you'll be running to fill a position at the end of a term, or worse, after a person has stepped down.

The 7 ways:

1. Start recruitment early.
2. Generate interest.
3. Be visible.
4. Clarify the skills for each role.
5. Run effective elections.
6. Cultivate collaboration and success.
7. Give your board the tools they need.

3

Be Visible

As with your volunteer program, make volunteers and members aware of the board and how it works. To get the board the positive exposure you need, consider:

Talking about it regularly and openly.

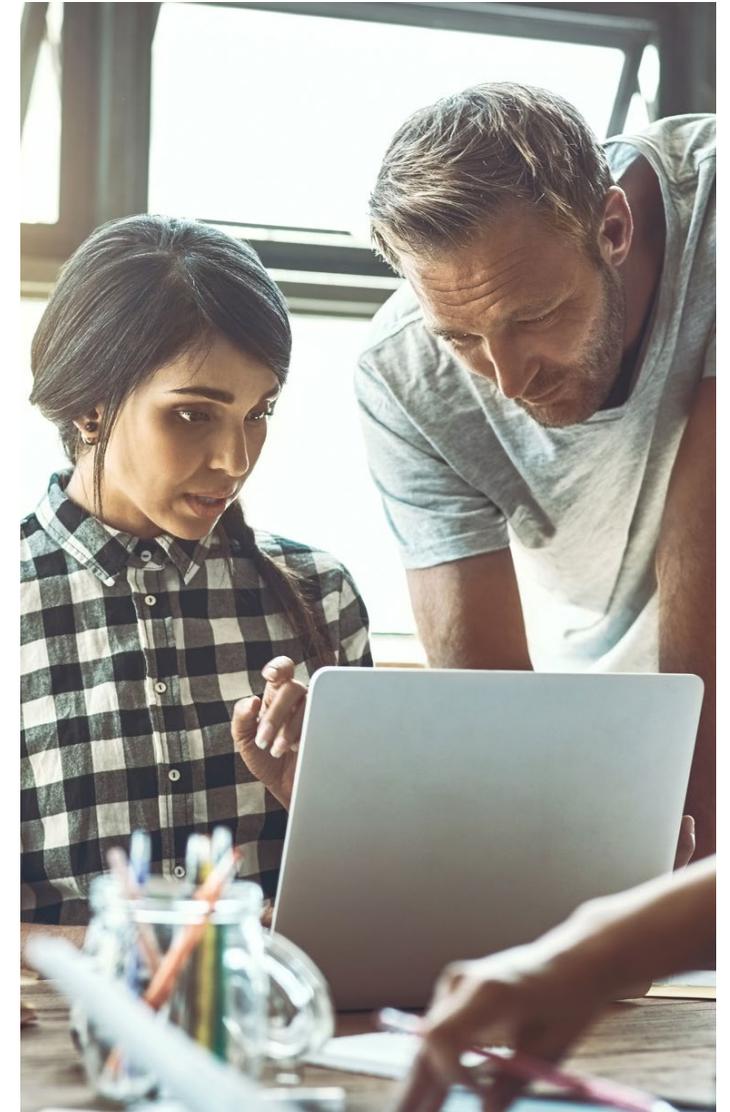
Do this on your website, your email marketing, in one-on-one interactions with members, and in your chapter meetings. Keeping the channels of communication open between your members, your volunteers, and your board helps ensure that before positions become open, you know who could fill them. Make this a regular part of chapter communications, and you'll be more aware of members who are willing to step up and who would be the right fit.

Having an obvious process for filling open seats.

It's important to show that your board isn't a clique and that the only way to be on it is to know a current or former board member. A structured board application process that starts far in advance of an anticipated need allows you to take the time to really get to know your members and lay the foundation for building the strong relationships necessary for proper board operation.

Holding networking events for your board to meet and interact with members.

This allows you to learn about your members' experience and skills and keep an eye out for those who would be a good fit. As with the networking events you hold to fill volunteer committee openings, be sure your board members wear name badges and work the room, talking to and learning about those they may not have met before.



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4

Clarify the Skills for Each Role

Which are must-have skills, and which would be nice to have? What can you teach a new board member? Maybe you can have a treasurer who isn't an accountant but is extremely detail oriented. Job descriptions and checklists for different roles give potential board members clarity on responsibilities, expectations, time commitments, etc. They also illuminate those intangible requirements, like the personality traits and soft skills necessary to succeed in the role and on the board.

5

Run Effective Elections

A fair, transparent process is a must for getting and keeping the right board members. Without one, your board will lack credibility and you'll have a difficult time getting new people to step up. You might consider:

- Having interested members complete applications
- Setting the election date well in advance and announcing it using a variety of methods
- Holding a nomination process for members who've completed applications
- Announcing the results to the entire chapter

6

Cultivate Collaboration and Success

Make the board position appealing by cultivating a board culture that is collaborative, diverse, and cohesive. Cultivate a board whose members trust, respect, and support each other and bring in differing levels of experience and perspectives. You can do so by creating opportunities for your board members to get to know each other outside of board meetings.

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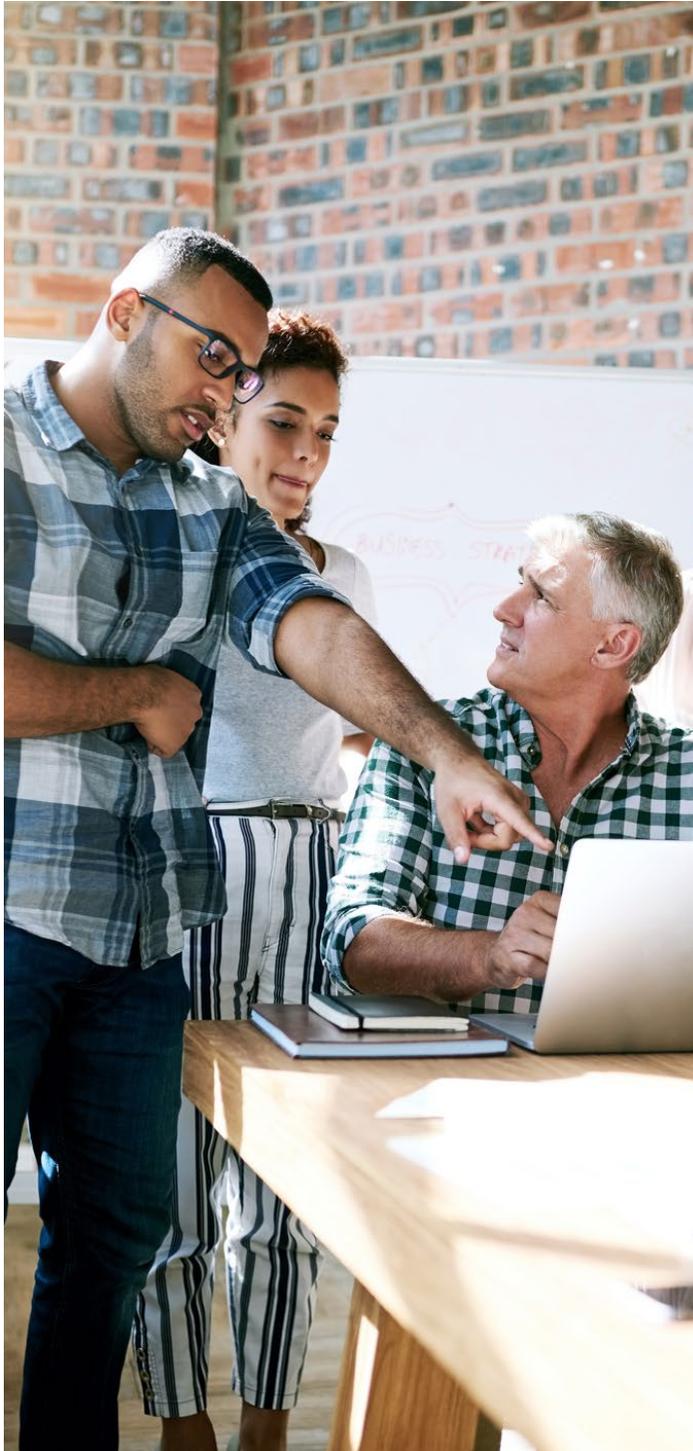
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Give Your Board the Tools They Need

It's important to provide the board with tools to engage effectively with your members, to help these members be successful and professional, provide advocacy, advance their careers, and become stronger leaders. Not only will more of your members step up to volunteer, those volunteers will be stronger, and you'll see an increase in membership rates, attendance at events, and revenue, even when your board changes. Giving your board access to all of the tools they need, in a single software application, can be especially helpful allowing them to easily manage all it takes to run a chapter efficiently and effectively. The core functionalities needed to run a chapter successfully include: event registration, email marketing, website content management, and membership management.

As you go through this exercise, keep an open mind. You might not need the exact person you think you do. Board members need to have the desire to learn and must be excited to give back to the organization. They don't necessarily need to have been leaders previously.





There's a good chance that between their commitments to the board, work, and home, your board members are some of the most overworked members of your chapter. It is important to acknowledge that they have competing priorities and set them up for success in their roles.

Have help available when needed. Perhaps you can spread some of the work between board members and their committees. Regular, formal board assessments will help you understand where things are working well and where help might be needed.

Have a written transition process. This helps ensure a clear handoff between the person coming into the role and the person leaving. The board member who is moving on should train the new person to get him up to speed more quickly.

Consider a board of advisors of former board members. They can be available to offer their expertise and advice where it's needed. For example, have your current and past president work with your incoming president to help the person get into the role and give them the comfort they need to start off strong, build their confidence, and eliminate the fear that sometimes accompanies taking on a board role.

Have ongoing, year-round board education. Education is critical to the long-term success of your board and your chapter. And by continuing your education throughout the year, even when the chapter doesn't meet, you'll avoid "summer slide," get and keep everyone up to speed and help your board better understand the issues affecting and driving your chapter and your association, like:

- The exact role of the board and its members
- How the chapter supports the mission, strategy, objectives, and business model of the parent organization
- The policies and legislation your association impacts or is impacted by

Create a board member toolkit. An easy-to-use toolkit - an online resource for tools, forms, and processes to run your chapter - can help decrease the time your board members spend looking for content and increase consistency. Centralizing their resources and making them easily available allows them to better connect with members and prospects and gives them the tools to more effectively run their chapters. Consider including details like job descriptions, election information and ideas for looking for new board members.

It's important to remember why your board members said yes in the first place. More than likely, those on the board and those considering joining want some level of personal satisfaction, whether that includes:

- Seeing the chapter and the association thrive
- Giving back in a bigger way than they currently do as volunteers
- Gaining experience – leadership or communication skills for example – that they don't get from their day jobs

Or, maybe they just want to be forced out of their comfort zones, which is a great way to grow!

Whatever the reasons, you'll begin to understand your board members more clearly – and know

what to do with what you learn, as your board gets to know itself and the other members of the chapter, more intimately.

Being strategic can help narrow down who you're looking for to fill roles on your board, understand why you need them and know where you'll find them. It gives you the direction you need to bring on the right people for the long-term. This takes input and insight from all members of your board and requires a commitment from each person to identify and cultivate potential talent. But it also requires the ability to say no to potential candidates who don't align with your current recruitment goals and the culture of the board.

Getting the new guy engaged with your board gets him to stay involved with the chapter as a long-term, active participant. Once he's on the board, it's up to him and the other board members to continue to engage incoming members. This is made seamless with the help of StarChapter – Association Management Software Made Easy.