

Governing a
**NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANISATION**
**THE BOARD AS A DRIVER
OF DEVELOPMENT**

ILLUSTRATION: KENNETH ANDERSSON

THE BOARD AS A DRIVER OF DEVELOPMENT

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The material was written by Barbro Mellberg and
Lotten Kågeman.

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On THE BOARD AS A DRIVER OF DEVELOPMENT

Sitting on a board means you have been entrusted to govern the organisation according to the direction decided by the supreme governing body. The board is also responsible for looking beyond immediate concerns and initiating internal discussion about what the organisation will be like a little further on, in 5–10 years.


The board must guide the organisation from where it is today to a preferred future position even as it creates the prerequisites for dialogue about the organisation's long-term development. It must do this in a way that generates trust, both within the organisation and in the community.

This is a process that imposes demands on the board. You must clearly understand your own mandate as a board as well as the board's role in the overall organisation. This role may vary depending on which type of board you have. Conditions are different for a board that has a staffed administrative office compared to a board that is directly (operationally) involved in carrying out activities towards attaining the goals it has decided upon.

Board members should also determine how they will work together as a group so that they can focus their energy on activities. For instance, the board needs to agree on an allocation of responsibility in relation to the operational part of the organisation and the procedures the board must have in place to focus on the right kinds of issues. It should also continuously monitor and learn from the operational side.

The board is also responsible for the smooth operation of the organisation as a whole. The board must ensure that arenas exist for conversation about the organisation's fundamental values and development. As well, the board must ensure that structures exist so that decisions are actually implemented, that everyone in the organisation clearly understands who is responsible for what and who should interact with whom to ensure optimal operations.





A great many things must be in order before the board will be able to both govern the organisation and deal with the issue of where the organisation is headed and strategies for getting it there.

 **Guiding the organisation from status quo to a preferred future position. Creating the prerequisites for dialogue about long-term development. Generating trust internally and externally. These are the fundamental tasks of a board that is fulfilling its governance mandate.**

How can the work of the board be organised?

This workbook is intended to support the board in identifying procedures that will facilitate its work. The material is divided into a number of steps for the board to work through. Each provides scope for reflection and decisions about how you want your particular board to work.

These steps cover the following main areas:

-  The board as a group
-  The board's organisational mandate
-  Board procedures
-  For continued development

Before you start, think about and decide together which aspect you believe is most important to work on in your organisation – where you need to pause and engage in a more in-depth discussion. One way is to use the following assessment chart. Each member should think about the questions and tick the box that reflects their opinion. Afterwards, the board can discuss their individual assessments and decide which aspects of the board's work are most in need of development and improvement.

- 1. We understand what experience and knowledge each member brings to the board.** Yes Not sure No
- 2. We have clear principles/criteria for allocating assignments and responsibility among board members.** Yes Not sure No
- 3. We have a shared understanding of the organisation's fundamental mission and of what is important right now.** Yes Not sure No
- 4. We have a shared understanding of what type of board we are (strategic or operative, for example).** Yes Not sure No
- 5. We have a clear allocation of roles between the board and the executive part of the organisation (such as an administrative office staffed with employees or other elected officers/volunteers).** Yes Not sure No
- 6. Our meetings and other procedures are efficient and stimulating.** Yes Not sure No
- 7. We have an agenda that supports efficient and creative board work.** Yes Not sure No
- 8. We have a clear plan/annual cycle for the work of the board.** Yes Not sure No
- 9. We continuously monitor the effectiveness of the board's work.** Yes Not sure No

If there are a lot of 'No' or 'Not sure' answers to questions 1–2, it might be a good idea to spend a little extra time on these discussion questions and the tasks in the section *The Board as a Group*. If there is more uncertainty about questions 3–5, the section on *The Board's Organisational Mandate* may require more work. The answers to questions 6–9 suggest how much work will be required for the section on *Board Procedures*.

The hoped-for outcome of the board's work with the section on *The Board as a Driver of Development* is a plan for how the board can develop and improve its procedures and working methods. Naturally, you may not be able to change everything at once. With that in mind, there is a To Do list at the back of the workbook, which you can use to record thoughts and ideas about the work as well as notes about tasks that need to be done sooner or later.

Remember that all members share the responsibility for how the board performs its tasks and works together. This is not only a matter for the chair.

THE BOARD AS A GROUP

Having been entrusted to sit on a board often feels like a great honour. It is a special mandate that depends on the board working together as a team. To succeed, the board must work together as a group: the whole point of gathering a number of people together in a board is to generate a synergy effect. A group of sensible people, each with their own unique backgrounds and experience, think better together.

So, the board must work with the issue of how you can become a cohesive group with the commitment and enthusiasm that lead to efficient teamwork. A committed board spreads energy and commitment throughout the organisation, while a fatigued and fragmented board generates uncertainty and passiveness. As a board of directors, you must decide what kind of spirit you want to spread in your organisation.

The first phase in group development involves making sure that each member feels acknowledged and accepted by the group. To do this, you need to get to know each other as people so that you will feel at ease with each other. Who are we? What do we expect? What motivates us? What do we want to contribute, and what can we contribute?

You should also agree clear structures, approaches and procedures for the group/board. This will give you a strong foundation for your later work with more complex issues.

Even if the entire board has not been recently elected for the first time, there may be reason to think about the sense of security within the group and how well you know each other.

STEP 1. Get to know each other

A board is made up of unique individuals. We often think about each other only in terms of our roles in the specific time and place, but we all bring a wide variety of experiences and skills with us that can be useful to the work of the board.

So, it is a plus if the board can form a picture of the skills actually found in the group. Board members also need to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses so that these can be properly used to the benefit of the board as a whole.

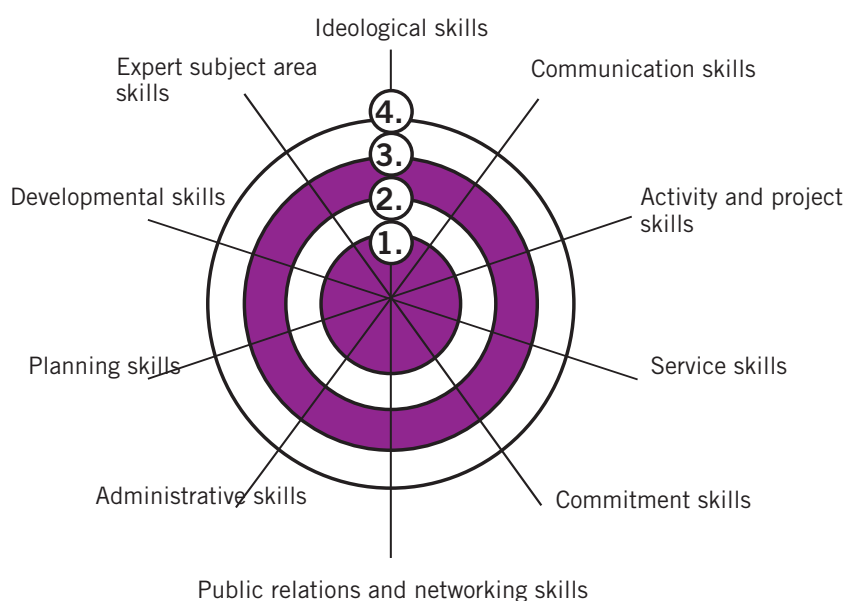
Tell each other about yourselves

Go around the group and introduce yourselves in detail. Tell the others about:

- your job, life situation, special knowledge/education/hobbies that are relevant to the context, previous board experience, your contacts and networks that may be useful, etc.
- what you are good at and the aspects of the board's work you are happy to take on, as well as the things you feel less comfortable with and would like to improve – or not be involved in.

When you all form a clearer picture of each other as individuals, you may discover that you are more similar in certain respects and more different in others than you thought. Used properly, both similarities and differences can be a strength in the board's work.

This will also make differences that might otherwise be problematic easier to manage. This may involve differences of opinion, differences in cultural background, or differences in knowledge/experience.



Think about how you can improve and develop the skills of the board

The introductions you have just made have probably shown that there is a much wider range of skills on the board than you thought. Compare the skills you have discovered to the skills profile illustrated below. It highlights a number of skills that are valuable to the work of a board of directors.

The illustration also shows that you do not have to have the same skill levels in every area.

Discuss the illustration. Which of these skills are important to your work? In which areas do you need extensive skills and in which areas is 'general knowledge' enough?

You might also notice that there is a skill you do not have. If so, that skill can be added to the board in several different ways. The board might, for example, take a fact-finding trip and visit an organisation that is more dynamic in the operational area in question; one or more members might go on a training course that provides the desired expertise; or the board might bring in an ad hoc member who has the required skill - to mention a few possibilities.

All of the skills do not necessarily have to be found among the board members themselves. The missing skill or skills may also be found among administrative staff, elected officers outside the board or among the membership. It is important that the board does not avoid an issue because there is no expertise in the area found on the board itself. Take advantage of all existing resources.

• What additional skills might the board need and how can they be acquired?

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Describe your personalities to each other

The differences between members of a board may also have to do with personality and motivation. In purely practical terms, different people take a unique approach to development and board work. Some people need to talk things over with others before they take a position, while others may want to think things through on their own before they speak out. Some need time for reflection, while others enjoy the stimulation of discussing matters immediately as they arise.

When you make your similarities and differences in your personal attitudes clear to each other and improve mutual understanding, you can save a lot of time in your board work and lessen the risk of conflict and interpersonal friction.

This knowledge can also guide you as you think about how your procedures might need to be varied so that all members reach their full potential in the context of their board work.

A few examples follow of various attitudes, which may be a useful basis for a group discussion about what best suits each member. If everyone in the group decides which attitude is closest to their own, the board will have a good basis for that conversation.

I like...

- 1a.** to immediately discuss issues with other people in order to arrive at a position - to talk and think at the same time.
- 1b.** to be given time to first think things through on my own and then talk to others - to think first and talk later.
- 2a.** to be given the opportunity to discuss ideas and options on a more theoretical level.
- 2b.** to take action based on the situation as it is here and now.
- 3a.** it when there is time to gather facts and when decisions are based on objective analysis.
- 3b.** it when decisions can be traced to a clear set of values.
- 4a.** it when the work is clearly structured - when things are planned and organised.
- 4b.** it when there is some flexibility to the work that allows you to take advantage of opportunities that arise.

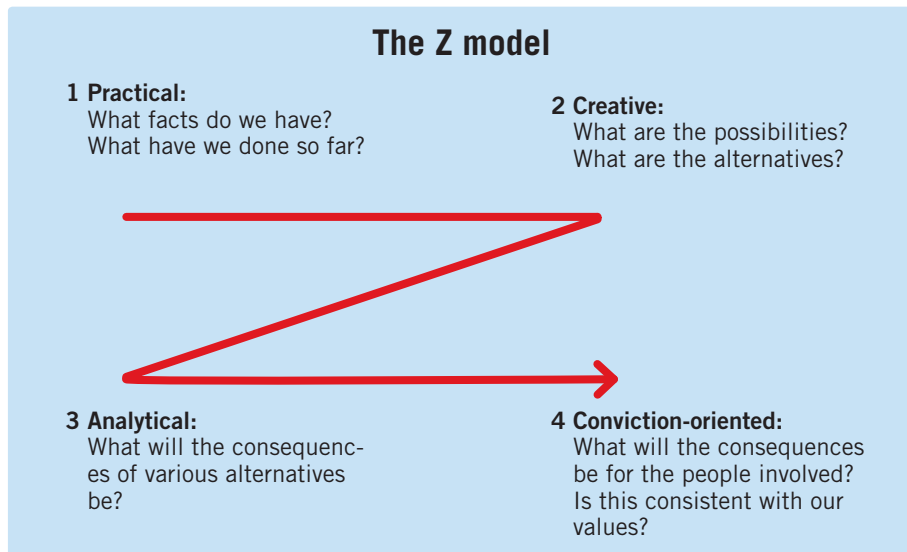
Each member of the board should think about themselves and how they usually approach things. Afterwards, talk as a group about what suits each of you best and the implications for how the work of the group should be organised.

The answers to questions 1a and 1b can provide a basis for talking about things like when documents should be sent out before a meeting; whether it is a good thing to bring up important issues at the conference table and deal with them immediately; and whether board members should always be given time and opportunity for personal reflection before issues are dealt with by the group.

The answers to questions 2 a and b may provide a basis for talking about things such as the allocation between 'rational decision-making' and 'ideological debate/development discussions' in the work of the board.

The answers to questions 3 a and b may provide a basis for talking about things like what kind of factual input the board wants to have before it makes decisions and how key fundamental values can be secured in the decision process.

The answers to questions 4 a and b may provide a basis for talking about things such as the degree of structure and flexibility in the work of the board.



What should you do to ensure that various personalities reach their full potential and issues are examined from all angles in the work of the board or group? The most important thing, of course, is to bring up the issue and make it clear that something that seems obvious to one person may not be as obvious to someone else. Thereafter, the point is to truly take advantage of the differences in order to examine issues from as many perspectives as possible. The ultimate goals are sound decisions and a strong, effective organisation. The 'Z Model' (from Margerison-McCann Team Management Systems) gives a good picture of the issues a board needs to address to achieve multifaceted examination before decisions are made.

- **Aspects that may be useful to consider in your shared work so that everyone reaches their full potential and can work well together:**

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Clarify what you and others expect

There may be various expectations for the board as a group and for the individual members. These expectations may be those of outside stakeholders and the wider organisation, but also the board members themselves. It can be good to put these expectations on the table and talk about them. This may lead to greater clarity among the board and in relation to the outside world as to what the mandate actually is.

In turn, describe:

- what you believe outside stakeholders and the organisation expect from you as a board.
- what you expect from yourself in your board capacity and what you expect from other members.

- what members expect from the chair and what the chair expects from members.

• **Reflections and attitudes towards our own and others' expectations:**

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Constructively managing differences of opinion

When people of varied experience and background work together, conflicts are almost inevitable. This lies in the very nature of the thing. However, when properly managed, it is also these differences of opinions and conflicts that take the organisation forward.

How can these differences of opinion be managed in a positive and constructive way?

The most important thing may be to agree in advance on how this should be handled – before there is any serious disunity. It is much easier to be sensible before things get out of hand.

There are a few examples of possible approaches below, taken from *Aktiv arbetsplatsträff* [Active workplace meetings] by Kerstin Olofsson:

- ☞ We postpone the decision and give ourselves the opportunity to think one more time.
- ☞ We help each other evaluate the advantages and drawbacks of various positions.
- ☞ We make the decision by vote.
- ☞ We design a compromise.
- ☞ We choose an appropriate method for proceeding with the issue.

Since the board must proceed as a group, it is important to arrive at a solution everyone can accept. There should be no winners or losers when the board moves on to the next item on the agenda.

- **Discuss as a group how you want to manage differences of opinion and conflicts that arise in the course of the board's work. When is a particular approach appropriate and when is something else a better choice?**

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STEP 2: Clarify and allocate assignments and areas of responsibility

There are various roles/assignments on a board: chair, treasurer, secretary, member, alternate member. Sometimes there are also clearly defined areas of responsibility. As a board member, you may for example have particular responsibility for membership recruiting, gender equality, public affairs or another area.

This responsibility is sometimes found in the form of being the chair of a committee/sub-group that works with the operational area in question.

The better understanding of each other that you now have will make it easier to agree about the allocation of assignments and responsibility among the board.

Principles for allocating assignments

Before you begin to allocate tasks, assignments and responsibility, it may be wise for the board to jointly discuss the underlying principles. A few examples are provided below of some more theoretical issues related to the allocation of tasks and assignments, which the board can think about and discuss.

- Do you want the greatest possible distribution of assignments? Or is it a good idea to always give certain assignments to the same person? If so, how do you prevent certain people/functions (such as the chair) from becoming overworked?
- Do you want to allocate tasks and assignments according to knowledge and skill? Or based on the potential to gain wider experience and thus higher skill?
- Can tasks/assignments be allocated to more than one person so that the responsibility is shared? This may reduce vulnerability and make the work more enjoyable. It may also make it easier to combine board duties with other commitments/personal life.
- Can tasks and assignments only be given to board members or can they also be allocated to non-board members?

• The board’s views on the principles for allocation of assignments and responsibility:

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Clarify what is included in the assignment/responsibility

After this more theoretical discussion, it may be time to move on to the question of who should do what in the overall work of the board. But first, it would probably be a good idea to clarify what is involved in the various assignments and what is entailed in having board responsibility for a particular activity.

Some questions that should be discussed:

- What mandate the person who has been given the assignment or responsibility has and what must be approved by the board.
- What support is available, for example in terms of training, documentation from previous work, or other information.
- With whom the person given the assignment/responsibility should interact.
- What resources are available.
- The forms and timetable for information and dialogue concerning the progress of the assignment.

Sometimes, there may be draft descriptions of various board assignments. There may also be descriptions of what board responsibility for a particular area of operations entails. If these documents exist, review them and discuss them as a group. Is there anything you would like to change?

The board's discussions on these topics may need to be further expanded,

[Definitions]

An assignment description states which tasks are included in the assignment as well as which decisions the person who accepts the assignment is allowed to take and which decisions must be referred to the board. The description should also state what responsibility for communication/information is included in the assignment. The training that the person who accepts the assignment should complete so that they can carry out the assignment well may also be added to the assignment description.

both when it comes to the principles for allocation of assignments and responsibility as well as how assignment descriptions should be drafted and how responsibility can be clarified. If so, add this task to the To Do list at the end of the workbook.

- **Ideas about what should be included in descriptions of assignments or what is entailed in having board responsibility for a particular area:**

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THE BOARD'S ORGANISATIONAL MANDATE

What is the board's actual mandate? When you look closely at this issue, it often turns out that board members have a variety of perspectives on their shared mandate. This could be because people do not really have the same understanding of the organisation's mission.

In addition, there is work in progress in various areas of the organisation, among both elected officers and employed staff, and perhaps also at various levels (central, regional, local). Even if all of these people and groups are focused on the organisation's fundamental mission, there is a risk that problems will arise if you do not clarify the roles of all the individuals involved.

To ensure effectiveness, all functions and groups must know what role they play in the whole and how they should interact. Not least importantly, the board must understand its own role.

STEP 3. Describe the organisation's fundamental mission

The first step in clarifying the board's mandate is to think about the organisation's mission. This may be described in a more or less complex way. The easiest way to describe the organisation's mission is, of course, to refer to the 'object' clause of the bye-laws. This is where the fundamental philosophy and purpose of the organisation is stated. In practice, though, it is not always that easy, especially because many organisations have over the years developed increasingly complex operations with several operational lines.

In this kind of situation, the board must be clear vis-à-vis itself and others, about what the *fundamental* mission is. This must be the focus in connection with all the deliberations required in the work to run and develop the organisation. So, it may be wise to check that all board members have the same understanding of the organisation's fundamental mission by jointly reviewing the organisation's ideological documents (object clause, important policies, etc.).

The questions you should try to answer include: Why is the organisation's *raison d'être*: what needs are supposed to be met through the organisation's existence? For whom does the organisation exist? What is unique about the organisation?

Further study

The discussion of the organisation's fundamental mission, purpose and goals is expanded in the first section of the material, *From Mission to Mission Accomplished*. The focus here is on how the board can work.

- In just a few sentences, sum up the organisation's fundamental mission:

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STEP 4. Describe the board's mandate

The board's mandate is to act to ensure that decisions made by the organisation's 'supreme governing body' (congress, annual meeting, or comparable) are implemented. What does this mean in practise? This might be simply summarised by saying that the board must make strategic choices, prioritise, formulate clear goals and follow up based on the general resolutions of the congress/annual meeting.

The board's strategic choices, prioritisations and goals become the point of departure for the activities pursued by the organisation.

What this entails for the role of the board in the day-to-day work of the organisation is not a given. It may differ from one organisation to the next and depending on the level of the board (local, regional, national).

At the local level and in organisations with few or no employed members of staff, the board is usually *operative*. This means that the board is engaged in *both* strategic issues concerning how the organisation and its activities will be developed short-term *and* long-term, *and also* participates actively in the work to carry out the activities necessary to attain the goals.

The role of the board differs in organisations that have employed staff. These boards can be more accurately described as *mandate boards* which formulate goals, but planning and implementing the activities required to attain the goals are the responsibility of the administrative office and its staff.

There are also variations that are somewhere in between these two types of board.

The work is often impeded when the board wavers in its approach and neither the board nor executive management is aware of it. In this situation, there is a clear risk of duplicate work, territorial struggles and other conflicts.

So, it is important that the board discusses what type of board they are/want to be and that this is made clear to the administrative office/the executive arm of the organisation.

- Describe what type of board you should be:

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STEP 5. Clarify the allocation of roles between the board and the administrative office

Once the board has decided what type of board they are/want to be, an operative board or a mandate board, you should further clarify the ideal allocation of roles in the organisation.

What types of decisions are up to the congress/annual meeting? What decisions are up to the board? What decisions are up to the administrative office/management? What decisions can be handled by individual working groups or project teams?

In certain respects, this will be obvious – the bye-laws often provide guidance. Other times, this is simply a matter of what you believe works best based on the type of board you are.

Work through the allocation of roles

You can use the chart below as a tool to help you in your discussion of the allocation of roles. As shown in the left-hand column, both goal statements and governance work can occur at various levels of definition. A directional goal, for example, is general and provides scope for the executive organisation to more closely define the goal statement and decide how the organisation will work to attain the goal. Outcome goals, on the other hand, are often so clearly defined that they also guide the path towards attaining the goal.

Further study

There is more information about different types of goals in the section *From Mission to Mission Accomplished*.

(Tick the boxes)

Who has the responsibility/ makes the decisions?	Congress/ annual meeting, etc.	Board	Administrative office/ administrative management	Project teams/ working groups
Frameworks Bye-laws, elections, resources				
Direction Directional goals				
Outcome goals				
Management Strategic management				
Operative management				
Executive management Implement				
Follow-up Control				

It is important that the board and the other parts/levels of the organisation have a shared understanding of who controls what and at what level of detail, as well as a shared understanding of the allocation of roles within the organisation.

Clarify the allocation of roles – prepare charters

Based on how the board – in dialogue with executive management – ticks the boxes on this chart, you can prepare draft charters for the organisation’s supreme governing body, the board, administrative management, etc.

These charters should be discussed with the people they affect to make sure you pick up on all the various aspects.

[Definitions]

A **charter states** how the work should be pursued and which responsibilities and tasks are assigned to the respective body (congress/annual meeting, board, administrative office, etc.).

- Write down your thoughts and reflections here in preparation for the process of clarifying the allocation of roles in the organisation by means of charters.

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Clarify what interaction is necessary in the organisation

For the organisation to work effectively, everyone must clearly understand who does what. This is a way of preventing duplicate work and territorial struggles, but also a way of making sure important issues are not overlooked.

You also need an overall view that shows how the various parts fit together and illustrates the importance of ongoing cooperation to promote optimal development of the organisation. This may be cooperation between different units as well as between different levels in the organisation.

The role of the board here is to bring attention to the overall picture and illustrate the importance of cooperation and interaction. How everything is a part of the whole is made clear in this quotation from 17th century poet John Donne: *'No man is an island, entire of itself. Each is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.'* The same applies to the organisation

- How smoothly do the various parts/levels of the organisation interact?

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- Where is interaction particularly important?

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BOARD PROCEDURES

A clear allocation of roles and responsibilities is essential to the work of the board. The effectiveness of the board also depends on the procedures it chooses to adopt.

- Do board procedures generate enthusiasm and commitment?
- Is there a structure to the work that makes sure good ideas become clear mandates for the executive organisation and eventually result in concrete action plans and concrete activities?

These questions are critically important to the board and the organisation.

STEP 6. Develop efficient meeting procedures

Much of the work of the board is carried out at board meetings. Accordingly, meeting procedures that are efficient in terms of accomplishing the purpose of the meeting are vital.

Assure the quality of board meetings

A sports club in Sweden has defined a few quality criteria for meetings that can be useful as a general check list when you are planning meetings.

- *What is the directional value?*
Is the purpose of the meeting clear?
Are the chosen methods and procedures consistent with the purpose?
- *What is the explanatory value?*
Is there a conscious educational approach by which the meeting results in greater knowledge and understanding?
- *What is the instructional value?*
Does the meeting lead to action? Do the participants know what they are supposed to do after the meeting: What? Who? Deadline?
- *What is the inspirational value?*
Does the meeting generate energy, motivation and enthusiasm for action?

One good way to make progress in developing board procedures can be for the board to analyse a few previous board meetings based on a few different agendas. Were the meetings effective in terms of directional value, explanatory value, instructional value and inspirational value?

In brief: Were the purposes of the various items on the meeting agenda clear? Were the discussions and input information understandable? Was it clear what was to be done after the meeting and who was supposed to do it? And did the participants feel energised and committed when they left the meeting?



The importance of working with board procedures cannot be over-emphasised. Sometimes *how* you work can be just as important as *what* you are working with. Even if the agenda is packed with important issues, outcomes may be poor if the procedures do not give all board members what they need to contribute with their skills and their ideas.

In the ideal situation, enthusiasm and commitment are greater after the board meeting than before.

Organisational psychologist Göran Ekvall has developed a model that includes ten dimensions for a creative working climate, which may be useful to consider in relation to the work of the board.

A version of the model adjusted to a board perspective is shown below. Assess the effectiveness of your work based on the various statements. It is a good idea for each board member to first make their individual assessments so that you gain a picture of any differences of opinion there may be.

	Good	Needs impr
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge The work of the board is meaningful and contributes to the organisation's success. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom and independence There is a sense of freedom and latitude in the work of the board. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment Board members are encouraged to contribute new ideas and suggestions for how the organisation can be developed. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust Relationships among board members are trustful. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vigour There is a sense that the organisation is vigorous and 'going places', that it is on the move. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play The conditions exist for innovative thinking and creativity in the board context. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lively debate There is openness to voicing differences of opinion in order to test ideas and suggestions. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of intrigue and emotional conflicts Tension in the form of differing opinions should be considered a positive development factor. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk-taking We have the courage to take risks on the board, even if the outcome is uncertain. 		

• **Time for thought**

There is scope in the board’s planning for reflection and thinking anew.

Good	Needs impr

• **Based on the discussion above – how do you need to develop and improve your board meetings?**

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An agenda that puts the board on the right path

Many meetings often consist of various items on the agenda with diverse purposes. Certain items are informational, others are resolution (decision) items. One or two items might deal with planning projects and allocating tasks, while another is intended as stimulate new ideas.

First, you must make the purpose of each item on the agenda clear and then adjust the meeting method based on that purpose. In addition, meetings should be planned with the individual needs of board members in mind. So, there are a lot of questions to ask and answer concerning the board’s agenda:

- How should the agenda be arranged? Should there be a standing agenda, or will a new agenda be written for each meeting?
- How much information should be included about each item on the agenda? Should specific proposed resolutions be included or should the board arrive at these during the meeting?
- What input information should be collected? How far in advance should board members be given the input information to read in preparation for the meeting? Should there be specific questions in connection with each set of input information?
- How much time should be spent at meetings on informational and reporting items? Can some reports instead be provided by e-mail to free up time for debate and strategic discussions?
- How do you want to work with the items that involve generating ideas and thoughts about how the organisation should be developed in the future? And how will you keep track of the discussions so that they will lead to concrete outcomes in the organisation?
- And not least importantly how are you going to make sure everyone’s voice is heard?

It is important that the agenda provides scope for discussions that further the progress of your activities and the organisation. The board must not get bogged down in the day-to-day executive issues.



- Describe how you would like to future board meetings to proceed and how this should affect meeting agendas.

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Projects and networks

Board work is also dependent upon the stimuli board members get from the outside world and the rest of the organisation. The board must never be an isolated island - there must be continuous interaction with outsiders.

Systematically capturing important stimuli/phenomena in the outside world is an important component of the board's work. A few ways this can be done are described in the final section of the workbook *Methods and Tools*.

Yet another way to interact with the surrounding world is to work deliberately towards having board members join networks considered relevant to the board as a whole. This may also prepare the ground for fruitful alliances in the future.

Another way to expand the board's skills and networks is for board members to join strategic project teams. This generates greater understanding for and knowledge about the issues with which the project is working while providing an opportunity to give the project a clearer understanding of the board's goals for the project.

If the board wants to participate in projects this way, it might be a good idea to draft a few guidelines for how board members should conduct themselves when working with a project or working group so that roles are not confused.

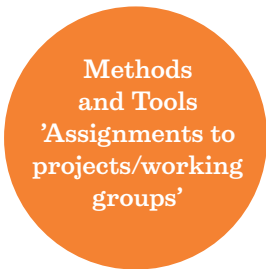
- Ideas about how we can use networks and projects to help us keep up with events in the outside world.

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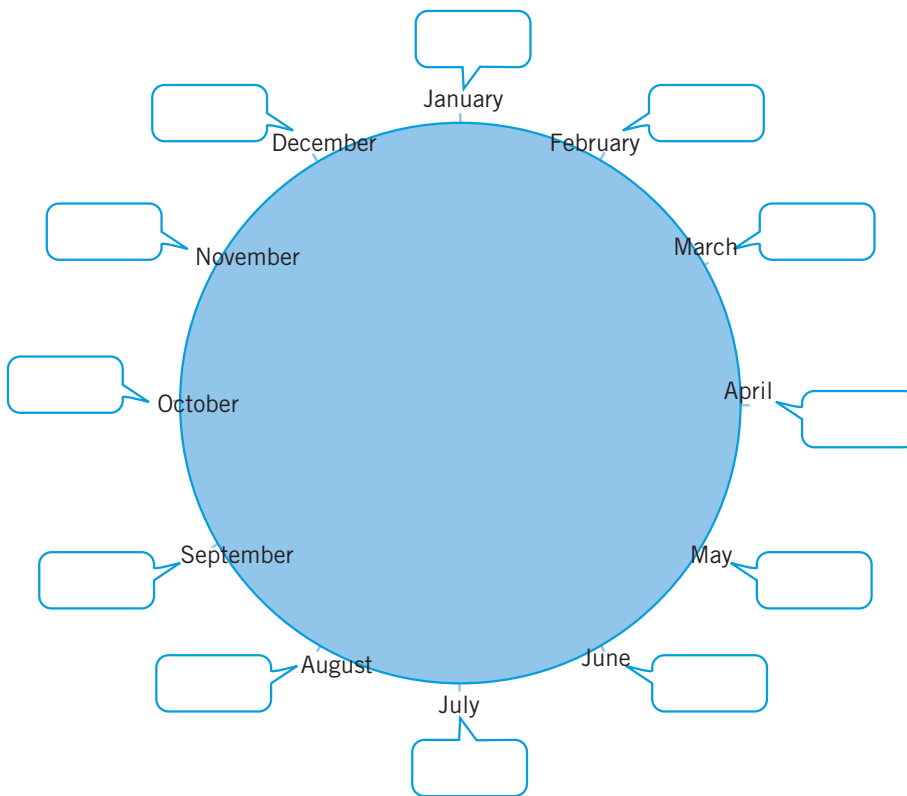


STEP 7. Make an annual cycle for the board's tasks

Smooth and effective board work also requires planning so that you do not realise at the last minute that something has to be done and be forced to rush the collection of input information prior to the board meeting. This not only entails a risk that input information will be substandard - but the lack of planning and preparation often makes it stressful for board members to try and absorb the material before the meeting.

So, effective procedures are dependent upon a clear picture of what has to be done and when . For this reason, you should prepare an annual cycle for the board's tasks. This may include, for example, when programme planning begins and when it must be finished, when the budget will be finalised, when the annual meeting and other activities required by the bye-laws must be carried out, when operations will be followed up and when the actual work of the board will be followed up and evaluated.

The annual cycle should also include external activities that have impact on the organisation.



• Notes to support the preparation of an annual cycle for the work of the board

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STEP 8. Board work between meetings

How the board works between meetings depends on what kind of board it is – an operative board that must participate in implementation or a mandate board that has staff at its disposal.

For the mandate board, it is important to clearly formulate what you want to happen with the issues upon which the board makes decisions at the meeting. The executive organisation/administrative office must be given a clear mandate and know what is expected of it based upon board decisions. How the implementation of decisions should proceed should be left up to the administrative office. However, the board should state whether it wants a report/follow up on the matter and, if so, how and when.

In the operative board, board members are usually involved in implementing decisions.

In this case, it is important to realise that a board member who accepts an assignment to implement a certain activity must handle this at the same time as many other commitments (work, family, other club/association activities, etc.). This imposes special demands for clarity concerning the assignment.

- **What needs to be done to improve the efficiency of work between board meetings? That is, how can the board’s assignments to the administrative office, working groups/project teams or individual board members be clarified?**

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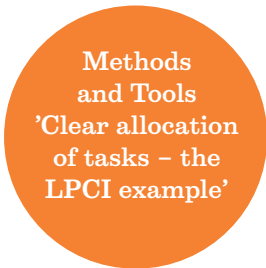
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FOR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

The work of the board is dependent upon the people who sit on the board and how they cooperate with each other. As a result, the matter of board procedures is never really finished. This is an issue the board must work with on an ongoing basis.

STEP 9. Continuously check and verify

Ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of board work is essential. In short, you must continuously check and verify that board members believe the board is working as it should. You may also want to discuss how board procedures can be further improved. One simple measure may be to end every meeting by going around the table to get everyone's views on whether the meeting fulfilled their hopes or expectations.

The board must also continuously follow up on implemented activities based on questions like:

Was the outcome as we intended? What have we learned? How can we develop and improve how we work with the issues - so that we also develop and improve our activities?

Obviously, everything cannot be monitored equally closely. For this reason, the board should inform the administrative office/responsible people about which issues it requires more frequent reporting on, and what kind of information this reporting/follow-up should contain. The board should also occasionally review the programme plan adopted for the year based on questions like: What has been done? What do we need to deal with? What can we learn from our mistakes and our successes?

Finally – if the organisation has staff/an administrative office, the board should check and verify the effectiveness of interaction with administrative management. The earlier any friction between the board and administrative management is brought into the open, the better. These things are often simply a matter of vagueness or misunderstanding.

- **Think about how the board can improve and develop its procedures and interaction with the administrative office in order to secure the organisation's development.**

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Further study

There is more about operational follow-up in the section *From Mission to Mission Accomplished*.

SUMMARY

As a result of the work the board has done in this workbook, you should now have a basis for drafting the following documents:

- Charters for the organisation's supreme governing body, the board of directors, administrative management, etc.
- A description of the board's annual cycle that includes which tasks are the ongoing responsibility of the board.
- An inventory of the skills and experience found on the board – and those that are lacking.
- Assignment descriptions for the various board assignments/areas of responsibility.
- A template for an agenda that provides scope for both operative and strategic issues; that is, both structure and creativity.

This should make it clear who does what and what mandate everyone has for their work, as well as how an effective board meeting that takes the organisation forward should be arranged.

To Do List

We need to proceed with/finalise the following in order to create the best possible conditions for the work of the board.

A series of horizontal dotted lines provided for writing the to-do list.



Governing a

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

is study material designed to provide support to boards of directors who want to improve and develop their leadership by working through their activities based on three areas of focus:

- FROM MISSION TO MISSION ACCOMPLISHED – Gain an effective programme based firmly on the organisation's ideals
- TRUSTED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE – Building and managing the organisation's trust capital
- THE BOARD AS A DRIVER FOR DEVELOPMENT – The role of the board in the development process.

A board can work with this material independently or with the support of an instructor.

The workbook **DIAGNOSIS – What does the board want to address?** is a diagnostic tool that gives the board an opportunity to jointly discuss the areas in which its work needs to be developed and improved.

The workbook **METHODS AND TOOLS** provides additional support for this material.

The purpose of the study material is to give every board of directors the tools they need to begin their journey towards development based on their specific needs and circumstances.

