

Ongoing Board Member Involvement: Staying in Touch

After individuals have completed their terms as members of the corporation's board, nonmember and nonboard alternatives can be created for keeping them involved with the organization. For a variety of reasons (fundraising, advice, institutional memory, etc.) it is often advantageous for nonprofit corporations to do this. Examples of mechanisms commonly used to accomplish this are listed below. If an enterprise wishes to pursue these or other alternatives, the details (eligibility, term, role re-election options, limited legal authority, etc.) should be specified in the bylaws.

Alternative Board Membership

- **Emeritus Directors**—title which can be given to long-serving board members who have completed their eligibility or reached mandatory retirement age.
- **Honorary Directors**—title which can be given to individuals whom the corporation wishes to recognize. Honorary directors may or may not have been past members of the board.
- **Life Directors**—title which can be given to individuals to recognize their long service or significant contribution. Depending on the corporation's decisions, as codified in the bylaws, life directors may or may not have the right to vote or have the other privileges and obligations of board members.
- **Ex-Officio Directors**—an individual who, as a result of office or position, is granted board member recognition. Like life directors, depending on the corporation's decisions, as specified in the bylaws, ex-officio directors may or may not have the privileges and obligations of board members.

Alternative Boards

- **Advisory Boards**—bodies which have no legal duties or responsibilities but which the enterprise has established to provide management with advice, competitive and community intelligence, communication networks, etc. Advisory boards can include current and former board members, as well as people who have never served on the board.
- **Boards of Governors**—bodies that are similar in role to advisory boards but whose membership is generally limited to former board members.
- **Foundation Boards**—legally separate, 501(c)(3) companion organizations typically dedicated to annual fundraising and endowment development. Often this can be a long-term organizational home for former board leaders and particularly dedicated general board members. In selecting foundation board members the criterion of either being able to give or get money must be clearly remembered. Foundation boards

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are active entities that, for the good of the organization, must be productive. Therefore, they are not a place for simply trying to maintain contact with former board members or friends of the organization.

In addition, many non-profit organizations make extensive use of volunteers. These individuals, while agents of the corporation, are not part of the governance process.