

Looking at your board from the outside in

When selecting directors to sit on your nonprofit's board, you probably have a good idea of what qualities you're looking for in those individuals. Certain attributes are going to be important to you and your group, such as the person's reputation or his or her belief in your cause.

Yet, have you ever considered how outsiders view your board? With the competition for funding dollars tighter than ever, it can pay to look at your board the way a potential donor might. Just as you want to present your nonprofit and the work it does in the best possible light to supporters, you should want the same for the individuals on your board and the work they do.

Put yourself in a potential donor's shoes and ask yourself three questions:

1. Does the makeup of the board represent a range of diversity and inclusiveness?

Diversity can cover gender, race, geography, age, expertise and other factors.

Inclusiveness is how well the makeup of your board mirrors your organization's mission.

2. Is it easy to see how each board member aligns with your organization's mission?

Consider including a personal statement from board members on your Web site and other promotional materials that defines their passion for your cause.

3. What commitment have these board members made? Some nonprofits ask their board members to sign contracts outlining their commitment — including the time they will commit, the funds they promise to donate or raise, and the duties they'll perform. If this is a step you take, be sure donors know about it.