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10 Steps to a More Diverse Board

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Even though nonprofit staff and board members WANT to diversify the composition of their boards of directors, [data show](#) that not much progress has been made. What if each charitable organization committed to taking a few of these steps during the next year?

1. Assign as homework in between board meetings, or set aside 15 minutes at a board meeting, for each board member to take an implicit bias quiz, such as this one from [Project Implicit](#), or Google's program on [how to spot unconscious bias](#), or watch this video together ([The Gardener](#)) and then spend some time discussing what surprised you – and what the implications are for recruiting board members.
2. Take a [self-assessment on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity](#), to give your nonprofit a starting point, and identify areas to address. (Self-assessment developed by the Michigan Nonprofit Association.)
3. Share a resource on diversity, inclusion, and equity in each board packet so that over the course of several months your board becomes more comfortable with the rationale and need for diversity on the board and to stimulate an intentional conversation with your board about its commitment to diversity. Consider sharing these:
 - [Why diversity, inclusion, and equity matter for nonprofits](#)

- [7 Things You Can Do To Improve the Sad Pathetic State of Board Diversity](#)
- [Race to Lead](#)

4. Articulate the nonprofit's commitment. Adopt and post a statement that the nonprofit values diversity, and is committed to an inclusive and equitable workplace. (Consider adopting a separate board resolution just for the board.) Publish this statement where anyone visiting the nonprofit's website will see it. That way when an interested board prospect visits the website, the message will be clear that people of all backgrounds and experience are valued as volunteers, staff, and board members. Just the work to craft and adopt such a statement will send your nonprofit forward on this journey several steps! [See this example](#).
5. Recruit for skills, not for "look." As described in [this post](#), *"The best way to achieve that goal is not to pursue diverse leadership candidates as a prize to sit at the board table, but as a valued fundraiser, attorney, project manager, etc. who happens to be black, or a woman, or a millennial."*
6. Be proactive in recruiting board members who are different from the existing board members. Pick a concrete, actionable goal and make a commitment to it as a board, such as *"We (one, two, or a small number of board members) will meet with (pick a number) people in the next 3 months who would bring diversity to our board, and introduce them to the nonprofit and its mission, and explore their interest in the nonprofit's work."* Assign accountability to make sure there is follow-through and celebrate when there is. Every bit of positive reinforcement helps in supporting change.
7. Look at your current prospect list: Does it include candidates across all experience levels? In addition to "C-Suite" experience, consider mid-level and even entry level board prospects, who may in fact mirror the nonprofit's beneficiaries, donors, or other supporters. There are currently more Millennials in the workforce than Boomers!
8. Use technology! Have you considered posting a "position description" for your nonprofit's board of directors on career sites/job boards, just as you would for a paid staff position?
9. Ask the people who are served by your nonprofit who THEY recommend as board members. And when they make suggestions, ask for an introduction.
10. If your nonprofit uses a search firm/consultant to help it find board member prospects, include in the scope of the assignment that the consultant should present the board – for each candidate that appears to meet the description of

qualifications sought – with one board candidate who the consultant thinks is quite different from what the nonprofit is looking for. This sounds counter-intuitive, but is designed to fight the [self-reinforcing cycle](#) that results in boards picking people to join the board who are just like themselves. The search consultant may be reinforcing this cycle thinking that it is pleasing its client (the nonprofit.)

Resources

[The declining diversity of nonprofit boards - and what to do about it](#) (BoardSource and Nonprofit Quarterly)

[Diversity on nonprofit boards](#) (National Council of Nonprofits)

[Why diversity, inclusion, and equity matter for nonprofits](#) (National Council of Nonprofits)