

## ***HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE BOARD MEMBER***

You have been chosen to be a member of your parent-teacher organization because you are informed, intelligent, and care about the welfare of your school community. You have proven to be interested in and alert to the needs of your school, community, and district. As a board member, you will be asked to share in the decision-making process that will determine how your organization can best support your school.

### **You will be most effective as a board member if you:**

- Read all information given you about the school, the PTO board, and your job.
- Attend all board meetings.
- Arrive on time for board meetings.
- Look for and impart ideas for new activities and ways to improve your organization.
- Act as a liaison between community and school.
- Participate in discussions, stating your opinion even if it differs from others.
- Let your position be known, but don't monopolize meeting.
- Continue to be alert to problems and methods for dealing with them.
- Be aware of other board members' duties and supportive of their efforts.

### **As the head of your committee, you will be most effective if you:**

- Understand precisely what your duties are.
- Begin year with careful examination of last year.
- Set definite goals and objectives for the coming year.
- Make nitty-gritty decisions in your committee, calling upon board for major decisions only.
- Be well informed and to the point when giving reports.
- Explain exact amount needed and use when asking board to allocate funds.
- End term with complete evaluation and report for person following you.

## ***CHARACTERISTICS COMMON TO A SKILLFUL LEADER***

A skillful leader is a person who:

- Listens a great deal.
- Exudes warmth, friendliness, and understanding.
- Provides clearly-defined lines of responsibility and authority.
- Has respect for the limitations of people.
- Has respect for the hidden or potential abilities of other people and helps them release their talents.
- Helps others develop a realistic sense of confidence.
- Recognizes and commends superior performance, often expressing appreciation publicly; offers criticism privately in the form of constructive suggestions.
- Provides a center of communication and keeps others up to date on all matters affecting them.
- Minimizes individual and group conflicts; helps others establish compromises based on mutual, long-range interests.
- Is sometimes wrong and admits it.
- Has clearly-defined objectives and has obtained agreement on the objectives.
- Is approachable and available when needed.
- Has sincerity of purpose and is willing to work hard.

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Excerpts from *Volunteer-Staff Relationships: A Team Approach*, by Elizabeth Madgoon, Washington State Office of Volunteer Programs.

## ***GROUP-CENTERED LEADERSHIP***

- The group, or meeting, is owned by the members, including the leader. All members, with the leader's assistance, contribute to its effectiveness.
- The group is responsible, with occasional and appropriate help from the leader, for reaching a decision that includes the participation of all and is the product of all. The leader is a servant and helper to the group.
- Members of the group should be encouraged and helped to take responsibility for its task productivity, its methods of working, its assignment of tasks, its plans for the use of time available.
- Feelings, emotions, conflict are recognized by the members and the leader as legitimate facts and situations demanding as serious attention as the agenda.
- The leader believes that any problem in the group must be faced and solved within the group and by the group. As trust develops among members, it is much easier for an individual to discover ways in which his behavior is bothering the group.
- With help and encouragement from the leader, the members come to realize that the needs, feelings and purposes of all members should be met so that an awareness of being a group forms. Then the group can continue to grow.

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From "Making Meetings Work, A Guide for Leaders and Group Members," Leland P. Bradford.

## ***LISTENING***

As PTO leaders, you find yourselves doing a lot of talking and directing. You also find yourselves doing a lot of listening. Listening may seem easier, but if it is to be done well, it does take effort and skill.

Listening requires working at listening and understanding what the other person has to say.

It has been said that the need to be listened to is so great that if being listened to were completely absent from our daily existence, we would probably begin to talk to ourselves.

Our ability to be good listeners is often affected by our emotions. We need to work hard at not making quick judgments and to be open to new ideas or perspectives.

To help you improve your listening skills, here are ten rules for good listening.

- 1. Stop talking!**  
You cannot listen if you are talking.
- 2. Put the Speaker at ease.**  
Help him/her feel that he/she is free to talk.
- 3. Show others that you want to listen.**  
Look and act interested. Don't busy yourself with other things. Listen to understand, rather than to oppose.
- 4. Remove distractions.**  
Don't doodle, tape, or shuffle papers. Would it be quieter if you shut the door?
- 5. Empathize with others.**  
Try to put yourself in their place so as to see their point of view.
- 6. Be patient.**  
Allow plenty of time. Do not interrupt. Avoid heading for the door.
- 7. Hold your temper.**  
An angry person gets the wrong meaning from words.
- 8. Go easy on argument and criticism.**  
This puts others on the defensive. They may "clam up" or get angry. Do not argue: even if you win, you lose.
- 9. Ask questions.**  
This is encouraging and shows you are listening. It helps to develop points further and is essential for clarification.
- 10. Stop talking!**  
This is the first and last, because all other commandments depend on it. You simply can't be a good listener while you are talking.

# ***CHANGE***

## ***Important Concepts . . .***

- Change is a process that occurs over time.
- Ultimately change is an individual act.
- The more complex the new idea/behavior, the longer it takes for change to occur.
- Change efforts must be directed not only toward the new idea itself but, also, toward individuals and the time and assistance they need in implementing the new idea.

# *Building Commitment To Change*

- Allow room for participation in the planning.
- Leave choices.
- Provide a clear picture of the change.
- Divide a big change into more manageable and familiar steps.
- Minimize surprises.
- Allow for digestion of change requests.
- Demonstrate your own commitment to the change.
- Make standards and requirements clear.
- Offer positive reinforcement for competence.
- Look for and reward pioneers, innovators, and early successes.
- Help people find or feel compensated for the extra time and energy change requires.
- Avoid creating obvious “losers.”
- Allow expressions of nostalgia and grief for the past—then create excitement about the future.