

## How To Be An Effective Club Board Member

As a director, you are an elected representative of your fellow members. They look to you for representation of their ideas. Your creativity is also important — one of the reasons you were elected was because of your ability to think well. The success of your association depends on your performance as a director.

There are many kinds of boards:

- Some are advisory boards, which can consider a broad range of issues but essentially have no power;
- Some are policy-making boards, such as boards of education, which set goals and then hire staff to carry out or administer the goals;
- Some combine policy-making and supervision.

Our board falls in the latter category. Members of the Civitan club board of directors make policy, but also supervise the activities of the volunteer leaders so that the club can concentrate its energies and abilities on community service and membership growth and retention. New board members, without specialized knowledge, often fear that they cannot make a contribution. They feel shy because others seem to know more about the rules. They hold back for fear they will be out of order. It is worth saying at the beginning, though, that new board members bring valuable talents and knowledge. Most have developed techniques which have effected membership growth and increased community service. Besides such general experience, board members often have specific talents, such as fund-raising ability, the gift of organizing, or the power to persuade people to their point of view.

As to the specialized knowledge about board membership, much of it will be learned along the way. In addition, there is help available from other members with experience in leadership, from written materials such as policies, the constitution and bylaws and the manuals for club officers. A deep interest in expanding the Civitan movement will serve as a guide to doing what is right.

### **What is a Board of Directors?**

The board is a slice of the whole loaf chosen to run an entire enterprise simply because it is too awkward to have everybody run it. Board members are entrusted to see that things go the way Civitans they represent want them to go. The board is responsible to the members who have chosen them.

A well-functioning board, however, is more than just a rubber stamp. The membership expects leadership from board members who, in accepting the office, have agreed to devote as much time as necessary to the job. Even though board members are volunteers, it is expected that they will give more thought and study to the opportunities and problems facing the club than could the general membership. Board members should lead the way in recruiting new members and in encouraging the club to create community service.

What characterizes good board members? Tact and common sense are what Civitans look for when choosing their representatives. Of great importance, too, are talents such as financial expertise or resources, such as contacts with certain vital elements of the business world, which can benefit Civitan.

### **What the Board of Directors Does**

In general there are two main parts to the board's job: policy making and implementation. In other words, the board, setting policy, says, "This is what we want to accomplish." Implementation is finding ways to carry out the policy.

On some matters the board confines itself to the first part, setting policy, and turns the second part over to the officers and committees to see that the job gets done. The president cannot do his job if the board is standing over him, telling him what to do at every turn. Even so, the board has clear responsibilities for implementation. It keeps an eye on the day-to-day operations to see that policy is carried out. It sets up good reporting procedures to hold the officers accountable, and builds in ways to see that they carry out board policy.

In general terms, there are five questions the board has to ask itself. These questions embody the five main tasks of a board:

- What do we want to accomplish (setting policy and establishing goals)?
- What is the road map to follow (formulating guidelines, making plans, suggesting alternatives)?
- How will we pay for it (getting and spending money)?
- How do we reach our goals (establishing priorities, delegating responsibilities)?
- Did we succeed or fail (evaluating)?