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Board Basics: A Primer for Non-Profit Board Members

Jerry Covey
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Board Basics offers realistic advice to existing or new non-profit board members. Everything from the creation of an agenda and budget to orientations, self-evaluation, and a rich discussion of boundaries and governance is covered in this volume. This primer is an important resource for newly announced board members or experienced members who want a refresher about their responsibilities.

Covey writes in a clear and effective manner. The fast-paced chapters include relevant tips and advice while avoiding jargon-laced language. This means that people of all ages and backgrounds will be able to learn about the non-profit world and what to expect. This book is easy to read because each chapter is broken down with headers and bullets. Though a slim volume, this primer feels complete because so much ground is covered in less than a hundred pages.

Board Basics breaks down the role of a governing board into sections. This is more than listing the different duties linked to such a responsibility. Instead, Covey explains the reasoning behind different tasks like an audit or board member orientation. These explanations continuously remind the reader of the relationship between the board and the non-profit it governs. In the process, the reader gains an important understanding of the checks and balances involved between the two groups.

Though *Board Basics* is full of useful information, the order of information sometimes seems off. For example, communication and boundaries are covered before the nitty-gritty details of things like understanding a budget. It may have been more useful to discuss the mechanics and duties of the board before going into the interpersonal and philosophical aspects of such a position. Though the book is full of interesting questions and specific advice, the one thing it lacks is real-life scenarios. Creating a fake non-profit and discussing how a board could guide and monitor such a group could have made the lessons and advice even more effective.

A non-profit's board does not have to exist behind closed doors. *Board Basics* lifts the curtain so that people can understand such a role. Though short, the book is filled with useful advice about creating and maintaining boundaries, understanding the purpose of a non-profit's board, and learning how to engage and participate with fellow members in a healthy, productive, and respectful manner. Reading this guide will take little to no time but will certainly benefit both experienced and novice board members looking to stabilize non-profits and help such groups grow to realize their full potential.

LISA BOWER (March 17, 2011)

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