

FIELD NOTES



HOW TO KEEP YOUR BOARD STRONG

Over time, boards begin to drift. Boards that were once strong now don't pack the same leadership punch that they once did. Why?

Most boards have a nominating or board development committee made up of members of the board. They meet and brainstorm names of people they know to recruit to the board. They develop lists and then are dispatched to help find the next class of leadership for their nonprofit.

One of the big reasons boards become weaker is something we at Donor By Design call "the law of lateral recruitment."

Law of Lateral Recruitment:
people most often recruit within their own socio-economic status.

Simply stated, these board members tasked with recruiting the next class of leadership will most naturally recruit from their own socio-economic status or below. Over time, the board loses strength.

While this sounds grim, you can reverse this trajectory.

FIND YOURSELF A "BIG L" LEADER

A Big L leader can be defined as a person who has influence, affluence and access. A simple litmus test is asking, "Does this potential leader have access to the top ten leaders in your community?" If the answer is "yes," go humbly recruit this leader to your board and ask them if they could help you find two other leaders just like them. Their special assignment will be to help you transform the board. **Hint:** Big L leaders love to help and fix.

THE VALUE OF RECRUITING IN THREES

Have you ever recruited a new board member and done the happy dance because you knew they would help transform your charity? Then, that individual shows up to the board meeting and realizes there isn't anyone like them sitting around the table. Others at the table aren't as bold, ambitious and mission-driven as they are. The conversation isn't about things that they can get excited about. (Say...a bake sale for example.) What happens? That new board member starts to lose enthusiasm and slowly drifts away.

The value of recruiting in threes is that there are now three Big L leaders who have joined the board. These new board members collectively begin to change the tone, agenda and trajectory of your board.



Board members who are under-performers start to naturally self-select off the board. Rarely do we need to "fire" them; they simply realize that the board has changed. Recruit in threes and ask these leaders to help you transform your board.

Has your board become weaker over time? Identify what you need, find a Big L leader (actually three) and begin to watch it transform and become stronger.

Need a little help with your board recruitment or development?
Contact us: info@donorbydesign.com

Or read some of our blogs on this very important topic of **leadership**.

