

How To Engage With Your Board During Crisis



When COVID-19 hit, we looked for resources on how an Executive Director could engage their Board. While we found many resources on Board engagement from the Board's perspective, we had a hard time finding information on what actions the Executive Director could take with their Board. Thus, we researched a lot of information and created our own resource. We hope you find it helpful in leading your board in a crisis.

1. Communication is key.

- You cannot communicate enough. Keep your board informed of what's happening. Be candid, encouraging, and don't minimize the truth.

2. Check-in with your Board.

- Reach out to ask, "How are you doing?" You may even consider a Board Happy Hour to connect and support each other. No work talk allowed.

3. Stick to the facts.

- Provide facts and don't overwhelm them with data. Too much data can derail your focus. Keep your message short and to the point.

4. Provide updates on strategic goals.

- This helps the board understand where progress has been made and what areas have faltered during times of crisis. Ask for ideas and feedback on how to course correct or disengage if the goal is no longer appropriate during this critical time.

5. Share issues facing the organization.

- Keep the board informed on issues facing the organization. Only then, can they offer advice and assistance in navigating uncharted waters.

6. Schedule weekly 1:1 calls with board members.

- Keep board members updated on where the organization stands. What you're doing. What you're thinking. What you're planning. Make sure critical messages are shared.

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7. Use board members' strengths.

- You selected each board member for their strengths. Leverage those strengths and their knowledge during a crisis and ask for help in areas where they excel...crisis management, marketing, human resources, donor relations, financials, etc.

8. Hold virtual brainstorming sessions with your board.

- Explore the current state of the organization.
 - How is the crisis impacting our organization?
 - What are our current vulnerabilities?
 - What is working?
 - What is not?
 - How can we innovate?
 - What can we start doing?
 - What can we stop doing?
 - What is our worse-case scenario?
 - How can we prevent this from happening?
 - What steps can we take now to set ourselves up for success while managing through the crisis?
 - Who are the owners of the goals during the crisis and what are their responsibilities?

9. Be open-minded

- Your board is there to support you. Take their ideas and suggestions and be open-minded to new possibilities. You may find ways to reinvent yourself.

10. Donor relations

- Ask your board to contact donors to ask about their well-being.
 - How are you?
 - What are you experiencing?
 - What are your biggest worries and concerns?
 - How can we help?