



POWER
YOUR MISSION

Nancy@poweryourmission.com

605-863-0619

poweryourmission.org

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

for Board Chair / Executive Director Check-in

1. Establish a regular in person time for check-ins.

Open and consistent communication between the executive and the board chair helps to build a strong working relationship and to surface issues and challenges before they get bigger. Shoot for twice a month. Don't substitute this face time with emails or calls because they won't have the same impact and can more easily be misinterpreted.

- a. Establish guidelines for your check-in meetings.

Guidelines might include whether you will cover specific topics at each meeting, whether you will follow a similar agenda, etc. You will also want to establish what constitutes a surprise that should be shared with the board chair before it is shared with the full board.

- b. Invite discussion of issues and challenges.

If you are afraid to do this these issues will catch you by surprise. You may need to ask when you are working on guidelines how to address the more difficult issues, making sure there is a safe way to do this.

VERY IMPORTANT POINT. When you set up your regular check-ins make sure that the Executive Director has permission to share bad news. Healthy boards encourage this but can be a dangerous to an Executive Director that does not feel safe sharing bad news or may not know if it is safe to share bad news. Ask now how bad news should be managed.

- c. Take time to include the positives. Share what is going well.

2. Learn to listen deeply.

The most important element of good communication is focused listening. Everyone wants to feel that their opinions are wanted and respected. Demonstrate that you're a good listener by being present in a conversation and actively acknowledging that the information you receive is

understood and appreciated. Therefore, when you enter these meetings, do so intentionally - pay attention to what the other person is saying and engage in active listening when necessary. In other words, paraphrase what you heard or try asking some clarifying questions. This may feel odd at first but suggest to your communication partner that you want to make sure that you have understood them

3. Pay attention to whether you are being heard.

If you do not feel heard, you may need to repeat what you said in a different way. This is also a clue to you if you find your partner is repeating themselves, it generally means they are not feeling heard.

Once you establish this format it will feel far more comfortable.

4. Share openly and honestly, including when there's bad news.

This is especially important between the executive and the chair, because it will set the tone for the relationship between the executive and the board as a whole.

5. Check your results

If the Board Chair or Executive Director are not responding with desired results, consider the possibility that your communication techniques need improving. Test your own communication style. Don't assume you have been heard correctly. Ask questions to determine if you have been heard. It is often true that the message sent is not always the message received.

Effective communication takes commitment to an ongoing process that includes constantly seeking improvement to both technique and methodology of message delivery. Continuously evaluate with one another if the effectiveness of your communication is on target. Ask each other for suggestions for improving communications.

6. Use "we" not "I" whenever talking to one another or the public.

This acknowledges the important role of both the board and Chief Executive.