



**MEMO TO THE BOARD**  
from Barry S. Bader

**What to Ask Prospective Board Members**

Elaine Zablocki found that recruiting more minorities and women to the board takes new ways of thinking about, recruiting and orienting directors.

An initial interview with a prospective board member is critical to seeing if the individual will be a good match, but what exactly should be discussed? Here a few questions to consider:

1. What do you know about our organization? Use this as an opportunity to briefly share your mission, vision and major initiatives.
2. What interests you about our mission and the work we do?
3. What motivates you as a volunteer board member? Which boards you've served on gave you the greatest opportunities to contribute, which didn't, and why?
4. Do you have any particular goals or aspirations for your work on this board? (It's not essential for a candidate to have goals in mind, but look for an answer that conveys enthusiasm but not zealotry for a narrow constituency.)
5. How much time could you give us? (Be candid about how much time is required.) What are your other volunteer and professional commitments?)
6. What are your expectations of management? (Does the individual understand the difference between governance and management? Is his or her understanding consistent with your board's desired board-CEO relationship and culture?)
7. Would you feel comfortable advocating for our organization with community, political or business leaders you know?
8. Do you have any conflicts of interest that might be viewed as limiting your objectivity as a board member?
9. Would you be willing to participate in board orientation and education? (Describe your board's requirements.) Are you willing and able to attend social and community events with other board members?
10. Would you be willing to make a philanthropic contribution to the organization? (Describe the expectations, whether it's a suggested dollar amount or simply giving within one's self-determined means.)
11. Would you be willing to participate in the self evaluation of the board, including an evaluation of your performance as an individual? (Describe your board's evaluation process.)
12. Based on our conversation today, if we have a vacancy on the board and our Governance Committee believes you are a good fit, how interested would you be in serving? If not, why – and could you recommend anyone else we should talk with?

Every interview will be different, of course, and can't follow a rote pattern. However, by having specific question prepared, you'll increase the chances the chances of interesting good candidates and assessing how well they fit the board's selection criteria and desired competencies.

Barry S. Bader