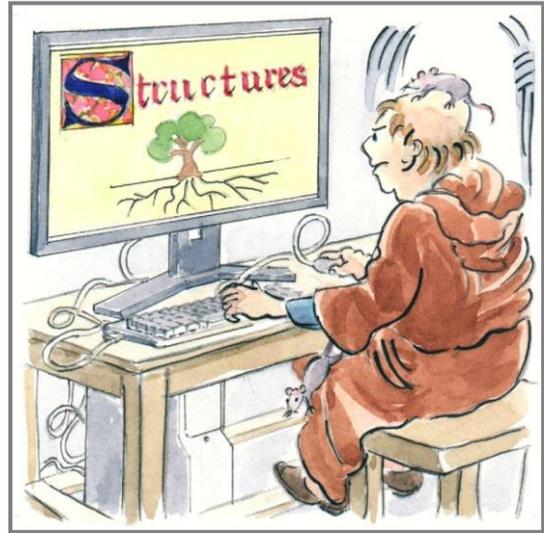


Responsibilities of mission agency Boards

TN5 Training Notes series: Structures



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These notes are designed to provide help for all Christian charitable organisations (whether trusts, companies limited by guarantee or CIOs).

They give an outline of the responsibilities of the Trustees or the Council of Management of any Christian society. They form a suggested starting point from which the Board of any organisation can write their own guidelines.

They are written from a range of source material in the Christian and voluntary sectors. Their emphasis, however, is on working in partnership with the staff, each having a distinctive but complementary role. The aim has been to avoid the 'policing' language that is sometimes used (as this can create unhelpful tensions) and to inject a clear Christian dimension.

The role of the Board

It is the role of the Board to:

1 **Maintain a servant attitude**

- To work as servants of God, seeking his guidance, as the body entrusted with the oversight of the organisation's life and activities.
- To pray for the organisation, taking an informed interest in its activities.
- To work together as a team under the leadership of the one appointed to chair.
- To work in partnership and harmony with the staff, each body having its distinct role to play.
- To review regularly their own corporate performance and to seek external professional advice and training whenever necessary.

2 **Promote and protect the organisation's development**

- To work alongside the staff in furthering the work of the organisation by all possible means so that everyone is fully committed to all key decisions taken.
- To support the staff as they manage the organisation on a day-to-day basis, taking an interest in their life and work, praying for them, and being a source of encouragement to them.
- To ensure that the organisation pursues its objectives complying with its Trust Deed (or Memorandum and Articles or Constitution), with all relevant legislation, and with Christian principles.
- To safeguard the good name, integrity and the agreed values of the organisation.

3 **Set a clear direction and keep this under review**

- To provide firm direction to the organisation as a whole by determining its purpose and vision; to agree its long-term plan through the setting of aims and budgets, having worked with staff in their formulation.
- To monitor performance against these aims and budgets with information provided by staff and to make necessary adjustments.
- To develop and agree policies and targets within the context of the plan and to monitor these as above.

4 **Oversee the right use of resources**

- To assess staffing requirements, to appoint appropriate CEO/(executive) staff*, to monitor their performance and, if necessary, to dismiss them.
- To ensure the well-being of all staff members through a proper human resources (HR) policy (to include recruitment, support, appraisal, remuneration and discipline) following all legal, ethical and Christian requirements.
- To ensure that the organisation is effectively and efficiently run by the CEO and staff, that it makes the correct and appropriate use of financial resources, that gift income is properly applied and that the organisation fulfils all legal requirements.
- To fulfil their role as Trustees of the property and investments of the organisation and all other statutory duties laid down in the foundation documents.

5 **Take individual responsibility**

These apply individually for each Board member

- To attend all possible meetings of the Board (including joint meetings with staff, working groups he or she is asked to serve on, and training sessions).
- To use specific skills, knowledge and experience in helping the Board reach sound decisions.

- To be ready to provide proactive input for discussion and decision both at meetings and in periods in between.
- To act as an ambassador for the organisation within any available networks, involving some measure of time commitment outside normal meetings.
- To take an active interest in at least one specific area of the organisation's day-to-day work, praying for individual staff and providing support and encouragement.

It is not the responsibility of the Board to get involved in the day-to-day management of the organisation, but instead to see that it is managed well through the appointment and monitoring of the CEO/(executive) staff*, and the setting and monitoring of strategy.

* Note: for a small organisation with only a few employees, read 'staff' rather than 'executive staff' at these points. The Board's open and healthy relationship, through its Chair, with the CEO is essential.

Personal requirements

A Personal qualities

The personal qualities required of each Board member are as follows:

- an enthusiastic commitment to the purpose and values of the organisation;
- whatever Christian doctrinal requirements are required (eg. acceptance of a basis of faith);
- a demonstration of Christian character in a life of integrity;
- a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort both to meetings and their preparation and to other means of offering practical support to the organisation;
- strategic vision for what might be, coupled with good, independent judgement;
- an ability to work effectively with others as a member of the team, supporting collective decisions and maintaining all necessary confidences;
- an ability to think creatively, take an objective view and respond appropriately to the views of others when they differ;
- an understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.

B Skills and experience

The trustee body should, between them, possess skills and experience in:

- the type of work being done or service offered by the organisation;
- the people-groups that the organisation serves;
- setting targets, monitoring and evaluating performance and programmes;
- HR work and issues of employment, teamwork and people management;

- financial and property management and an understanding of legal matters;
- marketing and fund-raising in a Christian context.

Individual Board members should therefore clearly fit within at least one of these requirement areas.

When considering candidates for Board membership there may be other considerations to keep in mind, although these should not be seen as primary requirements. Examples might include a reasonable spread of ages, balance of genders, representation of different geographical areas or diversity of theological positions.

It can be helpful then to add a statement about the corporate role of the staff team. One suggestion for this would be to repeat section 1 above with suitably amended wording, and to add two further sections, one on **Work within an agreed framework** (covering purpose, vision, budgets, values, etc.) and the other **Supply all information necessary for the oversight of the organisation** (plans, reports, etc). There is a possible summary at *Training Notes TN5a* as a supplement to these notes.

Individual responsibilities for the staff are given in job descriptions and annual aims and monitored through a proper system of staff appraisal.

Church Trustees

These notes have been written for a Christian mission agency, but also apply to a church. Church Trustees (including PCCs) might like to rethink their role in the light of these notes, even if some of the terminology will need to be adapted. Larger churches where there is an employed staff team will find the ideas here particularly relevant. See, in particular, Training Notes TN50, *Should the staff lead the church?*, and TN147, *The role of the PCC*, and also Article A24, *Mission-shaped church councils*, referenced below.

These notes are available at [https:// www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index](https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index) and then TN5. They cover one aspect of a possible event for Trustees and Board members on governance and meetings. For further resources specifically for Board members see, for example, Training Notes TN35, *Causes of friction in mission agencies*, and Health-checks HC6 & HC7, *The Christian Effectiveness Model*. Church Trustees should compare these notes with Article A24, *Mission-shaped Church Councils*, and Training Notes TN50, *Should the staff lead the church?*, TN87, *What to look for in your leaders* and TN147, *The role of the PCC*.

Contact John if you would like to enquire about the possibility of his running an event for your Board.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File TN5 under Structures.

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