

Leadership Transition: A Checklist of for Boards of Directors

When facing a leadership transition, particularly when an Executive Director/CEO has left abruptly, effective Boards know that they must address two critical issues: (1) How are you going to manage until you have a stable, permanent Executive Director/CEO?; and (2) How will you make sure your next leader is the right leader? In order to do so, a discussion of the following issues must take place:

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE AGENCY	
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you determine what the essential functions of the agency are?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What functions was the ED/CEO performing? Which of these are essential to keep the agency going?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What functions was the Executive Director/CEO supposed to be performing but failing to? Which of these are essential?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What are the duties of each team: program, operations, finance, development?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How are these being filled by the current staff and how well?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who was reporting to whom before the departure? Who will the staff report to now?
<input type="checkbox"/>	To whom should the staff turn for support, supervision, and direction? In case of a crisis?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What were the lines of communication between the staff and to the Board? What will they be now?
<input type="checkbox"/>	With whom did your contributors communicate most closely? How will the relationships with them be affected by this departure? Who will be responsible for nurturing and cultivating these relationships?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How was staff performance being evaluated? How will it be evaluated now?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you deal with the gaps in functioning during the transitional period? Who will do what, when, and how?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will decisions be made in the absence of a leader? Who has final say over which decisions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you know how effectively the organization is operating?
INTERIM LEADERSHIP	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Should you bring on an Interim Executive Director? How will you decide?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What resources do you have available to make such a hire?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you know what his/her job responsibilities should be?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who will develop the job description and how?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you find a qualified candidate and who will conduct this search?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you get the buy-in of stakeholders, particularly staff?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you evaluate him/her to determine if she or he is successful?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How long will you commit to having this person on staff? How will you decide if she or he would be a good candidate for a permanent Executive Director?

30, 60, 90 DAY CRISIS MANAGEMENT	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is your tactical plan for 30,60, and 90 days to get the agency back on track and reassure your funders, staff, and other stakeholders of your continued value in the community?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who is responsible for developing these plans?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Whose buy-in do you need?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will these plans be implemented?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will these plans be communicated?
RESOURCES	
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is your budget for the transition period?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you raise the money, particularly in the absence of a Director of Development, to pay for consultants, an interim ED (if necessary), current staff and programs, and potentially, a higher salary to bring on an experienced ED/CEO?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you are in the midst of a special event or a capital campaign, how will you handle these? Will you put these on hold? Will you scale back? Will you bring in outside talent to help you manage them?
SEARCH & SELECTION	
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you know what you need out of your next leader?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where is your organization now? What are its strengths and weakness, opportunities and threats? How do you know? Is there consensus? What challenges will the new leader face?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where do you want the new leader to take you? What are your strategic objectives? Is there consensus about your objectives?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What problems lead to the departure of your former leader? How do you know?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Given your analysis, what are the core competencies you seek in your next leader? What experience should she or he have?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you want this person to work with the Board? What kind of relationship would you ideally like him or her to have with the Board President?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What kind of compensation do other leaders at similar organizations in the area receive?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you make a competitive package?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you search?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will you need a search consultant?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What will the job description look like?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you execute the search?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How will you on-board him/her and deal with the transitions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who needs to be involved in choosing your next leader?
BOARD EVOLUTION	
<input type="checkbox"/>	How does your Board need to change to lead the agency forward?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How did the Board contribute to the departure? What lessons have been learned?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Who must you be to guide and partner with your next leader?
<input type="checkbox"/>	A collaborative, healthy relationship between the Board and the ED is essential to the success of the organization, so how will you ensure that this occurs with your next leader?