

# Module 1.1: Governance, Leadership & Mission

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## **Renz, 2004**

Non-profit governing boards are “where the buck stops.” At least in the US, the board oversees operations, acts as the public face of the organisation, and sets the course for the mission. Board-members are legally obligated to be conscientious leaders and act in good-faith, complying with the mission of the non-profit. As part of their fiduciary responsibility, board-members handle funds and assets as if in trust for the communities they serve; this entails external audits to “get a second opinion” of the organisations efforts and success.

Renz moves on to describe the structures and characteristics of governing boards. Most have, at minimum, a chair, vice chair, secretary, and treasurer as officers. Standing committees, special task forces, and consultants also assist the board with decisions and operations; typical committee tasks include acting on behalf of the board, nominating officers to the board, raising and managing funds, &c. Renz cautions that these committees and task forces not take over the role of existing organs within a non-profit or only as an emergency measure if they must. Beyond legal obligations, officers are expected to actively contribute to and prepare for meetings, understand the bylaws and mission of the non-profit, and work as supportive and effective leader to the organisation.

Negligent or careless officers on the board are at best unhelpful, at worst a liability to the rest of the organisation, and as such can be sanctioned for the good of the non-profit. Renz gives extra attention to conflicts of interests; such conflicts are unavoidable, but disclosing conflicts and removing the conflicted party from deliberation and decision is expected.

## **Pew, 2007**

### **Writing Op-Eds**

#### **Op-Ed Project: Tips & Tricks**

Op-Eds, being aimed at a general lay audience, are best written in plain language but with respect for the audience’s intelligence. These pieces seek to influence opinion and change minds, even those who already disagree with the point being made. Approaching the opposition with understanding and respect is half the battle.

Before one writes an editorial, it not only helps to ask oneself why the reader should listen to your opinion but also to remain confident in one’s expertise. Novelty of thinking is also good here: to make a contribution to the discourse on

the topic. Lastly, basing the argument on credible, verifiable evidence is always preferable to speculation.

The authors present the most basic skeleton of an Op-Ed. The hook relates to current events that make the piece timely and relevant; this sequesters into the thesis statement of the argument. The Rule of Three keeps the piece long enough to be substantive but short enough to be digestible; three conclusions derived from evidence support the thesis. Before concluding, anticipate counterarguments to your points. Put a bow on it by circling back to the lede.

The Lede grabs the attention of the reader and draws them to read the rest of the article. There are many ways to do this, either by ripping from the headlines or relating a personal or humorous anecdote in the back of the cab (as Thomas Friedman too often does).

When submitting an editorial, consider which outlet offers the best platform to influence the minds you want to change. National newspapers are prestigious, but an Op-Ed about Public Transportation in Southern Nashville does more good at the local level than the national. Check in with editors without appearing demanding or presumptuous, but be wary of building a reputation as a crank or fool who has nothing interesting to say. Have a backup in the event it is rejected, and don't submit to more than one paper in the same market region.

A study of the Washington Post in 2008 found that women are far less likely to have their Op-Ed; one can only hope things have improved since then. Op-Ed Project offers resources and workshops for people to hone their skills.

### **Bowman**

Bowman says that asking someone to do something gets a better result than simply ordering them. Missions and projects succeed when volunteers and workers feel a sense of ownership, a "buy-in", to the task at hand. Positive motivations are preferable to fear of negative consequences.

### **Spence**

Spence differentiates between leadership and management. Management is more of a one-on-one interaction, whereas leadership is a broader relationship with far more people. Leadership requires confidence and the ability to honestly reckon with self-doubt in the view of followers; management requires strong interpersonal skills to make sure a team can continue to function well.

### **Dudley**

Dudley's lollipop anecdote reveals that leadership on a low, interpersonal level can make an enormous difference in a single person's life. Becoming aware of our potential to change each other's lives for the better prevents us from recognising our potential as leaders, and Dudley believes that more of us have the ability to lead than we think.

**Krieger**

First off, Krieger tells organisations forming a governing board to clarify the purpose and scope of their work is. Selecting an executive to run the organisation comes next, and the decision should be made as a consensus of the board on who the best qualified candidate is. The board should continue to evaluate the performance of the Executive officer, giving them the support and information they need to work effectively. As part of the vision of the organisation, the governing board should work with the executive to plan the organisation's activities, bylaws, and values. Board officers are also responsible for adequate resources (such as fundraising and social capital) for the organisation to carry out its endeavour. Board members should also have some skin in the game, so to speak, to show they take the organisation's mission seriously, either as a time-commitment or donation. As public ambassadors for the organisation, officers should advocate for their work. A governing board also serves as an appellate court to resolve disputes within personnel and to address ethical conflicts of interest. Lastly, a governing board should conduct regular self-assessments to see what can be done better.