



Board Vetting 101: *The Process* **Rita Wray, MBA, RN, BC, FAAN**

Your passion is aflame. You have networked in the appropriate settings and increased your knowledge of board roles and responsibilities. You have identified an opportunity to serve on a key decision making board and are in consideration for board candidacy. The board now fulfills its due diligence to ascertain if you have the key qualities it seeks - the vetting process begins. Board basic qualities often include the following:

Passion for the mission - Boards seek members who believe in the organization so they can serve as its formal and informal voice, both internally and externally.

Monetary contribution - Boards often expect their members to make monetary contributions in addition to assisting the organization raise money from other sources.

- Cachet - Boards seek members who are well recognized and bring added credibility to the organization.
- Functional expectations – Boards strive to make decisions with a balanced perspective therefore it is important to have many business functions (finance, marketing, legal, etc.) represented.
- Valuable relationships - Board members are expected to open doors for their organization. They are often selected because of their extensive networks and knowing who to call.
- Skilled governance - Boards make strategic policy decisions with each member contributing to the organization's overall governance.

Due diligence may include the following key questions:

1. Can you fulfill the board's fiduciary and legal oversight responsibilities?

This may include approving financial plans, monitoring the organization's financial health and fiscal sustainability, ensuring financial controls are in place, ensuring there are independent audits, managing key risks and ensuring all legal requirements are met.

2. How have you demonstrated a passion for similar organizations?

Passion for the mission can take many forms ranging from prior experience to interest in one of the organization's components i.e., membership, finance, etc.

3. Do you fundamentally have the time to serve on the Board?

The time commitment required to be an effective board member is often underestimated and may be substantial, ranging from 75 to 100 hours per year. Board members must be able to meet the basic requirements of board service. At a minimum this means preparing for and attending as many as four board meetings annually and serving on at least one board committee. Additional requirements may include sharing intellectual property/knowledge or supporting the organization's staff in soliciting prospective donors.

4. Are you able to meet the Board fundraiser requirements?

Many boards expect their members to actively contribute financially and/or engage other to contribute. These roles of fundraising – give or get - by board members vary widely. Seek clarity about expectations for financial support.

One nurses experience.

The process began with a letter of invitation, followed by a telephone call. Once the invitation has been extended a flurry of paperwork ensued.

- *The application was completed.* It sought data such as personal information, educational information, employment information, legal information to include civil suits & judgments, liens, bankruptcy, criminal history as well as inquiries about personal finances, background checks, civic/professional membership, professional licenses, military information, ethic information, political affiliation and professional/character references.
- *A tiered interview process followed.* A telephone interview was conducted as well as a face-to-face with an individual followed by a diverse group of board leaders. I researched the organization before the interviews so my responses to inquiries would be well informed. I brought a copy of my bio, and dressed professionally. First impressions count. I used the interview time to concentrate on my strengths, highlighting accomplishments and learning experiences.
- *An offer to join the board was extended.* The interviewers debriefed in private after the interviews to determine matters such whether I would be a good cultural fit with the board and the organization, whether my motive was to advance the organization's mission or my personal goals, and whether I could assume the reins of a leadership position. The board voted in affirmation and I received an invitation to join the board.

In my experience, the vetting process can be grueling and a bit evasive but having the right people with the right skills is essential for an organization to achieve its strategic goals. And, for me, the relationships I gained as a board member are invaluable!

Follow-Up Resources

Board Source: <https://www.boardsource.org>

Bridgestar www.bridgestar.com

The Glass Hammer www.theglasshammer.com