

What Most Clubs Need is a New Committee

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Someone once said that “a committee is a marvelous invention that provides a platform for several people to try to do what one person can normally do faster and more effectively on their own.” This is not to say all committees are bad. Smart managers know the real value of providing membership input on club life through a vibrant committee process. Most clubs usually have enough standing committees in place. So why should your club form another committee?

I am suggesting that you form the perfect committee – that being a committee of one person. Today’s clubs need a Board Resource Committee with essentially the only member being the Vice President as resource chairman. The concept is to roll several key governance responsibilities under one umbrella and give the GM/COO a committed partner that will insure that critical things get done on an annual basis.

In 2003 CMAA’s Premier Club Services® introduced the Director’s Guide for Understanding Club Governance. The guide was a handbook for volunteer leaders of clubs that detailed a series of best practices in club governance. Some of the practices require time and initiative to do well. The GM/COO is normally the individual that drives change in the organization. He or she will bring many new initiatives to the governing body on a regular basis. However, sometimes they find it difficult to get the Board to commit the time necessary to do the important things.

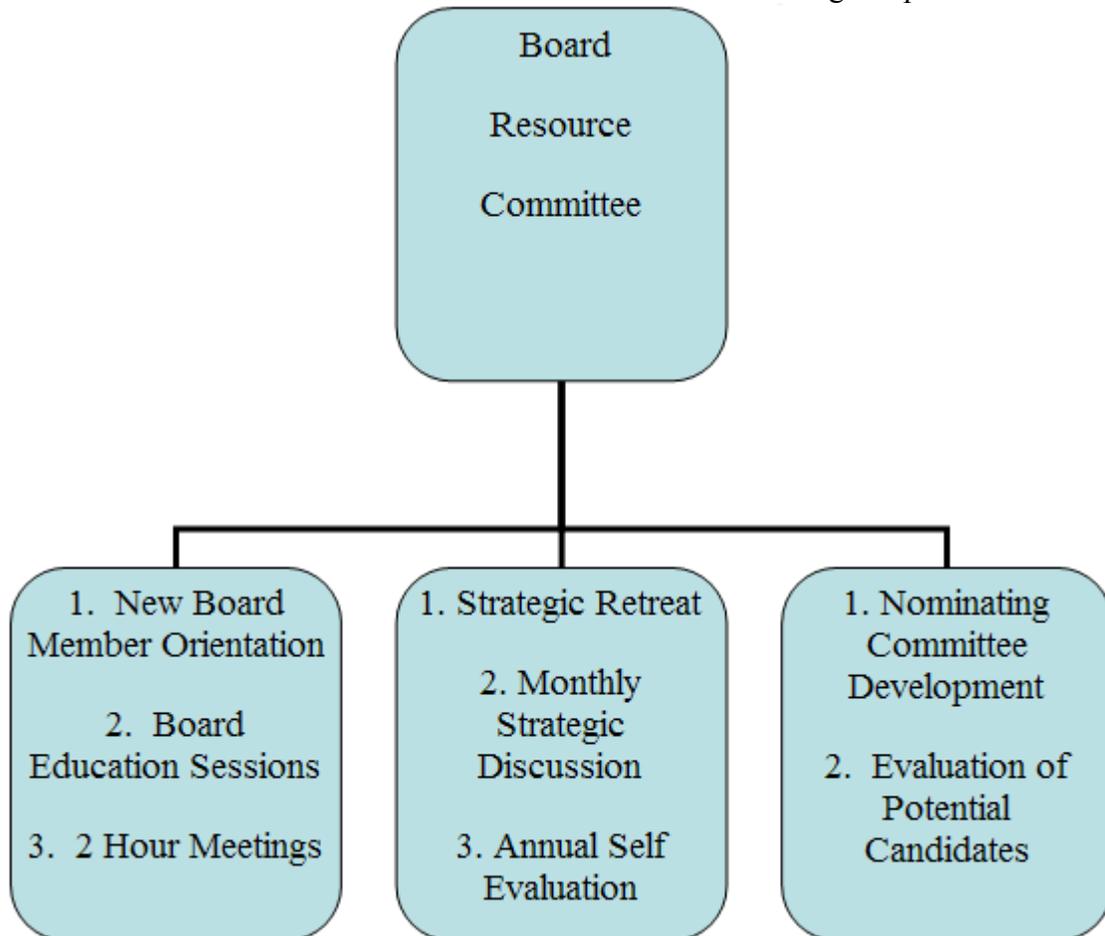
The Director’s Guide suggests the implementation of several practices which will help insure vibrant governance. They are:

1. Newly elected directors should complete an extensive orientation process so they can become familiar with all aspects of the club. The goal is to set each new person up for success early by giving them the tools necessary to be an effective decision maker.
2. One of the most important things a President can do in their term in office is to insure that there is a good nominating committee in place with a conscientious chairman. The committee should be established early in the year (normally in the first quarter) so that they can do a thorough job of selecting the right people for nomination to the Board the following year.
3. The Board should provide suggestions of potential candidates to the Nominating Committee for consideration. The best resource for future directors are individuals that perform well in the committee system.
4. The Board should set a date at the beginning of the year for strategic plan evaluation and goal setting.

5. There should be one to two Board educational sessions annually. The annual budget needs to include funding for Board education.
6. The Board meeting agenda should be well managed and the regular meetings should not take more than two hours. At each meeting the Board should set aside at least 15 minutes for strategic evaluation of existing goals and objectives.
7. There should be a year end session for the Board to complete a self evaluation of their effectiveness.

In most clubs the responsibility to insure that all of these best practices in governance take place is squarely on the shoulders of the GM/COO. Normally the club president has a variety of duties that can be time consuming. The Vice President is the natural person to head a Board Resource Committee to work with the GM/COO to insure all these things take place. Ideally the VP will move up the chairs and benefit for the work that was done during their time as vice president.

The club should adopt an organizational chart that has three basic areas of responsibility for the Vice President/Resource Chairman. Consider the following sample chart:



Recently one club went one step further. During a rewrite and update of the bylaws, they inserted the language below.

The Vice president will also act as the Board Resource Chairman. He or she will coordinate the following governance functions:

(i) Work with the President to insure a nominating Chairman is appointed in the first quarter of the year.

(ii) Monitor the list of potential candidates for the Board for recommendation to the Nominating Committee.

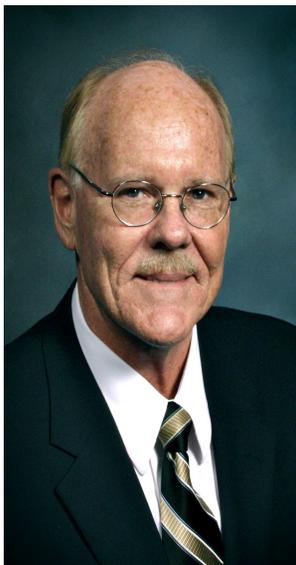
(iii) Set a date in the first quarter for a retreat or extended special meeting of the Board for the purpose of setting strategic goals and priorities.

(iv) Evaluate options and schedule of Board education sessions to become more knowledgeable in important club issues.

(v) Provide oversight regarding Board meeting agendas to insure effective meetings that do not waste time.

(vi) Insure that the newly elected Board members have a comprehensive orientation prior to their first Board meeting

The leadership of this club did have a great degree of flexibility in this area as the Board had the authority to modify the bylaws without a vote of the members. It is not necessary to modify the bylaws to insure the continued existence of a Board Resource Committee. However, by changing the bylaws the current Board has assured that the club will continue to have future Boards well positioned to make quality decisions.



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