

## TOOL #1: The Pathway to the Board

Give this internal document to your Governance Committee to guide them along the six steps...from suggestion to election.



“Your board candidate does not need to be wealthy—just generous. Generally that means that during this person’s term of service on the board, he or she will make your ministry their first, second or third highest annual giving priority. No exceptions. Remember, Jesus said, ‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

“Where this core value is practiced, board members attest to the remarkable culture change that happens on the board. Passionate, highly committed board members—who follow their money with their heart—become incredible zealots for your mission. Wow!”<sup>1</sup>

### Cultivation → Recruitment → Orientation → Engagement

#### 6 Steps on the Pathway to Board Service

Ask an administratively-gifted person on your Governance Committee (or perhaps the executive assistant to your CEO) to track names and next steps in your “Prospect Pipeline” using this internal document, “The Pathway to the Board.”

**Reminder!** “Date” board prospects before proposing “marriage” (board service). Bring board prospects inside the circle of involvement.

Thoughtful adults don’t propose marriage on the first date. Effective boards don’t propose board service to prospects they don’t know well. Think of this as a 36-month dating experience. But don’t mention marriage (board service) up front.

As you pray through the process, slowly bring the prospect inside the circles of involvement. Today, he or she may be unfamiliar with your ministry, so add them to your mailing list and invite them to an event. Test their interest with a volunteer role. Just like in dating, continue to evaluate over many months if your prospect demonstrates growing interest, and ultimately passion, for your important mission.

**YES OR NO?** If “Cliff” turns out to be a lousy volunteer, drop him as a board prospect! You’ve avoided untold problems by not marrying an ineffective or uncommitted board member. But—if Susan volunteers with energy and effectiveness, plus recruits friends and families beyond expectation, you’ve likely found a great board prospect! Keep dating!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Pearson, *Mastering the Management Buckets: 20 Critical Competencies for Leading Your Business or Nonprofit* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008), 194–95.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Pearson, *Mastering the Management Buckets*, 193.

## The Pathway to the Board



### Go Slow...and Keep Reminding the Board About the Process for Recruiting New Board Members

Track these six steps for each name in your  
“Prospect Pipeline.”

Ask an administratively-gifted person on your Governance Committee (or perhaps the executive assistant to your CEO) to track names and next steps in your “Prospect Pipeline” using this internal document, “The Pathway to the Board.”

- Step 1: SUGGEST.** A board member submits a “Board Nominee Suggestion Form” for a possible prospect—and the Governance Committee creates a “Pathway to the Board” file.
- STEP 2: REVIEW.** The Governance Committee prays, discerns, and reviews the candidate’s biographical information and qualifications against board-approved criteria. (Example: See the “6 D’s Criteria.”)
- STEP 3: INQUIRE.** The Governance Committee assigns the next step on “building the relationship” to a specific board or committee member (perhaps in tandem with the CEO) and, possibly, the individual is invited to participate in a ministry event and/or accept a volunteer role.
- STEP 4: APPLY.** The individual, after adequate time for dating, has a formal discussion about board service and—if it goes well—may be invited to complete an application for board service. The conversation should be crystal clear: the individual would still be subject to numerous next steps, including board approval and formal election.
- STEP 5: ORIENTATION.** Should the candidate be recommended to the board by the Governance Committee—and receive board approval—begin the orientation steps immediately.
- STEP 6: ENGAGE.** Create the expectation that every board member is highly committed to the sacred calling of God-honoring governance. Provide feedback and affirmation regularly!

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### RESOURCE:

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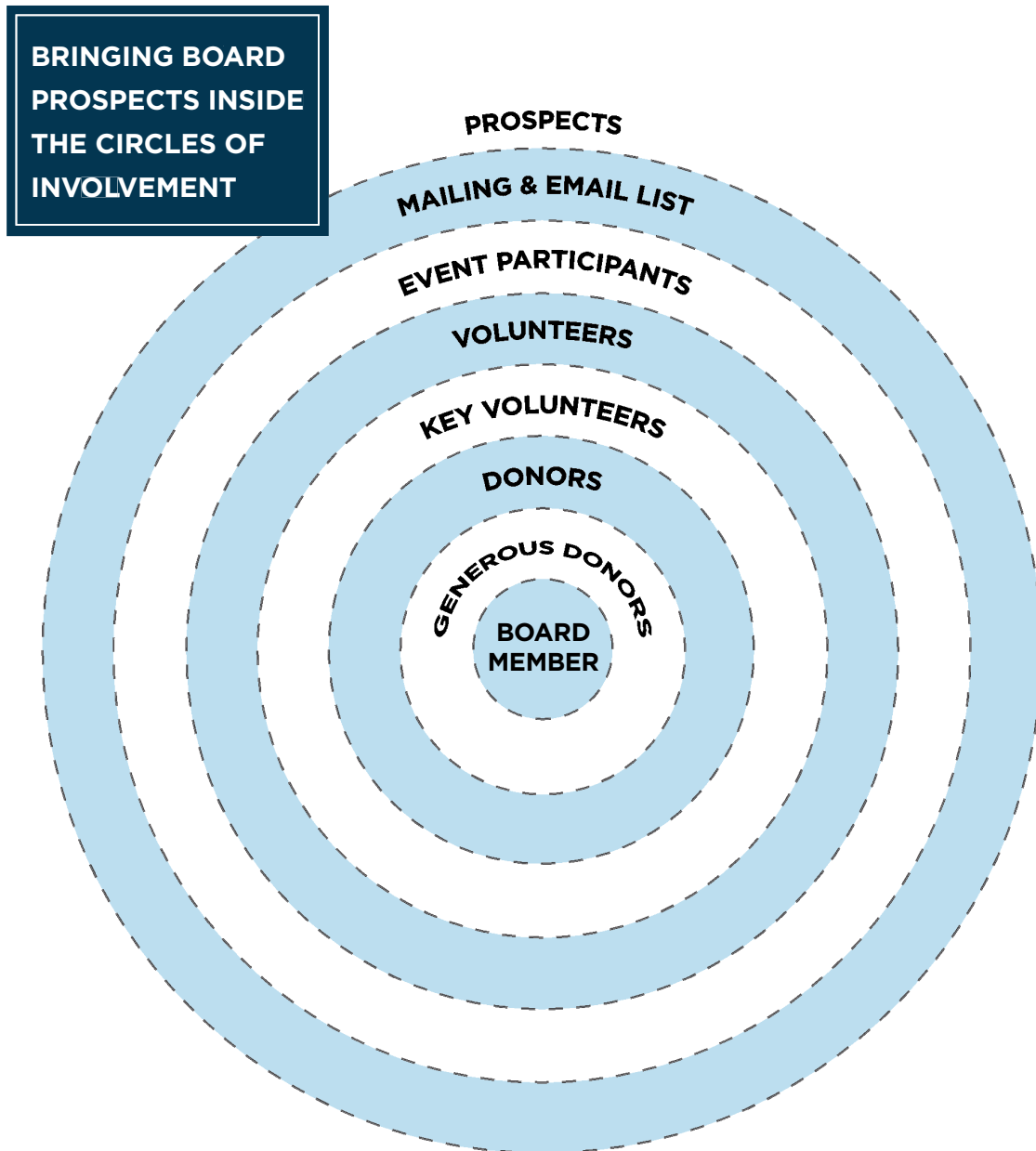
Once a year, view the “Recruiting Board Members” short video at a meeting of the Governance Committee.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *ECFA Governance Toolbox Series No. 1: Recruiting Board Members – Cultivation, Recruitment, Orientation, Engagement* (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2012). Visit [www.ECFA.org/Toolbox](http://www.ECFA.org/Toolbox) and download the *Board Member Read-and-Engage Viewing Guide* and the *Facilitator Guide*.

## Think 18 to 36 Months When “Dating” a Board Prospect

You’ll know when it’s time to propose marriage (board service). The prospect will have already demonstrated a high level of commitment, all the time moving towards the center of the involvement circle. This person will meet all of the previously established board criteria. Plus, the Lord will confirm it to you and your Governance Committee—as you devote time to prayer and discernment.<sup>4</sup>



*Mastering the Management Buckets.* Used by permission.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from “The Board Bucket” chapter in Pearson, *Mastering the Management Buckets*, 194–95.

**THE PATHWAY TO THE BOARD**  
**The 18- to 36-Month Steps for Bringing**  
**Highly Qualified Candidates Onto the Board**

**XYZ INTERNATIONAL**

Version 1.0 – This form was approved by the board on (date): \_\_\_\_\_.

**(one name per form)**

<b>6 STEPS</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Suggest <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Review <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Inquire	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Apply (Nomination & Election) <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Orientation <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Engage

<b>CULTIVATION→RECRUITMENT→ORIENTATION→ENGAGEMENT</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>STEP 1: Suggest</b> <b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	<b>Submitted to Governance Committee</b> Attn: Committee Chair
Board Prospect Name and Contact Information:	
Submitted by:	
Date:	
“Board Nominee Suggestion Form” received:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (do not proceed without form)

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>STEP 2: Review</b> <b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	<b>Reviewed by Governance Committee within 30 days</b>
Review Biographical Information and/or Resumé	
Review Qualification as a Board Member (including Statement of Faith)	
Review Preliminary Qualification Per Written Board Member Nominee Criteria	
Prayer and Spiritual Discernment Process	
<b>Action &amp; Date:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Decline or Postpone <input type="checkbox"/> Move to Step 3: Inquire	

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>STEP 3: Inquire</b> <b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	<b>Confidential “Dating Process” Begins</b>
“Build the Relationship” process assigned to (board member and/or CEO):	
Document past involvement with our ministry (if any):	
Possible invitation for current involvement and/or volunteer role in our ministry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Task Force</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advisory Council</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Informal Input/Focus Group/etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Annual Event</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> </ul>	
Other:	
<b>Action &amp; Date:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Decline or Postpone</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Move to Step 4: Apply</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inform the Board</li> </ul>	

CULTIVATION→ <b>RECRUITMENT</b> →ORIENTATION→ENGAGEMENT	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>STEP 4: Apply</b> (including nomination & election— if recommended)	<b>Formal Recruitment Begins</b>
<p><b>Formal Meeting:</b> “Would you consider, sometime, in the future (this year or next year), perhaps/maybe serving as a board member, should the Governance Committee recommend you and the board elect you?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Here’s why we think God is leading us to you (your background, experience, etc.)...</li> <li>• Here’s how this might give you joy, fulfillment and rich relationships as you leverage your strengths, spiritual gifts and social style...</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Review Board Nominee Orientation Materials With Applicant, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Board Member Position Description</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Board Member Annual Affirmation Statement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Board Policies Manual (BPM)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Annual Calendar of Board Meetings &amp; Annual Board Retreat</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Briefing on “The 3 Board Hats: Governance, Volunteer, Participant”<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Get-Acquainted Meal:</b> Applicant and Spouse (if married) with 2-3 Board Members (including CEO)</p>	
<p><b>Invitation to Submit Application:</b> Governance Committee authorizes next step and Board Chair (and/or CEO) invites individual to submit Application (and resume):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Invitation extended</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Board informed</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Application &amp; Resume Submitted:</b> Application submitted and permission given to proceed on reference checks, etc.</p>	
<p><b>Reference Checks:</b> to affirm applicant meets “Board Member Criteria” standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pastor and/or Church/Small Group Leader</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Spouse</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employer and/or Fellow Employees</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Background Checks (must be legal and authorized!)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social Media Check</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Colleague or Outside Board Member Where Applicant Serves or Has Served (“Is he/she knowledgeable in governance and a Christ-centered team player?)</li> </ul>	

<sup>5</sup> *ECFA Governance Toolbox Series No. 2: Balancing Board Roles: Understanding the 3 Board Hats: Governance, Volunteer, Participant* (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2013). Visit [www.ECFA.org/Toolbox](http://www.ECFA.org/Toolbox) and download the *Board Member Read-and-Engage Viewing Guide and the Facilitator Guide*.

CULTIVATION → <b>RECRUITMENT</b> → ORIENTATION → ENGAGEMENT	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>STEP 4: Apply</b> (including nomination & election— if recommended)	<b>Formal Recruitment Begins</b>
<b>Prayer and Spiritual Discernment:</b> Engage the Board in praying and discerning God’s direction regarding this candidate.	
<b>Governance Committee Recommendation:</b> Due diligence by Governance Committee and recommendation to the Board	
<b>Board Approval/Election:</b> Governance Committee recommendation is approved by the Board of Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Candidate notified</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Candidate is/will be elected on _____ and term begins on _____.</li> </ul>	

CULTIVATION→RECRUITMENT→ <b>ORIENTATION</b> →ENGAGEMENT	
<b>❑ STEP 5: Orientation</b>	<b>Formal Orientation Begins</b>
<p><b>Customized Orientation:</b> With assigned “board buddy” and CEO, create the customized six-month orientation process, to likely include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attendance at board member professional development workshop or conference</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Online course(s)/orientation (if available)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Detailed Review of Board Nominee Orientation Binder</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walk-through/briefing of ministry departments and introductions to staff, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Password for online board portal and documents</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Professional Development/Reading:</b> Read ____ of the following books/articles within the next six months. For additional reading options, visit <i>ECFA’s Governance of Christ-Centered Organizations</i> blog:<sup>6</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>StrengthsFinder 2.0</i> by Tom Rath (take the CliftonStrengths assessment—and share your Top-5 strengths with the board)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Imperfect Board Member</i> by Jim Brown</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Owning Up: 14 Questions Every Board Member Needs to Ask</i> by Ram Charan</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> “What Makes Great Boards Great” by Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld, (<i>Harvard Business Review</i>)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Called to Serve: Creating and Nurturing the Effective Volunteer Board</i> by Max De Pree</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lessons From the Nonprofit Boardroom</i>, Second Edition, by Dan Busby and John Pearson</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>More Lessons From the Nonprofit Boardroom</i> by Dan Busby and John Pearson</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lessons From the Church Boardroom</i> by Dan Busby and John Pearson</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Council</i>, by Gary G. Hoag, Wesley K Willmer, and Gregory J. Henson</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Orientation Evaluation:</b> Within six months of the first board meeting, submit an evaluation and suggestions for improving the orientation process for future new board members.</p>	

<sup>6</sup> John Pearson, “Best Board Books: Index to 18 Good Governance Stimulators,” *Governance of Christ-Centered Organizations* (blog), March 12, 2019. <http://ecfagovernance.blogspot.com/2019/03/best-board-books-index-to-18-good.html>.



CULTIVATION → RECRUITMENT → ORIENTATION → <b>ENGAGEMENT</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>STEP 6 Engage</b>	<b>Engagement Begins</b>
<p><b>Inspiring Engagement:</b> Based on engagement expectations for all board members, continue to engage at the highest level—stewarding the responsibilities of a Christ-centered board member. Customize your plan to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Annually:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sign the Board Member Annual Affirmation (to include the board’s generous giving expectations)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sign the Annual Conflicts of Interest Statement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend the Annual Board Retreat (with spouse)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete the Annual Board Self-Assessment Survey</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Quarterly:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend board meetings:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and review all board meeting materials in advance of the meeting</li> <li>• Complete “homework” assignments on time</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend committee meetings</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Expect to hear from God about the critical issues of our governance work—through our formal and informal times of prayer and spiritual discernment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain standards of board member governance literacy as documented in the Board Policies Manual (BPM)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Daily/Weekly/Monthly:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pray regularly for our Board, staff and CEO</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respond promptly to emails and phone calls regarding board work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> </ul>	
<b>As a Volunteer</b>	
<p><b>Conduct all volunteer work</b> through appropriate employee channels (per our board policy) versus “going around” normal channels to senior management or our CEO.</p>	

**The 6 D’s Criteria:**

**Attn: Governance Committee:** Review the Suggestion Forms for two or three applicants—and compare them to each other. *What is God saying to you about them?*

**Rate Applicants on a Scale of 1 to 10 (10 is high):**

Board Nominees Must Meet our 6 D’s Criteria <sup>7</sup>	Applicant #1	Applicant #2	Applicant #3
<p><b>1. Discerning Decision-Maker:</b> Prior experience in making wise policy, financial, strategy and personnel decisions. (<i>Is this person competent in both hiring and firing situations?</i>)</p>			
<p><b>2. Demonstrated Passion:</b> Gives high priority to and cares deeply about our cause. (Limits board service to one or two boards at a time.)</p>			
<p><b>3. Documented Team Player:</b> Competent in group process skills, effective listener; leverages own spiritual gifts and those of others (Rom. 12, Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 12). Knows and leverages his or her strengths.</p>			
<p><b>4. Diligent and Faithful Participant:</b> Documented history of fulfilling our volunteer assignments (if applicable) on schedule and under budget. Keeps promises and keeps confidences. Inspires others.</p>			
<p><b>5. Doer: Walks the Talk!</b> Reference checks affirm a God-honoring lifestyle and character. Humble, prayerful, high integrity in all relationships. Affirms our statement of faith.</p>			
<p><b>6. Donor:</b> Because Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” this board prospect is <i>already</i> a generous giver to our ministry. (Note: Many organizations define “generous” as prioritizing your organization in the Top-3 of a person’s annual giving. Board members at all income levels can be generous.)</p>			
<p><b>Other criteria could include:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Highly knowledgeable and/or competent in _____ and _____.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Highly knowledgeable and/or influential in this niche/network/profession/etc. _____.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> _____</p>			

<sup>7</sup> ECFA Governance Toolbox Series No. 1: Recruiting Board Members. Visit [www.ECFA.org/Toolbox](http://www.ECFA.org/Toolbox) and download the Board Member Read-and-Engage Viewing Guide and the Facilitator Guide.