

TOOL #16: Prime Responsibility Chart

Use this tool to eliminate fuzziness between board and staff roles.



The 1-Page Tool for Fixing Fuzziness

What's the role of the board? Does everyone agree?

- Ministering?** Listening, encouraging, and praying with ministry directors?
- Monitoring?** Ensuring that every ministry has goals, reports, and results?
- Meddling?** Jumping in with new ideas, fixing problems, and addressing personnel issues?
- Micro-managing?** In the weeds, obsessing over details, and mandating lengthy reports?

Boards should relate to one just employee: the top leader. And the board must be crystal clear about the board's relationship with all other staff. There are many tools that will help clarify these relationships, such as a *Board Policies Manual* (see Tool #17).

Try this tool: the *Prime Responsibility Chart* (PRC). The PRC will help you eliminate fuzziness between board and staff roles. The PRC is short—just one page.

Roles and responsibilities are crystal clear. Based on your governance model, you may have unique approaches to some functions so the PRC can be customized to meet your unique needs.¹

When you're ready to graduate to a more comprehensive tool, you'll quickly see the value of *Tool #17: Board Policies Manual*.

ECFA Research Says...

Ineffective Boards Reveal a Greater Need for Outside Intervention

Board Members Who Agree They Need "Much Help" or "Major Help" with...

	Effective Boards	Ineffective Boards	Difference
Board/CEO/senior team clarification of roles and responsibilities	4%	41%	37%
Staff roles in board meetings	4%	19%	15%

¹ Adapted from "Lesson 7: Eliminate Fuzziness Between Board and Staff" by Dan Busby and John Pearson, *More Lessons From the Nonprofit Boardroom: Effectiveness, Excellence, Elephants!* (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2019), 40–45.

Prime Responsibility Chart

The Prime Responsibility Chart Is Dynamic, Not Static

The Prime Responsibility Chart is simple and straightforward and can be revised at any time—literally at any or every meeting. Growth (or decline) in your organization, or a department, will likely impact reporting relationships, so this tool is not static—it’s meant to be reviewed frequently.²

When the PRC is edited by board action, just make the change and update the chart with “Version 3.0” and the current date, and then email the revised PRC to board members and senior team members within 24 hours. Plus, have copies available for reference at every board meeting.

KEY PRINCIPLE: Only One Person Has “Prime Responsibility”

The most important principle: only one person has “Prime Responsibility” (P). In the absence of a Board Policies Manual (see Tool #17), this one-page chart is an excellent way to clarify board and staff roles.

NEXT STEPS:

- ❑ **Step 1. Clarify:** Ensure that your staff organizational chart is crystal clear. Verify that each staff member has just one direct supervisor. Reminder: the CEO (or senior pastor) is the only person that reports directly to the board.
- ❑ **Step 2. Create:** Inspire two or three board members (including the top leader) to customize Version 1.0 of the *Prime Responsibility Chart* and present this draft at your next board meeting. After input, edit the PRC and move to Version 2.0.
- ❑ **Step 3. Congratulate:** At the end of any lengthy discussion at a board meeting, affirm and congratulate (maybe with a Chick-fil-A card) the first board member who observes: “This is taking way too long to decide. Is it because we need to add or edit a line on our *Prime Responsibility Chart*?”



Attn: Church Boards

Inspire one or two board members to review this tool and then customize it for the unique needs of your church’s board, senior pastor, and senior team. It’s designed to be updated frequently as responsibilities and trust increase regularly.

² The “Prime Responsibility Chart” is adapted from Chapter 18: “The Operations Buckets” in John Pearson, *Mastering the Management Buckets: 20 Critical Competencies for Leading Your Business or Nonprofit* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008). Bill Benke, an executive at The Boeing Company, and a board member at the time at SAMBICA in Bellevue, Wash., adapted the Boeing template for use by nonprofit boards.

*Important! This template is an **example only**. The details are not prescriptive for every board.*

PRIME RESPONSIBILITY CHART

Version 1.0 (Drafted by Carlos, Jennifer and Cameron on Jan. 15, 2019)

P = Prime Responsibility A= Assistant Responsibility AP= Approval Required

BOARD AND STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	Board	CEO/ Sr. Pastor	Exec.VP/ CFO/Exec. Pastor	Dept. Heads
PERSONNEL				
1) Hire and fire the top leader	P			
2) Hire and fire other senior leaders		P		
3) Hire and fire middle management		AP	P	
4) Hire and fire all other staff			AP	
5) Annual update: employee handbook	AP	AP	P	A
PLANNING				
1) Mission, vision, values	AP	P	A	A
2) Rolling 3-Year Plan Annual Update	AP	P	A	A
3) CEO/senior pastor annual goals	AP	P	A	A
4) Dept. heads annual goals		AP	AP	P
FINANCE				
1) Annual budget	AP	A	P	A
2) Quarterly financial reports			P	
3) Annual audit	AP		P	
4) Non-budgeted expenditures over \$ _____		AP	P	A
<i>Add additional categories, roles, and responsibilities below (as needed)</i>				

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE! Only one person has “Prime Responsibility” (P). In the absence of a Board Policies Manual (see Tool #17), this one-page chart is an excellent way to clarify board and staff roles. Update this chart whenever the board edits the policy and label it (for example): Version 3.0 – 4/15/2019.

“If you don’t know what your top three priorities are, you don’t have priorities.”³

“What you measure improves.”⁴

Donald Rumsfeld

³ Donald Rumsfeld, *Rumsfeld’s Rules: Leadership Lessons in Business, Politics, War, and Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 304.
⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.