

TOOL #18: Job Descriptions for the Top Leader and Board Chair

Review these sample job descriptions for the Board Chair and the CEO (or Executive Pastor) and then use these insights to refresh your documents.



“The term of the Rotator chair is usually as short as a year or two. The idea is that the ministry can survive incompetence for a short period of time.”¹

S.O.A.R With Inspired Job Descriptions!

The Number One Hiring Mistake

You're Not the Person I Hired!
A CEO's Survival Guide to Hiring Top Talent

The Number One hiring mistake: “Inadequate job descriptions drove the hiring process; these focused solely on experience and skills, not company expectations. A staggering 93 percent of searches that resulted in new executive failure made this mistake at the outset.”

The solution: eliminate tired-out, traditional job descriptions and instead, create measurable expectations around four S.O.A.R. areas: Substantial Departmental Goal, Obstacles, Action, Results. [Three cheers for authors who focus on the Results Bucket!]

“The harsh reality is, when you *define* a job in mediocre terms, you tend to *attract* and *interview* mediocre people.”²

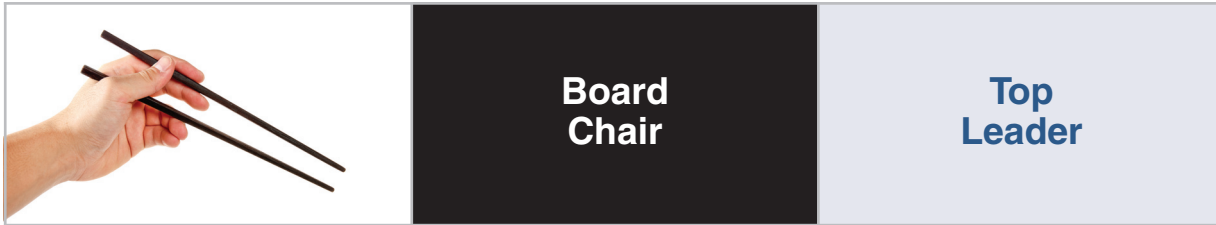
Book Reviews:

- ❑ ***You're Not the Person I Hired*** (Janet Boydell, Barry Deutsch and Brad Remillard)
http://urgentink.typepad.com/my_weblog/2009/11/youre-not-the-person-i-hired.html
- ❑ ***Call of the Chair: Leading the Board of the Christ-Centered Ministry*** (David McKenna)
http://urgentink.typepad.com/my_weblog/2017/06/call-of-the-chair.html
- ❑ ***The Ideal Team Player: How to Recognize and Cultivate the Three Essential Virtues*** (Patrick Lencioni) http://urgentink.typepad.com/my_weblog/2016/06/the-ideal-team-player.html

¹ David L. McKenna, *Call of the Chair: Leading the Board of the Christ-Centered Ministry* (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2017), 17.

² Janet Boydell, Barry Deutsch, and Brad Remillard, *You're Not the Person I Hired! A CEO's Survival Guide to Hiring Top Talent* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2006), 63–70. Read Chapters 5 and 6 for more insights.

Job Descriptions for the Top Leader and Board Chair



“The board chair-CEO relationship is like a pair of chopsticks. One is much more effective with the support of the other.”³

☑ Assess Your Current Job Descriptions and S.M.A.R.T. Goals (see Tool #11):

Position	Job Description Is Current	Job Description Needs Work	SMART* Goals Are Current	SMART* Goals Need Work
Board Chair				
CEO or Senior Pastor				

***S.M.A.R.T. Goals are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Related (See Tool #11).**

Job Descriptions Resources:

- ☐ ECFA Knowledge Center – www.ECFA.org/KnowledgeCenter
- ☐ BoardSource – www.BoardSource.org
- ☐ Board Policies Manual (see Tool #17)

Note: For a contrarian view of job descriptions, read the “People” chapters in *Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make It...and Why the Rest Don’t – Mastering the Rockefeller Habits 2.0*, by Verne Harnish. “We are not big fans of job descriptions and prefer Topgrading’s Job Scorecards.”⁴

***“Like a one-stringed banjo player,
the chair will always sound the note
reminding the members that the board’s role is policy, not execution.”⁵***

David McKenna

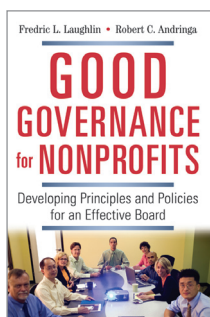
³ Michael Naufal, *The Chair-CEO Relationship: Ten Commitments for a Better Partnership* (Ottawa, Canada: Ray & Berndtson, 2005).

⁴ Verne Harnish, *Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make It . . . and Why the Rest Don’t – Mastering the Rockefeller Habits 2.0* (Ashburn, VA: Gazelles, 2014), 51.

⁵ McKenna, *Call of the Chair*, 63.

The Board Chair Job Description

The Board Chair's Role



Review the role of the board chair as described in the Board Policies Manual (Tool #17) from:

Good Governance for Nonprofits
Developing Principles and Policies for an Effective Board

by Fredric L. Laughlin and Robert C. Andringa

The Board Chair's Role (Section 3.5) – “The Chair Manages the Board”

See Tool #17: Board Policies Manual (BPM)

3.5 Chair's Role. The job of the Chair is, primarily, to maintain the integrity of the board's process. The Chair “manages the board.” The Chair is the only board member authorized to speak for the board, with the exception of certain rare and specifically board-authorized instances.

The Chair ensures that the board's behavior is consistent with its own rules, and those legitimately imposed upon it from outside the organizations. The content of meeting discussions will focus on those issues that, according to board policy, clearly belong to the board to decide.

The Chair's authority consists only of making decisions on behalf of the board that fall within, and are consistent with, any reasonable interpretation of board policies in Parts III and IV of this BPM. The Chair has no authority to make decisions beyond policies created by the board. Therefore, the Chair also has no authority to supervise or direct the CEO's work, but is instead expected to maintain close communication, offer advice, and provide encouragement to the CEO and staff on behalf of the board.”⁶

From the “color commentary” on Section 3.5 in *Good Governance for Nonprofits*

In describing the chair, we have heard board members use terms like *dynamic*, *lazy*, *control freak*, *hands-off leader*, *overbearing*, *timid*, *committed*, *blasé*, *confident*, and *self-centered*. Seldom do we hear that the chair is a ‘good manager.’ Yet, as described in Section 3.5, that is the chair's role—to be a good manager of the board.⁷

“For every hour spent on creating and maintaining a Board Policies Manual, at least three hours of board and committee meetings will be saved before too long. It's a ‘living document,’ always reflecting the latest wisdom of the board.”⁸

Robert C. Andringa

⁶ Fredric L. Laughlin and Robert C. Andringa, *Good Governance for Nonprofits: Developing Principles and Policies for an Effective Board* (New York: AMACOM, 2007), 95.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Robert C. Andringa, “Do Unwritten Board Policies Really Exist?” *Lessons From the Nonprofit Boardroom* (blog), December 13, 2017, <http://nonprofitboardroom.blogspot.com/2017/12/lesson-4-do-unwritten-board-policies.html>.



ECFA Knowledge Center
www.ECFA.org

Used by Permission

Sample Board Chair Position Description

Authority for Electing the Board Chair

The bylaws of [Name of Ministry] stipulate that the board of directors shall annually elect a Board Chair. (Note: The bylaws may provide for an election cycle other than an annual election.)

Qualifications

Completed two years of board membership term and have an understanding of parliamentary procedures.

Term

The Chair is elected by the board for a one-year term in accordance with the bylaws.

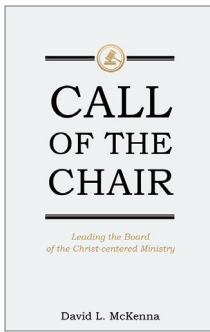
Requirements:

- Commitment to the work of the ministry;
- Knowledge and skills in one or more areas of board governance: policy, finance, programs, and/or personnel;
- Regular attendance at periodic board meetings;
- Prepare for, and participate in, the discussions and the deliberations of the board;
- Foster a positive working relationship with other board members and the organization's staff; and
- Be aware of, and abstain from, any real or perceived conflicts of interest

Major Duties:

- Be the primary spokesperson for [Name of Ministry] to the media and the community at large;
- Chair the Executive Committee (if there is one);
- Report to the board on the status of major programs;
- Signing authority on behalf of the board for financial and legal purposes;
- Provide leadership and direction to the board;
- Arrange for Vice Chair to chair meetings when absent;
- In conjunction with the CEO, set the periodic board meeting agenda;
- Ensure board members receive agenda and minutes in a timely manner; and
- Adhere to general duties outlined in the board member job description

Do-It-Yourself Board Chair Job Descriptions



Wordsmith your own job description from “McKenna’s 9 M’s”

***Call of the Chair:
Leading the Board of the Christ-Centered Ministry***

by David L. McKenna

Read the review:

http://urgentink.typepad.com/my_weblog/2017/06/call-of-the-chair.html

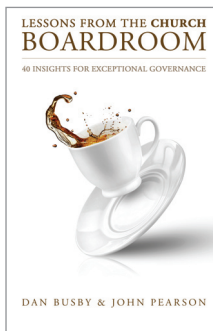
No.	McKenna’s 9 Ms	Per McKenna, the “distinctive role of the board chair for the Christ-centered ministry” is answered this way:
1	Missionary	
2	Model	
3	Mentor	
4	Manager	
5	Moderator	
6	Mediator	
7	Monitor	
8	Master	
9	Maestro	

Bonus Resources for Church Boards



Attn: Church Boards

Church boards (including churches that have elder boards) recognize that there is a wide variety of governance models for churches. Identify a person on your church board who is a “Learner,” according to the StrengthsFinder assessment from Gallup (see Tool #20). Then inspire that person to always be on the lookout for helpful resources for both the board chair and the church board.

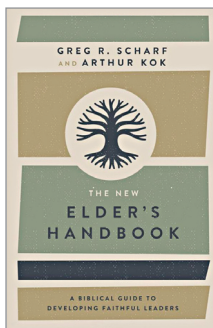


Lessons From the Church Boardroom

40 Insights for Exceptional Governance

by Dan Busby and John Pearson

- ☐ 40 short lessons
- ☐ Blog: <http://churchboardroom.blogspot.com/>



The New Elder's Handbook

A Biblical Guide to Developing Faithful Leaders

by Greg R. Scharf and Arthur Kok

- ☐ This resource provides church leaders a model for an elder development pipeline, including vision, recruitment of elders to carry out that vision, and specific, biblical training for developing faithful elders for God's people.



Best Practices for Effective Boards

by E. LeBron Fairbanks, Dwight M. Gunter II, and James R. Couchenour

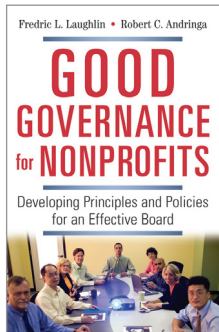
- ☐ Authored by a pastor, an educator, and a business person/board member
- ☐ Insights and wisdom for both church and nonprofit boards
- ☐ See Appendix 7: “Rules of the Road for Christlike Conflict Management”

In his chapter, “Yes! to Missional Change,” Pastor Dwight Gunter asks **“How many Christians does it take to change a light bulb?”** His answer: “Seven. One to change the bulb and six to resist the change.” (Insert “How many board members...” and it's just as funny.)⁹

⁹ E. LeBron Fairbanks, Dwight M. Gunter II, and James R. Couchenour, *Best Practices for Effective Boards* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2012), 178–79.

Top Leader Job Descriptions – CEO/Senior Pastor

CEO Job Description



Review the job description for the CEO as described in the Board Policies Manual (Tool #17) from:

***Good Governance for Nonprofits
Developing Principles and Policies for an Effective Board***

by Fredric L. Laughlin and Robert C. Andringa

CEO Job Description (Section 4.2) – “Performance in Two Areas”

See Tool #17: Board Policies Manual (BPM)

4.2 CEO Job Description. As the board’s single official link to the operating organization, CEO performance will be considered to be synonymous with organizational performance as a whole. Consequently, the CEO’s job contributions can be stated as performance in two areas: organizational accomplishment of the major organizational goals in Section 2.8, and (b) organization operations within the boundaries of prudence and ethics established in board policies on Executive Parameters in Part V.¹⁰

From the “color commentary” on Section 4.2 in Good Governance for Nonprofits

We have seen job descriptions that are as short and simple as the one in our BPM template and others that are three pages of bullet points. Often CEO job descriptions are drawn up and closely followed during the recruiting process, but then are seldom consulted after the CEO is hired. Once the CEO is on board, the framework for the CEO/board relationship is less one of listing all the functions in the CEO’s job description and more about how well the mission is being accomplished. Accordingly, the board normally looks at the CEO’s “job” as being responsible for carrying out the mission of the organization while staying within the stated board policies. As a practical matter, of course, there are many factors that may complicate this simple equation, including the maturity of the organization, external influences, and other factors that are beyond the CEO’s control. Accountability must be balanced with fairness as you lay out the relationship between the board and your CEO.¹¹

“Recall that BPM Section 2.8 lists the current goals of the organization and therefore of the CEO. The board and the CEO mutually agree upon these, and they become the basis of the CEO’s evaluation. They should be measurable and linked to the strategic plan. Therefore, even though the board is looking to the CEO to accomplish the mission in a broad sense, it must translate that overarching statement into fair and reasonable goals against which the CEO can be evaluated.”¹²

Fredric L. Laughlin and Robert C. Andringa

¹⁰ Laughlin and Andringa, *Good Governance for Nonprofits*, 123.

¹¹ Ibid., 124.

¹² Ibid.

Do-It-Yourself CEO Job Descriptions



Available in print or PDF at www.BoardSource.org

***The Nonprofit Chief Executive's
Ten Basic Responsibilities***, Second Edition
Rick Moyers

	10 Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit CEOs¹³	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If this is included in your current CEO position description. <input type="checkbox"/> Note any action steps required.
1	Commit to the mission	
2	Lead the staff and manage the organization	
3	Exercise responsible financial stewardship	
4	Lead and manage fundraising	
5	Follow the highest ethical standards, ensure accountability, and comply with the law	
6	Engage the board in planning and lead implementation	
7	Develop future leadership	
8	Build external relationships and serve as an advocate	
9	Ensure the quality and effectiveness of programs	
10	Support the board	

Download the book's "Table of Contents" and "Introduction" here:

<https://boardsource.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Nonprofit-CEO-Ten-Basic-Responsibilities-TOC-1.pdf>

¹³ Rick Moyers, *The Nonprofit Chief Executive's Ten Basic Responsibilities*, 2d ed. (Washington, DC: BoardSource, 2013).

CEO Job Description Homework:

We would add these additional basic responsibilities—based on our history, our culture, our faith-based convictions, the season/cycle we’re in, and other factors:

	Additional Basic Responsibilities of <i>Our</i> Nonprofit CEO	
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

IMPORTANT! Job descriptions are helpful, but you’ll find the most helpful document for effective CEO/board relationships (and the growth of your organization) will be when you have agreement on the CEO’s 3 to 5 Annual S.M.A.R.T. Goals. (See Tool #11.)

Ten Questions for Nonprofit CEOs

Question 6:
Do you know who your next board chair is likely to be?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ **Are you kidding?**¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid., 60.

Sample CEO Job Description

Nonprofit organizations exist in all sizes with an emphasis on an array of causes. Regardless of size, or whether the organization's staff is made up of volunteers or employees, every nonprofit should have one person who is the effective leader that guides the organization.

The Nonprofit Board Answer Book expresses agreement with this principle: "Every nonprofit organization should designate one person to function as its operational leader. That person's title does not have to include the words *chief executive* or *chief executive officer*, but the bylaws and other policy documents should identify which position carries the authority and responsibility to run the organization day-to-day and reports to the board of directors. The following are some reasons why:

- A board needs one point of accountability.
- Staff members need to know where the buck stops.
- Donors need to identify the leader.
- Other external constituents need to know who's in charge.
- Planning needs a facilitator.
- The organization needs one spokesperson."¹⁵

As noted above, it is essential for an organization to have one leader that the board and staff can look to for guidance. Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where there is no guidance, the people fall. But in abundance of counselors, there is victory." Without an executive to provide counsel and guidance, the organization is more likely to encounter hindrances. However, with a leader in position, an organization is able to flourish and grow, ultimately furthering The Great Commission.

Below is a sample job description of an Executive Director/CEO. The sample is provided as an illustration of broad guidelines for the position and should be tailored to best fit the organization using it.

CEO

Summary/Objective

The CEO is responsible for providing strategic leadership for the ministry by working with the Board and other management to establish long-range goals, strategies, plans and policies.

The CEO is the direct executive representative in the management of the corporation, and is responsible for the organization's consistent achievement of its mission and financial objectives.

Qualifications

[Tailor qualifications to fit the specific organization's function and demands of the top leadership position.]

¹⁵ BoardSource, *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book: A Practical Guide for Board Members and Chief Executives*, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 231–32.

Essential Functions

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

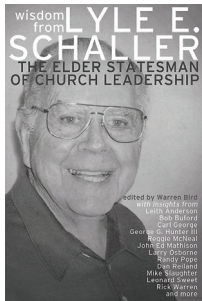
1. Commit to the organization and its mission and ensure that the organization has a long-range strategy which achieves its mission, and toward which it makes consistent and timely progress.
2. Follow the highest ethical standards, ensure accountability, and comply with the law.
3. Provide leadership in developing program, organizational and financial plans with the Board of Directors and staff, and carry out plans and policies authorized by the board.
4. Implement plans and decide or guide courses of action in operations by staff. Oversee and manage organization programs and projects.
5. Exercise responsible financial stewardship.
6. Determine the financial needs of the organization, submit proposals to donors and maintain the fundraising records.
7. Oversee fundraising planning and implementation, including identifying resources, requirements, researching funding sources, establishing strategies to approach funders, submitting proposals and administering fundraising records and documentation.
8. Manage human resources of organization, including the recruitment, employment, and release of all personnel, both paid staff and volunteers, in conformity with current laws and regulations.
9. Assist in the selection and evaluation of board members.
10. Support and advise the board, making recommendations and engaging the board in planning and the implementation of projects.
11. Build external relationships and serve as an advocate of the organization, in and around the community. Establish sound working relationships and cooperative arrangements with community groups and organizations. Maintain a positive image with the public regarding the nonprofit organization.
12. Ensure that the board is kept fully informed on the condition of the organization and all factors influencing it. Maintain knowledge and update the staff and board of significant developments and trends in the field.
13. Act as an interface between Board and employees, and between the organization and community.



Attn: Church Boards

Caution! “One size doesn’t fit all.” A senior pastor position description and “S.M.A.R.T. Goals” for the top leader at First Church may not be adequate (or relevant) for the senior pastor of Anytown Community Church. As you collaborate with your senior pastor on a position description, review relevant resources, such as *Wisdom From Lyle E. Schaller* and other books and websites.

Before You Create the Senior Pastor Description: Caution! “One Size Doesn’t Fit All”

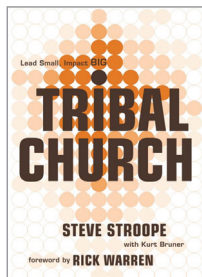


Wisdom from Lyle E. Schaller
The Elder Statesman of Church Leadership
 Second Edition
 by Warren Bird, Editor

What is the senior pastor’s role: Shepherd or Rancher?

On the senior pastor’s role in leading a church that functions as a “congregation of congregations” versus “one big family”...

“This effort can be reinforced if the senior minister’s basic role is seen not as being a shepherd spending most of the day with one flock and considerable time with individual sheep, but as being a rancher or bishop. . . . The rancher or bishop’s responsibility is to delegate to others and to trust the people to whom specific responsibilities have been delegated.”¹⁶



Tribal Church: Lead Small, Impact Big
 by Steve Stroope with Kurt Bruner, Foreword by Rick Warren

How should a senior pastor invest his or her time?

“The larger the church, the greater the need for more tribes of leaders who can lead their own tribes.” ¹⁷	Early Ministry Season	Middle Ministry Season	Later Ministry Season
Doing ministry	60%	30%	10%
Leading those doing ministry	30%	40%	30%
Leading those who are leading those doing ministry	10%	20%	30%
Resourcing leaders of leaders	0%	10%	30%
Total time	100%	100%	100%

¹⁶ Warren Bird, ed., *Wisdom from Lyle E. Schaller: The Elder Statesman of Church Leadership* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2012), 76.

¹⁷ Steve Stroope with Kurt Bruner, *Tribal Church: Lead Small, Impact Big* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 84–85.

Sample

BONUS: Executive Pastor Job Description

Overview

The Executive Pastor is to provide vision, support, and coordination of all ministries. This person will function as the chief administrator of multiple staff. This person is responsible for the establishment of priorities and the orderly implementation of approved activities and plans. This person is a voting member of the elder board and is a member of the Pastoral Leadership Team.

Responsibilities

Administration

- Primarily responsible for leading the search for unfilled staff and volunteer positions.
- Serves as supervisor for all staff, with the exception of the Pastoral Leadership Team.
- Serves as supervisor for all non-pastoral staff to ensure that their efforts cohere with the mission of the church and that they have the share of resources they need.

Coordination

- Coordinates all seminars and conferences related to the further development for church leaders and staff.
- Oversees budget planning and monitors financial performance to insure that expenses stay within budget.
- Coordinates all activities associated with growth of all ministries and facility expansion.
- Coordinates communication of plans and vision to the congregation.
- Coordinates any ministries that do not have direct pastoral oversight.

Implementation

- Serves as a member of the Pastoral Leadership Team (PLT), which provides vision planning for all Staff led and Board approved actions.
- Oversees the implementation of the PLT actions so that communication, harmony and faithfulness to the vision prevail.
- Mentors the appropriate staff as necessary to assure staff cooperation, unity, effectiveness and efficiency.
- Monitors the appropriate staff expectations, goals and training.
- Assures that all financial reports and activities are managed properly and in a timely manner.

Reporting and Reviews

The Executive Pastor is accountable to the Senior Pastor.

Qualifications

Beliefs

- Knows Christ as personal Savior and Lord and is willing to testify accordingly.
- Agrees with the Statement of Faith, the Church Covenant, and the Biblical Principles for Christian Living as written in the Constitution.

Character

- Has unchallenged mature Christian character.
- Has demonstrated ability to work with many different types of people.
- Has the ability to communicate with sensitivity.
- Has relationships with his family, associates and friends that honor the Lord.

Competency

- A strong organizer
- A good people manager
- Detailed in follow through
- Able to motivate others, both staff and volunteers.
- Able to coordinate many ministries to maximize their effectiveness
- Self motivated
- Able to develop professional skills in others
- Accountable

Education and Experience

Must have prior full time ministry experience in a local church. An advanced degree from an acceptable seminary or educational institution is preferred.

Job Description Resources: CEO

✓ ECFA Knowledge Center

www.ECFA.org/KnowledgeCenter

Job Descriptions



ECFA’s Knowledge Center provides access to hundreds of documents including policies, procedures and a wealth of research on topics such as charitable gifts, expense reimbursements, board governance, fringe benefits, and much more.

✓ BoardSource

www.BoardSource.org

ePolicy Sampler – Chief Executive (Word Doc)



Level 201

BoardSource offers Downloadable Policy Samplers in 10 different topic areas to help you create specific policies for your organization. Each Downloadable Policy Sampler covers several subtopics and includes an introduction to the subtopic area, key elements, practical tips, suggested resources, and several dozen sample policies.

The Chief Executive Sampler includes 17 samples on the following:

- ☐ Chief Executive Job Descriptions
- ☐ Chief Executive Performance Evaluation
- ☐ Executive Compensation
- ☐ Executive Transition

***“There are three roles of the CEO:
selecting the right people,
allocating capital resources,
and spreading ideas quickly.”¹⁸***

Jack Welch

¹⁸ Jack Welch quoted in the “Leadership Tip of the Day” email from the (now-named) Frances Hesselbein Leadership Forum, June 4, 2015, www.HesselbeinForum.org.

Job Description Resources : Executive Pastor



Attn: Church Boards

Here are several organizations and websites that may help you in creating or revising your senior pastor's job description and S.M.A.R.T. goals.



Leadership  Network

XPastor Equip
Coach
Lead

ECFA KNOWLEDGE CENTER

www.ECFA.church/KnowledgeCenter

The Knowledge Center provides access to hundreds of documents including job descriptions, policies, procedures and a wealth of research on topics such as charitable gifts, expense reimbursements, board governance, fringe benefits, and much more.

LEADERSHIP NETWORK

<http://leadnet.org/downloads/>

According to Leadership Network, they have more experience in helping churches than anyone else. They help strategic pastors, staff and teams move ideas to implementation to impact.

XPASTOR

www.xpastor.org/staffing/job-descriptions/

The mission of XPastor is to “equip, coach and lead” those who lead and manage the church. XPastor’s “tribe” is church leaders—Executive Pastors, Senior Pastors, Pastors, Finance Personnel and Board Members. The link above will lead you to senior pastor and lead pastor job descriptions for varying sizes of churches.

*“A pastor friend, ‘Carlos,’ once told me,
‘I don’t have the spiritual gift of board meetings.’
He expressed what many pastors feel.*

*“No church board is perfect, but the best boards set a high standard for board service.
When the right people—with the right motives and God-honoring character—
serve graciously together, there will be a minimum amount of dysfunction
and a maximum amount of spiritual fruit and impact.*

*Board members and pastors will thrive in board meetings as the Holy Spirit
deploys their spiritual gifts and their God-designed personalities and strengths.”¹⁹*

Dan Busby and John Pearson

¹⁹ Dan Busby and John Pearson, *Lessons From the Church Boardroom: 40 Insights for Exceptional Governance* (Winchester, VA: ECFA Press, 2018), 44–45.

Read *The ONE Thing* . . . Before You Write or Revise Your Board Chair and Top Leader Job Descriptions

This book will help you focus on the ONE thing you must do every week.

BOOK REVIEW



The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results

by Gary Keller with Jay Papasan

Your Weekly Staff Meeting eNews

John Pearson, Editor/Publisher

Issue No. 342 of *Your Weekly Staff Meeting* features 10 quotable quotes (all Twitter-worthy) from a hot contender already for my 2016 book-of-the-year. Gary Keller says that to focus on *The ONE Thing*, you must examine your to-do lists. He notes: “To-do lists inherently lack the intent of success.”

10 Tweetable Quotations

Never done this before! Right there—on page 117—was a stunner-of-a-statement that went immediately from the book to my brain, to my laptop, to my printer, and now it’s big and bold on my office door:

**“Until my ONE Thing is done—
everything else is a distraction.”**

I’ve just read a powerful book, *The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results*, by Gary Keller with Jay Papasan. This bestseller will certainly be on my Top-10 book list for 2016 and is already a contender for my 2016 book-of-the-year.

But first—an apology. *The ONE Thing* waited patiently on my overflowing “books-to-read” shelves for three years. Then recently, it popped back onto *The Wall Street Journal* business bestsellers list. (OK. OK. I’ll read it!) But I apologize because you (and I) could have been much more productive over these last three years. So sorry—but better late than never.

Gary Keller, chairman of the board and cofounder of Keller Williams Realty, Inc., the largest real estate company in the U.S., has seen his share of failures and successes—and that’s how he discovered *The ONE Thing*.

He writes, “Where I’d had huge success, I had narrowed my concentration to one thing, and where my success varied, my focus had too.”

Here’s Keller’s big idea:

**“What’s the ONE Thing
you can do this week such that by doing it
everything else would be easier or unnecessary?”**

Read his chapter titles and you're hooked. The first section highlights six lies that mislead and derail us:

- Lie #1: Everything Matters Equally
- Lie #2: Multitasking
- Lie #3: A Disciplined Life
- Lie #4: Willpower Is Always on Will-Call
- Lie #5: A Balanced Life
- Lie #6: Big Is Bad

The second section addresses the focusing question, the success habit (66 days), and the path to great answers. The final section motivates with unusual clarity on the four thieves of productivity:

- Thief #1: Inability to Say “No”
- Thief #2: Fear of Chaos
- Thief #3: Poor Health Habits
- Thief #4: Environment Doesn't Support Your Goals

Well...I promised you 10 tweetable quotations. (I know—somewhat ironic that I have over 20 quotations in a book review about *The ONE Thing*.) On a short plane ride, I winnowed hundreds of PowerPoint-worthy insights down to just 35—just before I landed. I've given you three already—and here are 20 more (but who's counting?). Tweet your 10 favorite!



On rabbits, to-do lists, and irrelevancy:

- “If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either one.” (Russian proverb)
- “Instead of a to-do list, you need a success list—a list that is purposefully created around extraordinary results.”
- “. . . it turns out that high multitaskers are suckers for irrelevancy.”

On a “balanced life” and productivity:

- “A ‘balanced life’ is a myth—a misleading concept most accept as a worthy and attainable goal without ever stopping to truly consider it.”
- “‘Don’t put all your eggs in one basket is all wrong.’ I tell you ‘put all your eggs in one basket, and then watch that basket.’” (Dale Carnegie)
- “Productivity isn’t about being a workhorse, keeping busy or burning the midnight oil. . . . It’s more about priorities, planning, and fiercely protecting your time.” (Margarita Tartakovsky)

On goal-setting, accountability, and coaching:

- "Accountable people receive results only others dream of."
- "When Arthur Guinness set up his first brewery, he signed a 9,000-year lease."
- "Earlier I discussed Dr. Gail Matthews's research that individuals with written goals were 39.5 percent more likely to succeed. But there's more to the story. **Individuals who wrote their goals and sent progress reports to friends were 76.7 percent more likely to achieve them.**"
- "Ericsson's research on expert performance confirms the same relationship between elite performance and coaching. He observed that 'the single most important difference between these amateurs and the three groups of elite performers is that the **future elite performers seek out teachers and coaches and engage in supervised training**, whereas the amateurs rarely engage in similar types of practice.'"



On saying no:

- "Someone once told me that one 'yes' must be defended over time by 1,000 no's."
- In the two years after Steve Jobs returned to Apple in 1997, **"he took the company from 350 products to 10.** That's 340 no's, not counting anything else proposed during that period."

On time-blocking and buckets to focus on The ONE Thing:

- "Build a bunker. Turn off your phone, shut down your email, and exit your Internet browser. Your most important work deserves 100 percent of your attention."
- **"My recommendation is to block four hours a day.** This isn't a typo. I repeat: four hours a day. Honestly, that's the minimum. If you can do more, then do it."
- "If your time-blocking were on trial, would your calendar contain enough evidence to convict you?"
- "The people who achieve extraordinary results don't achieve them by working more hours. They achieve them by getting more done in the hours they work."
- "Paul Graham's 2009 essay, 'Maker's Schedule, Manager's Schedule,' underscores the need for large time blocks."
- "Graham divides all work into two buckets: maker (do or create) and manager (oversee or direct)."
- "To experience extraordinary results, be a maker in the morning and a manager in the afternoon. Your goal is 'ONE and done.' But if you don't block each day to do your ONE Thing, your ONE Thing won't become a done thing."

On books:

"One of the reasons I've amassed a large library of books over the years is because books are a great go-to resource. Short of having a conversation with someone who has accomplished what you hope to achieve, in my experience books and published works offer the most in terms of documented research and role models for success."

Warning!

Keller: “After my wife, Mary, read this book, I asked her to do something. She turned to me and you know what she said? ‘Gary, that’s not my ONE Thing right now!’ We laughed, high-fived, and I got to do it myself!”

Ready, set, TWEET!



John Pearson’s 2016 Book-of-the-Year

Of the 24 books that John Pearson read and reviewed in 2016 in his eNews, *Your Weekly Staff Meeting*, he named *The ONE Thing* his “2016 Book-of-the-Year.”²⁰

Note: John’s reviews of more than 400 books are archived at:
https://urgentink.typepad.com/my_weblog/

Subscribe: <http://managementbuckets.com/enews>

²⁰ Gary Keller and Jay Papasan, *The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results* (Austin, TX: Bard, 2012).