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Accountability in Action: *Enforcing Board Member Responsibilities*

Audio Dial-In Information:
U.S. & Canada: 866.740.1260
Access Code: 7853891



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- To participate in today's webinar, you must
 - LOG-IN to SEE the Web portion; and
 - DIAL-IN to HEAR the audio portion.
 - Call: 866-740-1260.
 - Use the following access code: 7853891
 - You will hear hold music until 2:00 pm.

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Accountability: *What's the Big Deal?*

- Transparency and accountability should be more than "buzzwords" at your association
- True accountability starts and ends with the Board
- Holding board members accountable may be easier said, than done, but...

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What influences (bad) behavior?

- Perceptual filters
- Cast of "characters"
- Lack of clarity (board roles and board/staff relationship)
- Personal agendas
- Lack of clear rules and accountability mechanisms (unmanaged child syndrome)

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It Takes a Village





- Each board member sees the world (and your nonprofit) through their own unique lens.
- Differences are good! When the going gets rough, remind yourself that your mission requires more than:



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Perceptual filters

 Fatalist	 Hierarchist
 Individualist	 Egalitarian

*Source: John Adams, www.John-Adams.co.uk

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Perceptual Filters

- **Egalitarian - fearful and risk averse** – if you can't prove it's safe assume it's dangerous & invoke the precautionary principle ("minimize regrets rather than maximize benefits").
- **Individualist - optimistic and pragmatic** - if you can't prove it's dangerous assume it's safe
- **Fatalist** – ducks if she sees something about to hit her, otherwise *que sera sera*.
- **Hierarchist** – additional information is needed to find the right answer.

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Cast of Board Characters

(see 20 Dysfunctional Board Member Character Types for the Full Cast)

Common Board Characters:

- **The Playwright** – scripts scenarios before the board meeting; expects everyone to follow his instructions.
- **The Queen** – seeks inputs and then makes pronouncements about what shall be done.
- **Machiavelli** – master of the power play.
- **The Director** – knows what's best for everyone. Finds a way to leave the contributions of dissenters on the cutting room floor.

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More Common Board Characters:

- **The Expert** – first one to speak up and remind fellow cast members of his expertise.
- **ED Wannabe** – positioning to take over the ED's job.
- **The Bomber** (special effects expert) – drops a bomb during the board meeting and watches what happens.
- **Big Daddy** – well known with inflated ego; cell phone is certain to ring during every board meeting.

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Additional Causes of Bad Behavior

- Lack of clarity (board roles and board/staff relationship)
- Personal agendas
- Lack of clear rules and accountability mechanisms (“unmanaged child syndrome”)

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Dealing with Problem Directors

- **Position the Chair**
 - Advance notice of chair's role/duties, reminders, coaching
 - Position description for the Chair
 - Not everyone has the skills to be an effective Chair
 - Specialized training for Chairs

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Dealing with Problem Directors

- **The agenda is your friend... use it!**
 - Directors should insist on having and following an agenda
 - Learn how to use a consent agenda to speed up meetings

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Dealing with Problem Directors

- **Use a Board Position Description**
 - Distribute it early (before election) and often
 - Refer to it as often as necessary
 - Update it as necessary

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Dealing with Problem Directors

- **Provide training**
 - Don't assume your board already "knows how"
 - Consider a third party who can deliver an unvarnished message about board duties
 - Board education is an ongoing process not a one time event

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Dealing with Problem Directors

- **The "Heart to Heart"**
 - There is a reason and you need to find it
 - Isolate the Issue

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Dealing with Problem Directors

- **Use a Board Handbook**
 - Generic information on duties and responsibilities of directors
 - Specific information on board procedures
 - Articles, Bylaws and policies

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Dealing with Problem Directors

- **Remember “right resources”**
 - Use the proper “tool” for the job, and
 - Send the appropriate emissary
 - Tap other volunteers – “peer management”

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Dealing with Problem Directors

- **Empower your Governance Committee**
 - Director recruitment and training
 - Enforce policies & procedures
 - Enlist assistance with problem directors

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Thank you!

- Join me next month for “Fiscal Oversight, Risk and the Nonprofit Board” – Wednesday, September 7th at 2 pm Eastern
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- (202) 75-3891

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