

EducationBoardPartners

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Recruiting for Diversity

How to Expand Your Board Beyond Your Personal Networks

Overview

Having the right skills and experience around the board table is essential to effective governance. Boards comprised of directors with diverse skills and backgrounds tend to outperform boards lacking a varied composition.¹ But, broadening one's personal network can be a challenge. Here are some tips to help you find the missing pieces to your board puzzle.

Define board diversity.

Diversity is a big concept that encompasses identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, socio-economic background, age, physical ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, ideologies, and other attributes that make each of us unique. When we talk about board diversity, we mean all of that plus a complex set of professional skills, experience level, community clout, and personality traits that make a governing body effective. This tool focuses on how to build diversity of demographics and expertise on your board and offers tips to help you approach that opportunity.

Become comfortable speaking about racial and ethnic diversity or the lack thereof.

The reality in our country is that race, class, and academic achievement intersect in meaningful and important ways. All of us who work in education must be comfortable naming and discussing this if we hope to close the racial and socio-economic achievement gap. Part of that is being able to articulate why diversity is important at all levels of your organization. We don't get better at overcoming our individual and group bias or ending discrimination and inequality by sweeping those things under the rug. We grow together through ongoing

¹ *Is there a payoff from top-team diversity?* Thomas Barta, Markus Kleiner, and Tilo Neumann. McKinsey Quarterly. April 2012. http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/is_there_a_payoff_from_top-team_diversity. *The Secret of Top Performing Companies: More Women On The Board*. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidprosser/2014/09/25/the-secret-of-top-performing-companies-more-women-on-the-board/>

dialogue.

Rather than attempt to give you a few bullets that minimize this important topic, we recommend you read *Reinventing Diversity: Transforming Organizational Community to Strengthen People, Purpose, and Performance*, by Howard Ross and Julianne Malveaux. Ross. Howard Ross is one of my heroes and mentors and his company, Cook Ross, Inc., specializes in organizational development, leadership development, and diversity and inclusion training. They help transform organizations around the world by making them more conscious, inclusive, and humane communities. His newest book, (*Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives*) is available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), and provides not only the rationale for why diversity is important, but will also help you and your board develop a toolkit for discussions and action.

There are already some charter schools that are leading the way in this area like [E.L. Haynes Public Charter School](#) in Washington, DC, where the work done on diversity and inclusion in their Professional Learning Communities inspired former middle school principal Michelle Molitor to found [The Equity Lab](#) . The equity work of The Equity Lab was built in response to the urgency for culturally responsive systemic change for our most vulnerable students—not just in Washington, DC, but nationwide. The Equity Lab has the mission of creating equitable educational settings for all students through honest and open dialogue across differences, and collective anti-racist action. Consider connecting with them to learn more.

Mine Current Board Members' Networks

At its core, board building is both people and development work. Having a fundraising background in donor identification, cultivation, and stewardship could be effective in building a board. Your school's development team should include someone skilled at individual donor prospect research for fundraising. If this person is not in place yet, consider hiring a consultant who knows how to use [Wealth Engine](#), [Muckety](#), and other industry research tools. This person should do prospecting of all board members and present an individualized relationship map to each board member. Often, people are unaware of the connections within their own network. Personal networks are the low-hanging fruit of board recruiting.

Get LinkedIn Savvy.

[LinkedIn Board Member Connect](#) allows non-profit organizations to post volunteer board opportunities and to search users who have indicated interest in board service. Take a tour, and research the benefits of an upgraded account. At EBP, we use LinkedIn daily to do targeted recruiting. We subscribe at the [Business Premium](#) level, allowing access to advanced search options that we use to control for variables like seniority, job function, and interest in board service. We also get a number of InMail credits with our membership that allow us to send direct messages to users outside our personal networks. We have found this extremely helpful in finding board candidates. You can sign up for a free [webinar](#).

Connect with local professional associations and organizations.

Most cities and states have local chapters of national convening organizations for professionals, people of color, and women. There is a list below with a small sample of some of these organizations. Don't be afraid to do cold outreach—although before you do that, comb the list of staff members and board members and check them out on LinkedIn and social media to see if you know someone in common. It's always easier to receive a warm introduction than a cold call; use your connections where available. Many organizations, networks, affinity groups, associations, etc. are looking for opportunities for their members get involved in the community—you could be helping them achieve these goals.

The list below offers some examples of suggested professional groups you may want to target. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but can provide you with a start:

Accounting and Finance

- [Association for Financial Professionals](#)
- [The Association of Accountants and Financial Professionals in Business](#)

Business Leaders

- [Local Chambers of Commerce](#)

Human Resources

- [National Human Resources Association](#)
- [Society for Human Resource Management](#)

Law

- [American Bar Association](#)
- [The National Bar Association](#)

Public Relations

- [Public Relations Society of America](#)

People of Color

- Monster.com's list of [Top 21 African American Professional Associations](#)
- Monster.com's list of [Top 15 Hispanic/Latino Professional Associations](#)