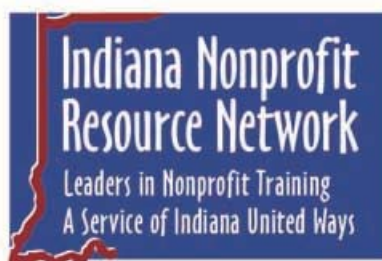


Case Study

Founders Syndrome and Board Recruiting Best Practices



Case Study: Founders Syndrome and Board Recruiting Best Practices

Kids Come First opened its doors over 20 years ago to provide high-quality, reliable daycare for area children.

The opening was the result of a study commissioned by the Community Foundation in the early 1990s to assess the availability of daycare in the county. The study confirmed that the availability of daycare was limited. The Community Foundation and other area funders provided initial funding for *Kids Come First*. It was later incorporated as a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, became financially self-sufficient and was recognized as an important addition to the community and it flourished.

Ida Lovett became the Executive Director of the daycare ten years ago at a critical time for the organization. Enrollment was faltering, the facility needed updating, sufficient income was becoming an issue and the board of directors was not supplying the needed support.

Lovett was an energetic, longtime resident of the community with a background in education. She managed to rally family, friends and parents of the students. They worked diligently to turn things around and *Kids Come First* was once again on solid ground, but, with a new set of issues.

The turnaround was so successful that they now have a long waiting list and need additional space, more qualified teachers and funding to cover expansion costs. When Ida attempts to address these issues with the board of directors she gets little response. Because attendance was faltering at board meetings, they went from monthly meetings to quarterly meetings. Meeting attendance still sometimes fails to meet quorum requirements, and board members are even more disengaged due to the length of time between board meetings.

The board is made up of 10 members (3 below the minimum stated in the by-laws) consisting of Ida's sister, sister-in-law, and mothers of students.

Ida and her board president, May Begone, agree that they need a plan to address growth issues but know they must have the support and input of the rest of the board of directors. They have attempted to energize the existing board, but get the sense that they are "burnt out." They have also tried with limited success to recruit new members, because they live in a small community where the "same ten people are on every board of directors."

What should Ida & May do?

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Response

Although in existence for over 20 years, Kids Come First is experiencing symptoms of Founders Syndrome. The entire board is either related to the Director, have children in the daycare, or both. All board members have been personally involved at a hands-on level to keep the daycare open and functioning at a high level. The likelihood is high that the board members are burnt out and may not have the qualifications to become the governing board that the organization needs now, in a time of growth and planning.

Kids Come First needs to initiate a board development process, by creating a board development committee consisting of community stakeholders, representative board members and the Executive Director. The committee would be charged with strengthening the organization by building a strong governing board. The committee would follow standard board building procedures, including but not limited to:

The creation of a board member profile – what are the qualifications needed for board members to move the organization forward

By aligning the profile with current board membership, determining the gaps in board qualifications

Developing a new board member job description

Asking existing board members to sign a re-commitment letter based on the new job description or to resign

Creating a list of potential candidates for board membership based on the job description

Meeting with potential candidates to determine interest in completing a board member application which are then reviewed and presented to the board for election as appropriate.

Once the new board is in place, the ad-hoc board development committee would be disbanded and a newly formed standing board development committee would then perform the on-going duties of orientation, board training and development and evaluation.

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