



Secrets of Successful Strategies: How Certain Boards Get What They Want and Others Don't



By **Brenda Kelleher-Flight Ph.D.**
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Boards often find themselves in a position to need something from another organization. Successful boards approach this process by building their strategies on sound principles. These principles are:

- » The board's prior accomplishments and achievements are **known**
- » The board is **respected** and **trusted** and acts always in the best interests of its constituents.
- » Parties act jointly when their interests have many **elements in common**.

Steps in developing a successful strategy

1. Specify the desired outcomes.

- Write the issue in precise language which is clear, concise and measurable.

2. Delineate the interests of the board and of the other party

- What interest are served if this issue is solved? Write the interests of the board and of the other party. If the interests are common the likelihood of reaching an agreement are high. If the number of common interest are low, the chances of reaching an agreement with the other party is greatly decreased.

3. Determine what the board needs to do to minimize the negative effects of the interests which are not in common

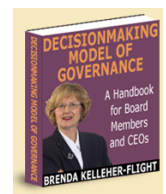
- The board can determine if there are other steps it should take before it approaches the other party. When these steps are agreed upon, write out each step and who will take the action, the time frame for the action, and when the results would be reported to the board.

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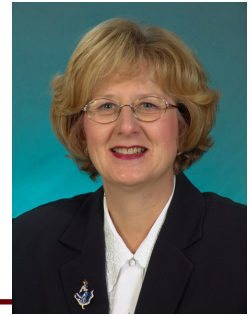
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4. Determine the assets which would assist to reach a resolution

- Determine whether
 - board members have any personal contacts which might help .
 - the other party is requesting anything of the board and whether the board can use this request as part of a negotiating tactic
 - the board has factual information which would be used to convince the other party
 - the board's request will advance the agenda of the other party
 - the resolution the board desires could be used by the other party to convince its constituents of its effectiveness and advance its own political agenda

5. Write out your best alternative if the other party does not agree with your request

Before creating a plan, write out the alternative you have if the other party ignores your communication. This alternative should be realistic given the board's mandate and resources.

6. Create a plan and determine who will monitor the plan

Remember others are busy too and they have their own agendas. The other party may have created the board but that does not mean that the board can assume that the other party knows and trusts the board.

- A. Write 3 steps the board will take to introduce the issue and ensure the other party gets to know and trust the board. The first step introduces the party to the issue, the second step provides details about the issue, and the third step outlines how resolution of the issue would address common interests and goals. If a resolution is not reached the board may have to intensify its efforts.
- B. Write 4 steps the board will follow to ensure the other party respects the seriousness and sincerity of the request. Start with the least intensive approach and increase the challenge if the other party does not react to the previous approach (letters, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, email campaigns, media interviews, meetings with politicians or other groups, meetings with competitors, etc.) The first step notifies the other party that the issue is not going to go away, the second step demonstrates that this is an issue for constituents/parties other than the board, the third step introduces the issue to the public, and the fourth step makes the issue one for public debate. *Note:* Keep your alternative in mind when generating these four steps.