



# Are Your Boards and/or Committees Effective?

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Each entity depends on its people to guide it toward its vision and mission. In certain cases, a board and its committees or the staff committees are assigned specific mandates. The question is “Are these groups effective?”

To determine the effectiveness of each group, read the statements in the left hand column in the table below and determine which apply (it is important to be brutally honest )

Statement	Applies	Does Not Apply
1. We spend at least 70% of our time focusing on the future and no more then 30% focusing on the past		
2. Some of the members constantly take up time talking about “what we’ve always done”		
3. We view every problem/issue/concern as a challenge and remain very positive in our debates		
4. We discuss the importance of maintaining the status quo and we avoid rocking the boat		
5. We focus 90% of our agendas on items we can control or strongly influence		
6. We have members who are resistant to change and who pull us away from our key issues		
7. We are constantly looking for ways to support the entity to achieve its mission and be the best in its field		
8. We avoid the key issues and spend time discussing items which are not key to our mandate or role.		
9. We control the use of our time and ensure that all agenda items are related to our role and mandate		
10. We have members who refuse to accept that there are key issues which need to be addressed.		



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The most effective groups will respond ‘applies’ to the odd numbered statements (1,3, 5, 7, and 9) and ‘does not apply’ to the even numbered questions (2, 4, 6, 8, and 10). If any of the even numbered statements apply in your situation determine what can be done to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the group.

## Suggestions

1. Assign roles to each member. For example, when an issue is open for discussion ask specific persons to play one of the following roles:
  - Promotes positive realistic solutions
  - Explains all the negative aspects of the situation
  - Sees more concrete information (facts and figures)
  - Presents the emotional side of the situation
  - Focuses on solutions
  - Ensures the issue is related to the mandate of the group and the group can control or strongly influence the outcomes
  - Asks critical questions
2. Ensure the agenda items are prioritized based on the mandate of the group and whether the information is on the agenda for a decision, advice or information purposes only.
3. Confront resistance to finding solutions or reaching settlement regarding the issues. (This may need to be done privately)
4. Ask the person who resists trying something new whether his resistance comes from the fact that he has tried this solution and it did not work or whether it is based on his belief system solely.
5. Outline the rewards associated with maintenance of the status quo which are not associated with suggested change and brainstorm options which could be utilized to reduce the barriers.