

Before I got involved in a major national charity, I had no idea how common board of directors non profit problems are. As hard as a business board is to run, a non profit board of directors is that much harder. There are all kinds of problems that are unique to non profits. First of all, it can be much more difficult to make a non profit financially solvent than with a business. With your business board, you have to maximize profits and increase consumer interest. With a board of directors non profits, however, you have to be responsive to all sorts of changing situations that you don't get in the business world. Funding can increase and decrease, the interests of important donors can wax and wane, and the whole organization has to be able to quickly expand and contract in response to variations in the amount of money available.

A board of directors nonprofit also has to be accountable to the community in a way that a business doesn't. A non profit is there, after all, to serve the community. A business by contrast is there to serve the stockholders. This means that the board of directors non profit has to be representative of the community it is serving. As important as diversity is in the workplace, it is most important of all in a non profit organizations. Getting people from different perspectives and different walks of life to work together in a constructive professional atmosphere, however, is easier said than done. Nonetheless, doing this right can make or break non profit boards of directors.

A lot of people spend a lot of time working on organizational models, but it all basically comes down to this: each individual in the board of directors non profit has to be passionate about the cause, highly competent, and able to work with others. It doesn't help to bring in managerial types who couldn't care less about what the nonprofit is doing, but it also doesn't help you to bring in firebrands who are unable to work with other people. It is fine to have true believers working in the field, but the members of your board of directors non profit should have a little bit more critical understanding of the issues involved. They should believe, but not be ignorant of the pitfalls and problems that nonprofits face. Only then will they be able to work together so that the organization can function at its full potential.