

President/CEO Evaluation

-Dr. Brian S. Simmons

Introduction:

There is no more important role of the board of directors than the selection and meaningful evaluation of the President or Chief Executive Officer of the organization entrusted to their care. The leadership construct of Stewardship begins with the biblical premise that everything belongs to God (Ps. 24:1). ACSI ultimately is God's organization. Another synonym for a member of the board of directors is trustee. A trustee is one to whom has been given a trust. The definition of a biblical steward, according to Kent Wilson, is "the management of the property or resources belonging to another in order to achieve the owner's objectives." So, we see, that a trustee is a steward who is responsible to the owner to act on behalf of the owner to fulfill the owner's desires.

The main requirement of a steward is to be faithful to the owner (Mt 25:14-30). The duties of loyalty and care can be described in terms of three main functions as boards lead through effective governance: fiduciary, strategic, and generative (Governance as Leadership, Chait, Ryan and Taylor). Boards are responsible for the finances of the organization. Boards need to think strategically about the organization's plan of action, and boards need to make sense of what is going on and continually evaluate the operations of the organization in light of its mission, vision, and core values.

While scholars do not agree about a universal definition of leadership (Rost, 1993), for the purposes of this evaluation instrument, leadership is defined as "developing vision and strategies, the alignment of relevant people behind those strategies, and the empowerment of individuals to make the vision happen, despite obstacles" (Kotter, 1999, p. 10).

Because most board members serve as volunteers, boards usually hire a CEO to care for the day-to-day operations of the organization they are responsible to lead. A President then serves on behalf of the board of directors as an under-steward. Presidents and senior leadership teams are usually entrusted with the care for the day-to-day leadership decisions. If one thinks of the organization as a ship, the board members are in the crow's nest setting the course of the organization and the President and senior leaders have their hands on the wheel. Both the board and company executives lead, they just have different leadership roles.

Boards are responsible to evaluate their actions and the actions of the CEO, their only employee, through on-going informal and formal, formative and summative performance reviews. These reviews should be informal- an ongoing dialogue throughout the year about the effectiveness of the CEO's leadership in fulfilling the mission of the organization and his/her progress in achieving the organization's vision in light of its core values. The review of the CEO should be formal- a thorough, written evaluation conducted at least annually. The review should be formative- the primary purpose of the review is to help the CEO to grow as a leader and to become more and more effective. Finally, the review must have a summative component- it is the basis for increases in salary and serves as the ultimate basis for retention or dismissal of the CEO.

The CEO's job description, annual goals tied to the strategic plan of the organization, and relevant research on leadership effectiveness should together serve as the basis for meaningful performance review.

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Instrument:

Components of the President's job description used in this instrument include:

- 1) Strategic leadership
- 2) Fiscal management and legal compliance
- 3) Relationship management (external)
- 4) Board management and administration
- 5) General administration and human resource management

The six strategic initiatives for ACSI for the next three years are:

Initiative #1: School Improvement

Strategy #1: Expand and enhance REACH in substance and influence

Strategy #2: Develop REACH to excel

Strategy #3: Centralize and automate REACH

Initiative #2: Leadership and Educator Development

Strategy #1: Grow NEXUS

Strategy #2: Develop leaders in ACSI USA and ACSI Global

Strategy #3: Move all ACSI certification to NEXUS

Initiative #3: Membership Growth

Strategy #1: Grow school membership in USA and global

Strategy #2: Develop levels of ACSI membership

Strategy #3: Develop Individual membership options and income

Initiative #4: Financial Thrivability

Strategy #1: Vet budget cutbacks and balance the budget

Strategy #2: Increase Purposeful Design sales

Strategy #3: Increase giving

Strategy #4: Increase corporate partner income

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Initiative #5: Advocacy

Strategy #1: Support state by state choice legislation

Strategy #2: Create a new public face for ACSI

Strategy #3: Conduct/ disseminate meaningful research

Initiative #6: Organizational Health

Strategy #1: Evaluate all ACSI employees

Strategy #2: Develop meaningful staff training

Strategy #3: Survey the workplace on various topics and improve communication

According to decades of research by Kouzes and Posner, the 21st century leader “needs to be a dynamic leader who has a vision and can point the way and inspire the best from others” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Kouzes and Posner (2002) have determined that there are five practices that are present in leaders. They are the following:

- 1) accepting and challenging the process
- 2) inspiring others through sharing a vision
- 3) enabling others to act through empowerment and providing support so that others can carry out tasks
- 4) modeling the principles that guide the values of the organization
- 5) encouraging the heart by recognizing and rewarding contributions.

Based on job description, we will use Survey Monkey to report on evidence of goal achievement (on the scale clear, much, some, little, and no) to rate how well the President is fulfilling the specific components of his job description.

- 1) Develops and maintains a strategic plan
- 2) Develops and maintains a leadership voice for Christian schooling and ACSI in educational areas of influence.
- 3) Works with staff, Finance Committee and board in preparing and following an annual budget
- 4) Maintains official records and documents and ensures compliance with laws and reporting requirements
- 5) Serves as an effective spokesperson for the association
- 6) Establishes and maintains relationships with external groups important to ACSI and the fulfillment of its mission
- 7) Keeps the board well-informed
- 8) Provides logistical support for all board activities
- 9) Works effectively with the board

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- 10) Effectively administers the overall operation of the association
 - 11) Leads the association's paid staff effectively
 - 12) Encourages staff development
 - 13) Maintains a climate which attracts, retains and motivates a highly qualified, diverse staff
- Comments:

Based on the initiatives of our strategic plan, we will report evidence of how well the President is fulfilling specific objectives of the ACSI strategic plan.

- 1) Makes school improvement a priority especially via growing REACH
 - 2) Makes leader and educator development a priority especially via growing and personally supporting NEXUS live and NEXUS virtual
 - 3) Has taken specific actions to grow ACSI membership
 - 4) Is working diligently to ensure ACSI thriivability
 - 5) Actively supports the advocacy initiative
 - 6) Is making progress in developing organizational health
- Comments:

Finally, based on research on effective leadership, we will report evidence of how well the President follows researched practices of effective leadership.

- 1) The President sets a personal example of what he expect of others. (Models the way)
- 2) The President develops cooperative relationships among the people he works with. (Enables others to act)
- 3) The President praises people for a job well done. (Encourages the heart)
- 4) The President describes a compelling image of what our future could be like. (Inspires a shared vision)
- 5) The President challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work. (Challenges the process)

Comments:

Following completion by the board of directors of this survey, the Chairman of the Board will share the results of the survey with the President.

Conclusion

There is no more important role of the board than to select, evaluate, and ultimately replace its CEO. This evaluation process is one of the most important roles of the board. Similarly, it is important for the board to conduct an effective self-evaluation following a similar process. No process has greater potential benefit to the organization because this process improves communication and keeps the organization focused on the accomplishment of its mission and vision guided by its core values as the President works every day to put the strategic plan into action at every level of the organization.