

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.  
Affiliate Chapter Relations Committee

Affiliate Chapter Handbook  
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Section 24

Teambuilding for RID Affiliate Chapter Boards

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## **Teambuilding for RID Affiliate Chapter Boards**

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Serving on a board can be one of the most rewarding experiences we have as professionals. However, it can be scary and frustrating! For a board to function effectively as a team it must first have a structure that fosters productivity, respect, support and enjoyment. Sometimes this seems like an impossible task, but there are ways to establish a successful structure for the board.

### **Affiliate Chapter Board Structure that Fosters Teamwork and Success**

- The group has vision and mission statements.
- Goals are set and agreed upon by the entire group.
- Action items are assigned and status reported to the group regularly.
- Responsibilities are evenly distributed among board members.
- There is effective communication during and between meetings.
- The president, or designee, keeps the group apprised of all pertinent information concerning the board.
- Meetings occur on a regular basis and are conducted effectively.
- Team members have enough information, resources, and support.
- Best practices are established to ensure that business is carried out efficiently.
- The board has a safe and respectful environment.
- The atmosphere is fun and upbeat.
- Team members receive recognition for their contributions.

### **Vision and Mission Statements**

Each affiliate chapter should have a mission statement and a vision statement. It is imperative that all board members understand the mission, vision and goals for the group. If the chapter does not have a vision and mission, this could be the first order of business for the group. Once the vision and mission statements are in place, the team can begin setting goals for the organization. If the chapter already has a vision and mission, the board should review them together. Each board member should have all of his or her questions and concerns answered before goal setting. Direction and goals are two of the best tools for teambuilding! (See section 22 for more information on mission statements.)

### **Goal Setting, Action Items and Status Reports**

Each board member will be more invested in the process if goals are established as a group. At the beginning of each new term, the board can set a special goal setting meeting. Once the goals for the term are set, each board member has direction for his or her time of office and feels a sense of purpose.

It is important that action items are distributed evenly among board members. The board could take each goal and brainstorm a list of action items that are necessary for that goal. The duties can be written down with an estimated amount of time the task will take. The board can then engage in a discussion about how to evenly distribute the tasks. The skill sets of each board member should be shared so that duties are given to the person most prepared for the task. If a member receives an action item that he or she is not prepared for, a mentor can be assigned to support the member with his or her assigned duties. This is another way to foster teambuilding in the group. Board members will learn new skills and at the same time be supported during the process.

Information is key to each team member's success. The board will need to develop a communication tool so everyone knows what the other members are doing. It can be very frustrating to work on a task only to find out that another board member has already done the same work. Information sharing can occur in a variety of ways including email, regular conference calls, or on an Internet communication board.

Each action item should have a status report due date and a completion due date. The board may want to select a board member who has organizational skills who can follow up to make sure everyone is reporting on the status of their action items. Make sure this person has a kind and supportive delivery of reminders.

### **Effective Communication**

Effective and ongoing communication = a strong team. There are a lot of resources available from which to learn about effective communication. These resources include classes, books, magazine articles, Internet articles, etc. In terms of team building, each board member must feel he or she has enough information to achieve success in his or her position. The communication must be respectful and individual communication styles need to be considered when interacting with each other.

It is important that the chapter president oversee the communication within the board. The president can be responsible for certain aspects of communication and delegate other aspects to board members with the right skill set for the task. For example, the president can make sure that information from the national and regional level is shared with the board. One board member can ensure status reports are given on a regular basis. Another board member can be responsible for internal communication about meetings, events, resources, etc. Another board member can direct communication to chapter members.

### **Board Meetings**

For members to feel motivated to participate on the board, they must be motivated to attend board meetings. Sound like a dream? It can be done! If board meetings occur regularly, are scheduled with enough notice, are conducted effectively, and have food

available, board members will want to attend. (See section 16 for more information on meetings.)

### **Information, Resources, and Support**

Once board members have their assigned tasks, they will need information, resources and support to achieve success. If the member has prior board experience, it may be as simple as pointing them in the right direction. If the member is new to the board or does not have experience with the particular task, the board may want to assign a mentor to assist him or her in finding what they need. This mentor could be an officer, another board member, the person who was in the position before or anyone else with the skills, experience, and patience necessary to mentor the member. Board members might want to contact someone in another affiliate chapter in the same position or with the same responsibility. Your region representative can give you the contact information for any chapter in your region. RID's website, as well as this very handbook, have a lot of helpful information for chapter board members! The key is for the president or designee to make sure each board member has what he or she needs and that member must ask for help when he or she needs it. There is a lot of information out there!

### **Best Practices**

Some of the best teambuilding occurs when board members meet to establish best practices for the group. Each board member feels like he or she is involved in how the organization functions and the resulting best practices usually satisfy the needs of all members in the group. The board might want to establish an all-day board retreat to discuss and establish best practices. Another idea would be to have an agenda item at each meeting to determine one best practice per meeting. By the end of the term, the board could have 10 or 12 best practices sections for their policy and procedure manual. Within each best practice section, make sure to answer the following questions – Why, Who, What, Where, When, How, How Often, How Much?

#### Example of Best Practices to Establish:

- Board Communication
- Board Meetings
- Board Structure
- Communication with Chapter Members
- Conflict Management & Mending Fences
- Events
- Finances/Fundraising
- Membership Meetings
- Membership Recruitment, Services and Benefits
- Newsletter
- Policy & Procedure Manual – Development and Maintenance

Recognition

Recruiting & Training New Board Members

Use of the Affiliate Chapter Handbook

Workshops, Professional Development

## **A Safe and Respectful Environment**

One of the best ways for board members to feel safe and respected is to establish and enforce a set of ground rules that works for the group. At each gathering of the board, the ground rules should be the first item of business to discuss. The ground rules need to be a living document, reviewed at each meeting and changed to fit the needs of every member of the group. Once the ground rules are established and agreed upon, the facilitator of the group must make sure the ground rules are being followed consistently. On most boards, the president is responsible for facilitating meetings. Meeting facilitation is a unique skill and requires a constant focus on the process of the meeting. Since the president has the global knowledge of the organization and needs to oversee the content of the meetings, it may help to have another board member take over as facilitator; each board member can take a turn as facilitator at each meeting, or you can hire an outside facilitator.

In order to ensure a safe and respectful environment, the **ground rules** need to include the following:

- Raise your hand so everyone has a chance to participate.
- Listen to and honor all opinions and concerns.
- Be aware of body language and facial expression.
- Eliminate side conversations, voiced or signed.

Each individual has a different processing style; some may think quickly and others need time to process their thoughts. In a board meeting, there are pros and cons for both styles. To ensure that everyone has a chance to share his or her ideas or concerns, the facilitator must control the flow of discussion. It must be agreed upon by the group that all ideas, concerns, opinions, etc. are listened to and not judged. Within most boards, individuals bring a variety of experiences in board service, working as interpreters, interaction in the Deaf community, etc. Each person may have fears or concerns based on what they bring or do not bring to the table. If the ground rules are not enforced, a small group of people will always have the floor and the others will not feel like an equal member of the team. Each board member must also feel like the other team members accept their contributions without judgment. This is the reason that body language and facial expression are included in the ground rules. If someone reacts to a comment or question with rolled eyes, a sigh, or crossed arms, the team member with the comment or question will feel disrespected and may not contribute in the future. Side conversations can also be a sign of disrespect for the speaker. The facilitator must ask that side conversations halt so that the group is always together and the team is working effectively.

## **A Fun and Upbeat Atmosphere**

Certainly, not all business is supposed to be fun. But overall, board meetings can be upbeat and enjoyable experiences. If all of the previous suggestions are implemented, the members may naturally arrive at meetings feeling positive and motivated and leave feeling like it was a good experience. There are other activities that boards can do to have fun. You might want to have fun social gatherings outside of board meetings to do teambuilding and get to know each other as colleagues without the need to be doing business. You may want to have a social event either right before or right after board meetings. You could also meet for a meal before general membership meetings or for lunch during workshops or other events. One order of business at your next meeting could be to brainstorm ideas of how to enjoy each other and make the team stronger.

## **Recognition**

Recognition is the last section but could be the most important aspect of any board. If people feel safe, respected, and eventually recognized for their contributions, they will stay on the board longer and have a better experience while serving. Recognition can happen in a variety of ways. The board can take a moment at each board gathering to thank everyone for their work and contribution to the organization. One board member could take the responsibility for this recognition to make sure it is thorough and all members receive some kudos. The president can mention the work of the board at general membership meetings and/or in the newsletter. It is recommended above to establish best practices for recognition, which could include board members. During this discussion of best practices, you can discuss what recognition is appropriate, how much should be given and in what manner.

## **Conclusion**

RID affiliate chapter board service can be a wonderful and productive experience. If each individual feels comfortable, works within an established structure that allows for productivity and success, and is enjoying himself or herself, the board will attract the best and brightest board members for years to come. Good luck with your teambuilding endeavors! It may seem like a lot of work, but it will be worth it for the short-term and long-term success of the chapter.