



Board Self-Assessments

Facing the Truth Today for a Better Tomorrow

If a credit union wants to increase initiative and innovation to ensure it offers product and service differentiation in the market, it must risk failure. A culture that punishes less-than-ideal risk-related outcomes will stifle both initiative and innovation.

The capacity to demand results is the most universally underdeveloped volunteer skill in all not-for-profit organizations. Money is left on the table when credit unions conclude that they have lost their competitive edge because of external factors (i.e., economy, competition, regulations) This is especially true if the real reason for the organization's difficulty is underperformance. That is, the organization has failed to expand its boundaries using a stretch strategy. It has chosen to fit rather than to risk stretching.

Risk-taking starts in the boardroom. A credit union board that will objectively assess its contribution to organizational success supports the organization's ability to fulfill its mission. While volunteers generally agree that board self-assessments are a good thing, credit unions rarely devote significant time and effort to the process.

Self-assessments provide board members an opportunity to:

Reflect on their individual and organizational responsibilities.

Identify different perceptions and opinions among board members.

Point to questions that need attention.

Use the results as a springboard for board improvement.

Increase the level of board teamwork.

Clarify mutual board/staff expectations.

Demonstrate that accountability is a serious organizational value.

Provide credibility with the membership and other external audiences.

Board Self Assessment Survey

Whether you want to develop a formal evaluation tool or simply want to hold informational discussions, here are some examples of key indicators of volunteer success:

Board Operations

- There are effective means of sharing responsibilities among board members and getting the work done (e.g., committees, task forces).
- The organization ensures there is a formal succession planning process to review current board profiles and identify future needs of board members.
- The board has a nominating process that ensures that the board remains appropriately diverse with respect to ethnicity, gender, culture, disabilities, age, skills and past board experience.
- The board reflects the diversity of the membership.
- New board members are given a sufficient orientation to the organization and an orientation manual that includes information on the credit union's history, mission, bylaws, policies, practices, programs, governance structure and roles and responsibilities.
- Board members have a job description.
- Board members feel appreciated and recognized for their volunteer contributions and accomplishments.

Effective Meetings

- Meetings serve a useful purpose and are evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness on a regular basis.
- Adequate time and energy is given for discussion and decision-making at meetings.
- Board members are satisfied with the decision-making process that is used.
- Board members arrive prepared for meetings, having read the agenda, minutes and reports sent out earlier.
- Board members leave meetings with a clear sense of what was determined and what their responsibilities are.

Planning and Marketing

- The organization has a systematic planning process.
- The credit union determines its desired future/long-term vision.
- The board has the right balance between long-term vision and immediate needs.
- The organization is flexible to respond to new opportunities and challenges.

- The membership understands and supports the organization's vision.
- The organization's vision, mission statement and values drive the choices you make.

Evaluation

- The credit union's products and services are regularly evaluated.
- A full range of stakeholders (i.e., members, staff, volunteers) are asked to participate in the evaluation process.
- Recommendations from these assessments are used for planning and goal-setting purposes.

Change Management

- As a board or staff member of this organization, you are comfortable with changing the established ways of doing business.
- You understand your own change style, how you react and relate to others when change is presented.
- The organization has incorporated change as part of its planning process.
- The board has a defined process to identify major changes in structure, programs or resources.
- The board is flexible enough to change quickly.
- The board and staff work as a team when change is planned or occurring.

Individual Volunteer (Personal) Commitment

- You have a strong belief in the mission and goals of your credit union.
- You are able to put aside personal positions when compromise is necessary.
- You contribute your skills and perspective to the work of the board.
- You are willing to develop new skills to contribute to the effectiveness of the board.
- You are willing to contribute more time and energy to the organization when needed.