

Housecalls at Work

Answers from Dr. Insite

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Dr. Insite is an ongoing column to address people-related issues in nonprofit organizations. For answers to your workplace issues, please e-mail your questions to DrInsite@coreinsites.com. All responses will be handled confidentially.

Dear Dr. Insite:

I am the executive director of a national association with many members who would like to actively participate on Board committees. Our problem is that committee chairs typically set the agenda, monopolize the work and basically run the show alone. Either committee members feel useless or they simply rubberstamp the chair's actions, patiently waiting for their turn to become chair. The Board chair and I would like to change the committee process to become more inclusive and democratic. How can this be accomplished?

Dear Team Builder:

In an effective committee, the chair capitalizes on the talents of all members. However, if the organization has historically supported a culture where committee chairs monopolize the work, then a concerted effort must be directed toward changing those attitudes. Creating more open, participative committees can be achieved if Board members value working together and sharing in both the tasks and the rewards.

One approach to increasing participation is to create a Committee Competency Pro-

file. This is a simple three-step process that allows all members to share how they can best contribute to the activities of their committee. First, within each committee, members briefly review the projects for the upcoming year. Second, committee members share a) their background, b) their strengths and expertise and c) how they can contribute to accomplishing the work. Third, as a team, committee members go back to the project list and through discussion, match each person to the projects and tasks that fit with individual interests and competencies. Using this method, members' talents will be understood by all, and work will be allocated to those who are best suited for the tasks. ●

Sheila L. Margolis and Ava S. Wilensky hold doctoral degrees in Human Resource Development. As the principals of CORE InSites® Inc., they are well-known organizational development experts specializing in organizational strategy, the strategic use of human resources and program evaluation. Additionally, Margolis and Wilensky are part-time professors at Georgia State University. Visit them online at www.coreinsites.com