

The future of our Board

Considerations for the years to come

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Why I want to talk about our organization. And the board (again ...)

- 6 years on our board
- 3 Executive Directors
- directly involved in the 2 ED searches
- 1 minor crisis
- 1 major crisis
- 4 board chairs
- mistakes and learnings (a lot)

Where is our Board?

We come from a crisis.

What have we learnt? What direction do we take? Where is the horizon?

Are we in a swamp?

Where is our Board?

We have overcome crisis.

Are we all on the same path? Do we have an idea where it leads us to? Will it stay sunny or are we ignoring risks?

Are we on the way?



Where is our Board?

We have to perform.

Like individual experts on different instruments who create a powerful and inspiring working environment when they play in a group. Do we have that strong attitude and innovative power?

Are we in a concert hall?

Role: Basics

The easy ones (you can find most of them on meta)

- Bylaws
- Relevant Law
- Board Handbook

Role: Intermediate

The usual ones (you can find them in books and papers)

- Hire and fire the ED, evaluate, set compensation
- Set Mission and vision of the organization
- Oversee the organization's operations
- Execute good governance
- Ensure adequate resources

Role: Advanced

The challenging ones (you can't just get it with readings)

- Participation. Be and feel part of the organization. Act like it.
- Effectiveness. Be an asset for the organization.
- Impact. Nurture and challenge the organization.

What kind of Board
do we want to be?

What kind of Board
does the Foundation
need?

Is the answer the
same?

Growing needs of a growing organization

- A US\$ 100 million organization needs a board with **experience** in leading a US \$ 100 million organizations - and more.
- Who if not the board can **challenge the ED** respectfully and ask questions on eye level which help her to perform
- Our movement's dynamics are diverse and complicated. The more we need a Board who is able to identify the core issues, and **concentrate on what matters most**.

Composition: A question of skills and experience

- When we talk about Board composition we often differentiate between board appointed members and community (s)elected members.
- But shouldn't the question how the Board is composed be more about what individual members bring with them rather than where they come from?
- Affiliates' selection process is planned for 2019, how do we convey what the board and the Foundation need? We may ask for people with special skills.
- When have we thought about changing composition or size with respect to the changes in the organization?

Where do we want
to see our
organization in
2, 5, 10 years?

A strategy process ...

... to create a movement strategy

- Excessive process
 - Enormous costs
 - Movement Participation
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- What about the Foundation's organizational strategy?
- Which role has the board in the creation of an organizational identity?

A strategy process ...

... and what does the board think?

We talked about the process, about costs and about timelines. We didn't care much about the delay after Phase One.

We never talked about ideas or what what would be **substantial outcomes** from the view of the board. For our organization.

What part do we play in the strategy process?

A strategy process ...

... is no excuse to shy away from tough questions or to postpone decisions

- How to deal with Google, Amazon and other giants, who use our content with little or any giveback?
- Is San Francisco still the right place for our office?
- Is growth the only option for progress?
- How do we prioritize risk mitigation strategies (and their funding)

Do we know whom
we serve?

Leadership: a key business

The Board provides leadership on a non-operational level for the Wikimedia Foundation.

Leadership: a key business

The Board provides leadership for the movement.

Leadership: a key business

The Board provides leadership on a non-operational level for the Wikimedia Foundation.



The Board provides leadership for the movement.

Leadership: a key business

Have a clear and joint
understanding of your role.

Avoid surprise.

Question everything.

Draw carefully from resources.

How do we serve
best?

Make the best out of your board time

- **Facilitation**: Let a facilitator help you to get to the point, have inspiring discussions and balance the different voices in the board. At least at the retreat. Ask like-minded organizations for recommendations.
- Check **timing and number of in-person meetings**. The combination of movement events and board meetings asks for a huge time commitment.
- **Improve online meetings**, less presentation, more exchange.

Board self evaluation

- Check annually your body's health and if the board is still functioning
 - Identify weaknesses and take activities
 - Include feedback from execs
 - Get feedback, improve
 - Connect better
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- You may think about splitting areas of interest over two or three years ^[1]
 - Overall board performance
 - Committee performance
 - Peer to peer evaluation

[1] <https://boardroomresources.com/insight/recommended-board-evaluation-formats-mapping-three-year-plan/>

A quick board checkup

- Get rid of overaged/unnecessary/unconducted tasks in charters
- Identify, schedule and assign tasks which are necessary and/or helpful
- Think about officers' term length (currently 1 year) with regards to sustainability
- Check board involvement in committees like AffCom and FDC

An inspiring board agenda

- Plan ahead, not just for one year
 - Do more than just fiduciary activities, come to substance
 - Plan discussions about questions that matters for the organization
 - Have an overview about responsibilities and timelines of the board, the committees and individuals (you may use a task planning tool)
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My personal recommendations

- Rethink board composition with a focus on effectiveness.
- Re-establish board evaluation.
- Create a board agenda which is more than a calendar with your fiduciary tasks (but include them).
- Plan ahead and discuss (and check) ideas before you propose a resolution.
- Ask our secretary to review our committee charters and check them against good governance, good practices and feasibility. Simplify.
- Question your individual capacities and competencies.
- Change, do not only talk about change.

There is so much
potential.

We need to find the
key to unlock it.

Are we ready
for our own future?