



Behaviours of an Effective CEO¹

Improving Boardroom behaviours

¹ Extracted from Improving charity boardroom behaviours; A guidance note published by the Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland April 2021.

19 Board Behaviours for effective governance

- Committed to the cause
- Clarity of focus (understanding role and purpose)
- Being strategic
- Leads by example
- Team player
- Integrity
- Ethical
- Independent thinker
- Probing (not controlling)
- Risk aware (not averse)
- Self-aware
- Creative (innovative)
- Keen to learn and improve
- Open-minded
- Courageous
- Inclusive
- Good listener
- Inspires trust
- Takes (and accepts) responsibility

An Effective CEO will:

- Have a strong attachment to the charity's cause
- Be passionate, but calm and objective
- Demonstrate a strong desire to achieve
- Articulate a clear vision for the charity to staff, volunteers and beneficiaries
- Respect the different roles of trustees and senior managers
- Accept the different leadership roles of the CEO and chair
- Use conceptual and analytical thinking to achieve the charity's objects
- Show a good awareness of external environmental developments that may impact the charity
- Research and share new opportunities to deliver the charitable objects
- Be flexible to other ways of delivering the charitable purposes
- Have passion and enthusiasm for the cause
- Be a convincing communicator
- Be visible to all stakeholders
- Encourage excellence in peers and staff
- Be a positive influence in the development of staff and volunteers
- Take people with them to achieve more than thought possible
- Celebrate success

An Effective CEO will:

- Empower, develop and set high expectations for direct reports, peers and others
- Foster productive relationships with every trustee and the chair
- Build partnerships and coalitions to further the charitable purposes
- Define success in terms of the whole team, community/beneficiary group
- Have humility and recognise that others may be better equipped to lead/deliver certain activities
- Respect the decisions of the board and support them in public
- Work towards the fulfilment of the charitable purposes, putting personal interests
- aside
- Deliver the tasks delegated in a calm and efficient manner
- Over-deliver on commitments
- Be the person the board and staff trust to get things done
- Use their authority appropriately and respectfully in fulfilling their duties
- Role model the charity's stated values, ethics and culture as agreed by the board
- Be alert to the charity's reputation and take measures to promote public trust and confidence

An Effective CEO will:

- Ensure transparency in the awarding of contracts, grants and jobs etc.
- Support the board in their aims to create a welcoming environment that safeguards all those that come into contact with the charity
- Actively promote a 'listening' culture to be alert to instances where stakeholders do not feel welcome or respected
- Present reports to the board in a range of formats to aid understanding, discussion and decision making
- Appreciate the thorough interrogation of proposals in order to achieve a better decision
- Demonstrate flexibility when plans and proposals are not fully supported by the board
- Understand, and explain, the implications of individual actions or recommendations on other aspects of the charity's systems, processes, functions and environment
- Challenge and accept challenge
- Support the board in its pursuit of understanding the issue at hand
- Respect the oversight of the board, and those matters reserved to it
- Be tolerant of a trustee's aversion to risk, but will provide assurance to counter/mitigate such risks
- Present papers that give due consideration to all relevant risks and potential opportunities

An Effective CEO will:

- Think about the overall impact of decisions on the charity's ability to deliver its objects
- Promote activities/actions that are in the best interests of the charitable purposes
- Possess confidence and humility
- Accurately assess their own strengths and weaknesses and take action to improve
- Ask for support from the chair
- Seek out a mentor/coach to help with their board relationships
- Encourage the board to adopt new approaches
- Be comfortable with trustees visiting charity sites and partaking in activities to gain a better understanding of the front line
- Accept that others may know better
- Be aware of advances and current thinking in the charity's field and look to apply the latest technologies to the activities of the organisation
- Share new ways of working that other charities are adopting
- Seek out professional support/join a relevant network
- Accept when they are wrong/have made a mistake and be keen to make amends, where possible
- Apologise to trustees, staff, stakeholders when necessary

An Effective CEO will:

- Avoid hubris
- Welcome different approaches to delivering charitable purposes
- Promote diversity and equality of opportunity throughout the charity's activities
- Recognise that new ideas and ways of working can come from anywhere within the charity
- Encourage staff and volunteers to accept and embrace the fact that the charity is composed of individuals who represent a great diversity of values, opinions, backgrounds, cultures and goals
- Take hard or unpopular operational decisions for the benefit of the charity, when necessary
- Ask for support, from the chair, trustees and elsewhere when needed
- Admit when they are wrong
- Have resilience
- Take on stretching goals and work outside of their comfort zone
- Support and promote the board's commitment to embed equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the charity
- Champion appropriate recruitment practices that include both academic and lived experience, where relevant
- Lead efforts to create a welcoming environment for all who come into contact with the charity

An Effective CEO will:

- Listen to the concerns of the board and address those concerns in board reports and other conversations
- Reflect on the feedback received regarding each aspect of the charity's activities
- Appreciate that effective communication is about listening and being listened to; silence does not necessarily equate to agreement
- Communicate regularly and openly
- Use clear and thoughtful oral and written communications to influence, negotiate and collaborate effectively
- Operate a 'no surprises' approach to interactions with the board
- Be professional, even when a decision goes against them
- Gracefully share success and/or freely give credit where it is due
- Deliver what was agreed on time, in budget and in the desired form
- Accept the decisions of the board
- Be open when there's been a mistake and apologise publicly when things go wrong
- Acknowledge that they may no longer be the right person to lead the charity.