



# Vocation: Board of Directors ~ A Personal Mission and Mentoring Exercise

## Overview:

The purpose of the “Board of Directors” exercise is to provide participants with a guided means of reflection to examine life purpose and relational influences. By examining their lives from the perspective that their life is a corporation, individuals will develop a mission statement as well as identify individuals, beliefs and/or values serving on their “Board of Directors”. Guided analysis and reflective questioning challenge participants to be intentional in the decisions related to direction/purpose and relationships.

## Category:

Visioning, Personal Development, Vocation

## Level:

This activity is appropriate for all levels. It may be beneficial to use this exercise multiple times (freshman or sophomore year and senior year) so that individuals can see personal development.

## Recommended Bonner Sequence:

The “Board of Directors” exercise is an excellent tool to use during freshmen orientation or a sophomore retreat. The first administration will give students an opportunity to begin their college career with some intentionality. During their senior year Bonners should be asked to repeat this exercise. Processing may include a comparison to their earlier “Board” and personal mission as well as a conversation about how they may change as students move into life beyond graduation. In the freshman or sophomore years, this exercise can be used as a follow-up to “Two Choices”. In the senior year, this exercise can be used as a follow-up to “The Bridge Builder” and/or as a precursor to “Tuesdays with Morrie.”

expectation	explore	experience	example	expertise
VALUES: spiritual reflection, community development				

**Type:** Structured activity suitable for use in a workshop, retreat, training, or regular meeting

**Focus or Goals of this Guide:**

- Afford participants the opportunity to identify a personal, life mission: who are you, who do you want to be, what difference do you want to make in the world.
- Provide participants with a means to identify individuals, beliefs, and/or values influencing their lives.
- Challenge participants to develop intentionality about relationship development and life planning.
- Offer an indirect understanding of non-profit and/or corporate board structure and philosophy.

**Materials:**

- Board of Directors worksheets
- Pens and/or pencils

**How to Prepare:**

Read the activity to become familiar with the exercise. Facilitators are encouraged to do the activity to gain personal insight into its impact. It is helpful, but not necessary, to have the “legend” written out on a flip-chart, chalkboard, white board or handout. This enables participants to reflect back on the meaning of the symbols later in the exercise. Become familiar with how to present the exercise.

**How to Do/Brief Outline:**

This activity has five basic components. Facilitators should use the suggested times as a guide, feeling free to allow more or less time based on the size of the group.

The outline has the following parts:

- |                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Introduce activity                | suggested time 5 minutes     |
| 2) Distribute and complete worksheet | suggested time 5-10 minutes  |
| 3) Board assessment questions        | suggested time 5 minutes     |
| 4) Sharing                           | suggested time 10-15 minutes |
| 5) Reflection questions              | suggested time 15-20 minutes |

## **Part 1) Activity Introduction/Overview**

Suggested time: no more than 5 minutes

Distribute “Board of Directors” worksheets to all participants and say,

*“Boards of Directors typically have general control of the direction, stability and viability for an organization. Boards are typically made up of a chair and members. Taking this concept to a personal level and identifying your life from an organizational perspective, who is on your board? Who do you rely upon for guidance, support or advice? Who or what holds a chair of influence or control in your life? This activity is designed to assist us in exploring our lives from a Board perspective.”*

## **Part 2) “Board of Directors” Worksheet Completion**

Suggested time: 5-10 minutes

Say to participants:

*“ Your worksheet represents an aerial view of a Board room. List the names of the people or things currently holding a spot on your Board of Directors in the chairs provided. List each separately and be as specific as possible. In the center of the table, write your personal mission statement for life.”*

## **Part 3) “Board of Directors” Assessment Questions**

Suggested time: 5 minutes

After participants have filled in their board and written their mission statements, you will have another “task” component to complete. You may want to write the questions/steps on a flipchart, dry erase board, etc.

Ask the following:

- 1. Is there someone on your Board who has veto power over any decision(s)? If so, place a “V” next to his/her name.*
- 2. Underline the name of anyone who wouldn’t have been on your Board 3 years ago.*
- 3. On the bottom of the page, list anyone who has been on your Board in the past three years, but is no longer.*
- 4. Are there people you would like on your Board who aren’t there now? If so, list them on the top of the page.*
- 5. Circle the names of anyone on your Board who you would like to remove.*
- 6. If there are people who want to be on your Board whom you haven’t let join (your peer group, significant other, etc.), write their names and place a star next to their names.*

7. Draw a box around the person(s) who is/are most likely the co-chair(s) of your Board.

#### **Part 4) Sharing and General Reflection**

Suggested time: 10-15 minutes

Ask participants to share their Board of Directors with the group. Allow a sufficient amount of time for this to occur. A 10-15 minute block of time should allow for sufficient sharing. The time needed will vary based on the size of the group and their level of safety with one another. If the group is large and/or not well connected, some participants may not want to share this type of personal information.

You may wish to ask the following questions to facilitate sharing:

1. *Who would like to share information about your boards, either members, mission statement, or both?*
2. *What made this task easy or difficult for you?*

You may wish to develop additional questions to solicit broad reactions and thoughts.

#### **Part 5) Guided Reflection**

Suggested time: 15-20 minutes

After participants have had an opportunity to share information about their Boards, continue with the following questions for the group.

1. *What does this activity tell you about those who are closest to you?*
2. *How have these individuals influenced the values you hold?*
3. *Do your Board members know they are on your Board? Why or why not? How might your relationship change if they were aware of how highly you esteemed their influences?*
4. *As you think about your Board, is there anyone whom you actively recruited? Or, did they come to be on your Board through happenstance?*
5. *Do the members of your Board want to be there?*
6. *How do you feel your Board will change in the next 3-4 years?*
7. *How many of you put yourself on your Board? Why or why not? If you “didn’t think about it”, why do you think that is?*

8. *Whose Board are you on?*
9. *Whose Board do you want to be on?*
10. *What have you learned about yourself and how you manage your life as a result of this exercise? Will you make any changes in your life as a result of this activity?*

You may wish to develop additional questions based on your personal knowledge of and relationship with participants.

Handouts:

Board of Directors Worksheet