

INNOVATION MINUTE

Diversity & Inclusion

Over-Board

After several years of intentionally focusing on diversifying the racial and gender composition of your board, you finally reached a level of success worth celebrating. Last December, after approving 6 new board members, you finally reached 55% women, and 18% people of color on the board. The Chair of the Board was thrilled, and the nominations committee was quite proud of themselves. Several of the community organizations you partner with were also happy. For three years they had been expressing concerns to you over your boards lack of diversity. Despite strong diversity and inclusion value statements, and a long history of funding programs in diverse communities, you were still hearing feedback that the communities you served felt disconnected because your board members didn't represent their backgrounds and perspectives.

Because you and your board

chair believe that leadership and commitment start at the top, you knew you had to diversify the board. It was hard at first, but after a lot of outreach and relationship building, you finally got enough recommendations to reach your goal. You worked with your committee chairs to immediately engage these new diverse members on your diversity and inclusivity committee's and you even made sure that your staff called them when planning events in diverse communities. What a year!

Now, as you're reaching the end of the year, you've had 3 of the women resign, and 2 of the people of color on your board resign. At this rate, you're back to square-one. You've spoken to the governance committee about this and they're frustrated. They feel that they worked hard last year for nothing and told you that they approved all of the 'diverse candidates' last year, so they don't know

where you expect them to find more people.

When you called the resigning board members to ask if they had recommendations for you they told you that they would not recommend anyone to your board to be treated the way they were treated. None of them would expand on their answers and you have no idea what they're talking about. You thought everything was going well and you assumed they had each resigned due to professional conflicts. Now it seems there might have been a bigger issue at play. But what could it be?

Organizational Success Factors

Strategy

Intentionality

Commitment

Evaluation



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