



Good Governance

Conflict management for BPW Boards and Board members

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Responsibilities and Duties of Board members

- to act with care and diligence
- to act honestly and with integrity
- to act professionally
- to act within authority
- to act for the good of the organisation

Rights of Board members

Board members can expect to be

- treated respectfully
- provided with accurate and timely information
- included in all Board decision-making
- heard when they have a point of view
- treated the same as all other Board members
- advised of public statements before their release

Conflict on Boards

What causes conflict?

- Poor communication
- Seeking personal power
- Poor leadership style
- Inadequate information
- Lack of openness
- Questioning perceptions
- Conflicting value systems
- Lack of clear goals
- Different cultural norms
- Change in leadership

Conflict on Boards

Why does conflict occur?

- Conflict is inevitable, especially amongst hard-working passionate women who are committed to BPW
- Conflict develops because we are dealing with people's lives, pride, ego and sense of mission or purpose
- Conflict can be minimized, avoided or resolved
- Conflict can be constructive – we can learn from conflict

Avoiding conflict on BPW Boards

Destructive conflict

- takes attention away from other important activities
- undermines morale or confidence, especially of newer members
- polarizes people and groups, reducing cooperation
- increases or sharpens difference
- leads to irresponsible and harmful behaviour
- reduces the Board's productivity, delays good outcomes
- makes some members decide to leave the Board and other decide not to join

Avoiding conflict on BPW Boards

Constructive conflict

- helps to highlight differences and misunderstandings, and to clarify important problems and issues
- results in solutions to problems, and involves people in resolving issues important to them
- causes authentic communication, where members listen as well as talk
- helps release emotion, anxiety and stress
- builds cooperation among people through learning more about each other
- joining in resolving the conflict helps individuals develop understanding and skills

Managing conflict on Boards

Preventing conflict

- Agree goals, set a plan and measure progress
- Communicate frequently and develop a sound management system
- Be honest about concerns and differences in values and approaches
- Respect experience, but acknowledge new ideas
- Let the team create - people will support what they help create
- Provide more data and information than is needed
- Encourage informal interaction, provide opportunities away from meetings for members to get to know each other

Managing conflict on Boards

Resolving conflict

- Meet conflict head on, deal with it straight away
- Agree to disagree - understand that healthy disagreement builds better decisions
- Reach consensus through collaboration
- Put individual egos aside
- Stress the importance of following policy
- Focus on shared aims and achieving the agreed outcome, not on disagreements about details and priorities
- Seek advice and exchange best practice ideas with others

How shall we make decisions?

- Fairness and justice, applying rules fairly to everyone
- Honesty and integrity
- Transparency and accountability, making decisions based upon facts
- Respect for each other and the organisation, meeting our obligations
- Working together, taking the lead where we have prime responsibility
- Delegated authority and delegated responsibilities

Communication rules

- Respecting time, managing information flow, clarity of subject when the topic changes
- Responsiveness, meeting undertakings and deadlines, don't be the weak link
- Inclusiveness, acknowledging and respecting our different cultures and languages
- Allowing for discussion and debate, but then agreeing as a board
- Respecting confidentiality, developing trust