

Spark Event – “Business on Board”
Offices of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
200 S. Broad Street, 7th Floor
Monday, April 21, 2008

*Notes taken and typed by Michelle Jacob,
Administrative Assistant for the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia*

I. Welcome and introductions

- A. Bryan Clark and Erin Reilly are the organizers of tonight’s Spark Event.
- “Business on Board” We will talk about establishing and building your board.
- B. Representatives from PVLA – Kathleen Carignan (Executive Director), Mary Mitchell and Bill Grigos (Legal Services Coordinator, Drexel Law Students)
- Kathleen outlines PVLA’s services for theatres and artists - legal line, artfaxes, full service.
- C. Amelia Schmertz, Vice President of Programs, Director Business On Board
- Five core programs at Arts & Business Council
 1. PVLA
 2. Business on Board
 3. Business Volunteers for the Arts
 4. Technology Connectors
 5. Business on Call is a ready pool of highly professional volunteers from sponsored businesses.
 - Amelia will email the Theatre Alliance the Arts and Business Council brochure for posting on the Spark Resources website.
 - Introductions around the table - Name, Organization, How old is the organization? Is your board friends/family or community/corporate?

II. What is the main thing you need from your board that is NOT related to fundraising?

- A. Managing a board is not rocket science, but comes down to treating your board members as human beings. Communication is the key to any arising problems.
- B. Brainstorming
- Attend opening nights and bring people. Be an ambassador for company. Come to shows and events. Audience relations
 - Networking with follow through. Introductions to connections,
 - Help with hands-on activity, like advertising. Ideas with follow through
 - Board recruitment and development, leveraging in-kind activities.
 - Stop asking about tiny details and help look at larger strategy.

III. Solutions: Clear board expectations, evaluation processes (handouts – Job Descriptions)

- A. Who has a defined a set of board responsibilities? Whose board lives up to these responsibilities?

- Amelia hands out packet of responsibilities for board members, both the whole board as a body and responsibilities for individual board members. (Copies available at the Theatre Alliance office.)
- B. Who has an annual review process to evaluate board members?
- Send out evaluation sheet and ask board members to self-evaluate. Use evaluation to self-identify ‘dead wood.’ It takes the person out of the process.
- C. Discussion: What if you have someone on your board because they are a name and they are dead wood?
- As a board member, they do have legal and fiduciary responsibilities. Put them on an advisory board/committee. Sometimes you do have to deal with just getting a check every year.
 - Ex officio board members have a place at the table and are in all the information, but have no legal/fiduciary responsibilities or voting capabilities.
 - Is it proper for artistic/executive director to be on board? A lot to be said for that, especially for new, self-started company.
- D. New board member orientation.
- Spend time with staff, learn what organization is about. Assign a ‘buddy’ to the new board member, other than executive director or board chair. Give them a copy of your strategic plan, budget, last several years activities, organization charts, etc.
 - Carol gives example of new board member orientation with Simpatico.
 - Best turn out to board meetings at pubs, walking line between being formal and fun board.

IV. Board development

A. Tales from the trenches: Carol Laratonda of Simpatico Theatre

1. **SWOT** – Analysis of **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. Clarify expectations of board and company members. Create a list of what is important as a company.
 - Business on Board volunteer helped to set realistic goals and deadlines.
2. Where do you find these people once you know what you are looking for?
 - When you really think about it, you know more people than you think.
 - Identified weaknesses in company and find a person to fill that gap. Categorize what/who you want and seek people out.
 - Give potential board members information about company and invite to a show.
 - Discussion around establishing a board, and then choosing officers or vice versa.

B. How can you drive a conversation with board members to introducing people to the organization as possible board members?

- First step is a cultivation process. Get people to know the organization, and allow your board to provide the contact list.
- Throw a happy hour event for networking, possibly even after a board meeting.
- It is helpful to take the meetings out of the regular environment or bring in mentor/speaker to board meeting.
- BCKSEET recommends reading The Art of Governance. Available through TCG publications at <http://tcg.org/eccommerce/showbookdetails.cfm?ID=TCG5420>

- Asking board members questions they don't know the answers to will encourage them to ask other people to find the answer. Board members enjoy getting their hands dirty and having a sense of ownership and partnership.

V. Talk through brainstorming points.

A. Attend opening nights, ambassador for theatres

- Board members are people too, with busy schedules and who procrastinate.
- How do you sell your show to each individual board member? Fun save-the-date announcement or invitation at the beginning of the year. Mention important dates at board meetings and follow through in different ways (phone, email, evite, paper invitation, etc.)
- Give board a goal regarding show attendance and help them achieve it.
- Board members should pay for tickets. It is a part of their investment for your organization. Give free tickets to board members that they have to give away, perhaps a board subscription price to give away.

B. Networking and follow-through

- Board members do not want to do the leg-work.
- Create a list of potential ways to get involved and have clear expectations of what 'getting involved' means.
- Contact board member who bring friends to events to discuss ways to get the friend involved.
- Also, give board members a way out, like "You seem very busy right now, is there another way we can get this done?"

C. Hands-on activity

- Business on call – unlimited number of services for \$45 a year.
- Board burn-out? Take look at board and your own job description on parallel basis to take some work off their plate.
- New board members can bring in new life.
- People who have gone through Business On Board have experience and energy. Most start working as board officer very soon after training.
- Getting involved with a theatre organization can give these business people a great break from their day jobs.

VI. Business on Board program

A. Amelia explains training process for Business on Board.

- Business or professionals from companies who have identified board service as an important leadership opportunity.
- Organization observation - Amelia interviews and tries to match their personality and skill-set with organizations. A good match happens about 75% of the time. These tend to be in medium-sized organization range.

B. Once a year board training on clarification of board responsibilities for board and staff members. On site board consultations is a growing process.

C. Twelve principles of Governance that power exceptional boards.

- This handout answers the questions, "How do you go from being a responsible board to an exceptional board?"

VII. Closing thoughts

- Amelia will take fundraising questions after meeting.
- PVLA representatives are available for answering questions.