

Creating an Authentic Board Connection with People Who Care About Your Organization's Purpose

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Introductions

- Name
- Board on which you serve
- How long you've been on your board
- What challenges you have with connecting to your principal stakeholders (careholders or owners) — those on whose behalf you govern?

We will use Mentimeter to share throughout the presentation. Please scan this QR code to participate.

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Policy Governance® Boards Focus On 3 Areas

Role of the
Policy
Governance®
Board

1. Accountability to the Principal Stakeholders — which **guides**
2. Written Policy — which **directs**
3. Organizational Performance — which when rigorously monitored assures **accountability** to the principal stakeholders



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Some Current Challenges in Today's Political Environment

- Disagreements on Mission and Values
- Stalemates and Impasse
- Erosion of Trust and Respect
- Focus on Political Agendas
- Difficulty in Finding Common Ground
- Increased Scrutiny and Public Pressure
- Loss of Focus on the Mission

*Can School Boards Survive the "Parents' Rights" Movement?
With the 2024 U.S. election on the horizon, TC's Jonathan Collins and Jeffrey Henig discuss America's fiery landscape of politics and education*

*Mediation Under Consideration as Conflict Divides York County School Board Leadership
Tempers Again Flare at School Board Over Disagreement and Misunderstanding of Members' Roles*

Political endorsements, controversial cultural issues punctuate Northeast Ohio school board races

Two East Brunswick school board members resign over 'disagreement'



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Political Polarization

Nuances of Political Polarization

- Echo Chambers
- Tribalism
- Hyper-Partisanship
- Weaponization of Issues



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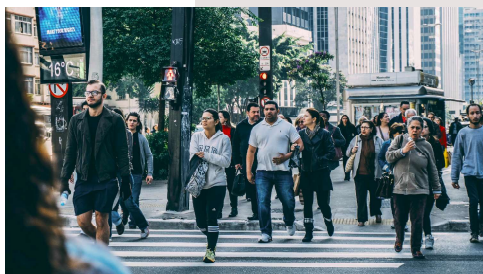
Strategies for Mitigating the Impact

- Board Composition
- Focus on Shared Values
- Ground Rules for Discussions
- Fact-Based Decision Making
- Focus on Common Ground
- Focus on Ends (organizational outcomes)
- Transparency and Communication

Policy Governance and Linkage/Connection Plan Helps!



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Key Takeaways

- Develop practical strategies for establishing authentic connections with diverse stakeholder groups.
- Learn how to balance diverse viewpoints within the board while upholding community values.
- Gain insights into evidence-based decision-making in the context of political polarization.
- Acquire tools for building trust through transparent communication with stakeholders.



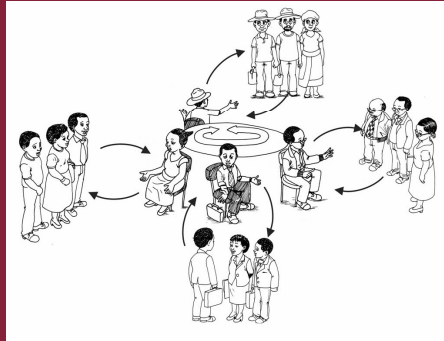
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13 Steps for Creating an Authentic Connection Plan with Your Principal Stakeholders



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1) Clearly define who your Principal Stakeholders are



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Who are Your Principal Stakeholders?

- The people on whose behalf the board determines what benefits the organization should produce, who those benefits are for, and how much they are worth
- Equivalent of “shareholders” in a for-profit organization
- NOT all “stakeholders” are “Principal Stakeholders”



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	Owners	Customers	Stakeholders (other than owners)
Definition	The people from whom the Board derives its moral and/or legal authority, and to whom the board owes ultimate accountability. The board determines the Ends (what benefits should be produced, for whom, at what cost) on behalf of owners	The people who use the organization's services or products	All who have an interest in the organization, including employees, customers, vendors, funders, other organizations
Time frame of perspective	Long-term perspective; can see the big picture	Immediate perspective; I want it, now	More likely short-term
Primary interest	Interest in the common good, community	Interest in the individual good, “me and mine”	Needs of the individual or organization to which they belong
Time frame for expected return	Expectation of future return	Expectation of immediate return	Varied; more likely short-term
Relationship to benefits from the organization	Proactive – decide what the benefits should be	Reactive – receive the benefits	Reactive or proactive
Mentality	Investment mentality	Purchasing mentality	Purchasing or investment mentality; more likely purchasing
Major focus	Cost in relation to benefits for the common good; relative priorities	Benefits for me	Benefits for me or alignment with my organization's needs
Basis for decision-making	Values	Opinions, reactions	Personal reactions or values of my organization
Appropriate organizational point of connection	Board	CEO/staff	CEO/staff



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Menti Quiz

- Questions posed with choices being
 - “Principal Stakeholders/Careholders/Owners”
 - Customers
 - All Stakeholders



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2) Understand the purpose of making **authentic connections** to Principal Stakeholders



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Menti Quiz

- What does an “authentic connection” mean to you?



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Menti Quiz

- What happens when authentic connections are lacking?



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Purpose of Making Authentic Connections

- Intentional and constructive dialogue and deliberation between Principal Stakeholders and board members primarily around the organization's Ends
- Not the same as “Public Relations”
- Critical part of the information used to make Ends decisions



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3) Select a **representative sample** of Principal Stakeholders



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Representative Sample is Key

- Segment Principal Stakeholders into bite-size pieces that will help you identify the diversity of opinion among them
- E.g., geography, age, education, socio-economic status

When division exists in a community, this work is essential!



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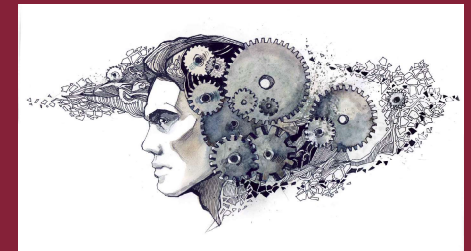
Menti Quiz

- What happens if your sample is not representative?



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4) Decide how much **background** is needed



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Background Provides Context and Foundation for Success

- Do the Principal Stakeholders know they are in this role?
- Is it necessary to provide some basic education before asking for input?
- Board wants Principal Stakeholders' input to help create the future
- Explain this is not about “customer” issues

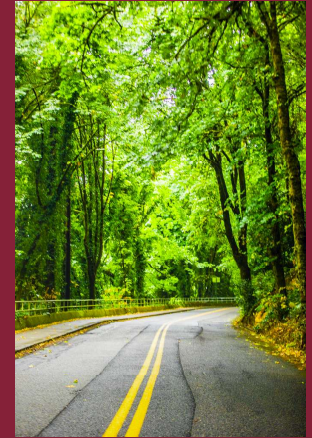


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5) Ask questions that generate **governance-focused responses**



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Governance Mindset Sets the Stage for Successful Interaction

- Get them into “Principal Stakeholder” mindset
 - “as a member of your community . . .”
 - “in your industry . . .”
 - “thinking about other people your age . . .”
- Not, “what do YOU think/want”
 - “Individual” mindset will likely yield “customer” information instead of “Principal Stakeholder” information

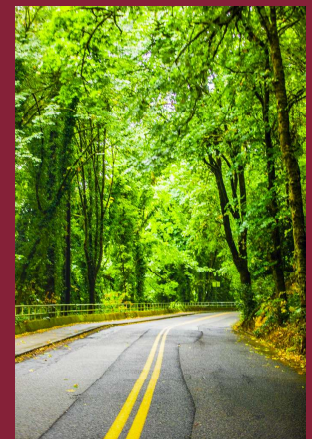


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6) Ask questions about **the right things**



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Right Questions Result in Meaningful Data Collected

- Input primarily about Ends issues
- Main purpose is not input about how the CEO is doing with delegated operational issues (occasionally, board may wish to check owners' perceptions re: adequacy of a limitation)
- Ask “what” and “why” questions, rather than “how” questions



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Examples of “What” Questions

- What are the priority needs in your community/industry that are not being met?
- If there could be only one need, that if met, could immediately assist your industry/community, what would that be?
- What difference should this organization make within your community/profession/industry?



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Examples of “Why” Questions

- Do people [your age/in your community] think the role of this organization should change? Why or why not?
- Look at the following list of outcomes that xx organization might offer: [list high level Ends]
 - Which one seems most important? Why?
 - Which one seems least important? Why?
 - Which seems unlikely that a [type of organization] would offer? What is missing?



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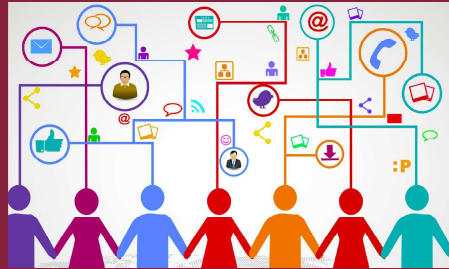
Help Them Provide “Future-oriented” Input

- Looking ahead 3 years from now, what results would have happened for the people we serve for you to say, “I’m really happy with the progress that the organization has made?”
- What are the biggest emerging trends or disruptions you see impacting our industry in the next three to five years?
- What challenges do you anticipate our organization facing in the next several years?



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7) Choose the most appropriate methods



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Choosing the Right Method for the Intended Audience

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Invited presentations at Board meetings
- Meetings with natural groupings
- Key informant interviews
- Scripted round tables at meetings
- “Town hall” meetings are usually non-representative of Principal Stakeholders
- Mail surveys
- Phone surveys
- Web surveys
- Direct-email surveys
- Dialogue groups
- Intercept surveys
- Cafés
- Deliberative Polling
- Advisory Committees



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8) Set a timeline



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Ensure Enough Time To Meet Your Goals

- Identify when linkage information will be needed for Ends work
- Work backwards from this date to schedule linkage activities
- Schedule debriefing time at board meeting immediately following each linkage activity



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9) Implement the plan



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Ready, Set, Go!

- Decide who will be accountable to make the plan a reality
- A Linkage Committee may be used
- If using a committee, make sure the board still “owns” the plan and as much as possible involve all board members



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Sample Ownership Linkage Plan

PLAN OVERVIEW

Owner group(s) Selected	Method	Questions	Notes
YEAR 1:			
8 people selected who are representative of Regions A, B, C respectively	3 Focus groups	To be determined by the board	Use at least 3 questions consistently with all groups; others may be group-specific
Representative of an organization that provides service to Region D	Dialogue at board meeting	To be determined by the board	Provide questions in advance
YEAR 2:			
Representatives of 5 other boards that have same or overlapping ownership	Dialogue at board meetings	To be determined by the board	Provide questions in advance
8 people selected who are representative of Regions E and F respectively	2 Focus groups	To be determined by the board	Refine focus group process based on learning from last year
YEAR 3:			
Random sample of entire owner population	Our questions added to a survey done by a polling company	To be determined by the board, with advice from polling company	
Leaders of community organizations	1 Focus group	To be determined by the board	



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YEAR ONE DETAILED OWNER LINKAGE PLAN	Accountability	Target Date	Participants	Notes
Identify 5 questions to ask the owners this year	Board	Feb 15	Whole board	
Method: Focus Groups Select 3 representative focus groups of 8 people in regions A, B, & C	Linkage Committee	March 1	Linkage Committee	Staff help needed with representative selection
Provide questions in advance and brief background introductory information	Linkage Committee	March 10	Linkage Committee	Need consistent package of background information
Set up focus group meetings for April and May	CEO	March 30		Admin support to the board
Conduct focus groups, 2 board members present at each group	Linkage Committee	May 30	Board members as assigned	Need scripted guide for facilitators, recorders
Provide board with collected information from the focus groups	Linkage Committee	June 30	Linkage Committee	Admin support with typing
Letter to focus group participants with summary of results from all focus groups, and outline of how the board plans to use the information	Linkage Committee	Aug 31	Linkage Committee	Admin support with typing and distribution
Identify information from the focus group meetings that could be used to develop survey questions	Linkage Committee	Nov. 30	Board to select from Committee's initial choices	
Method: Invitation to Board Meeting Invite spokesperson from organization X that works with owners in region D to Sept Board meeting	Linkage Committee	June 30	Whole board	Use questions to the focus groups as basis for dialogue
Create a comprehensive list of potential people who have a good understanding of the needs of owners, to invite to board meetings	Linkage Committee	Annually by Feb.1	Whole board to annually select from the list	



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10) Track the information



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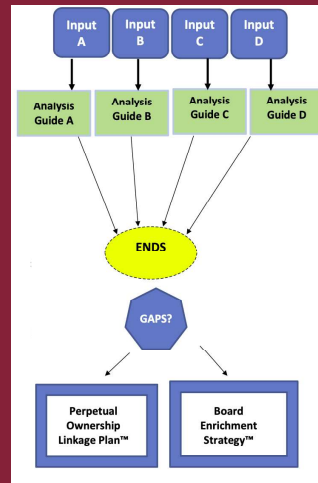
Track the Information So That It is Archived For Future Discussion and for Transparency

- Debrief with entire board as soon as possible after each linkage activity
- Identify key information that has potential implications for Ends and keep in one location
- Note if any means-related information has implications for Executive Limitations amendments
- Pass remaining means-related information to CEO as “FYI” – no board action required
- “Match” linkage information to existing Ends or note the potential need for a new Ends policy
- Identify any needs for further research or education as a result of what you have learned



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11) Apply governance-related inputs to ends



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Use What You Learn to Enhance Ends

- Collect Principal Stakeholder input during the board’s annual cycle, then schedule a longer meeting or retreat
- Go back to the key information extracted after each linkage activity and look at all information as part of the whole picture
- Add other information to add to the board’s overall understanding



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Connecting Info Gathered to the Ends

What Not To Do

- Don't simply file the report away, never to be looked at again.
- Don't, on the basis of one or two linkage events, immediately change the Ends. You need to collect a reasonably representative sample of information before you know if Ends should be changed.
- Don't think that Ends need to be changed every meeting, or even every year, although it is very important for the board to be continuously focused on them.

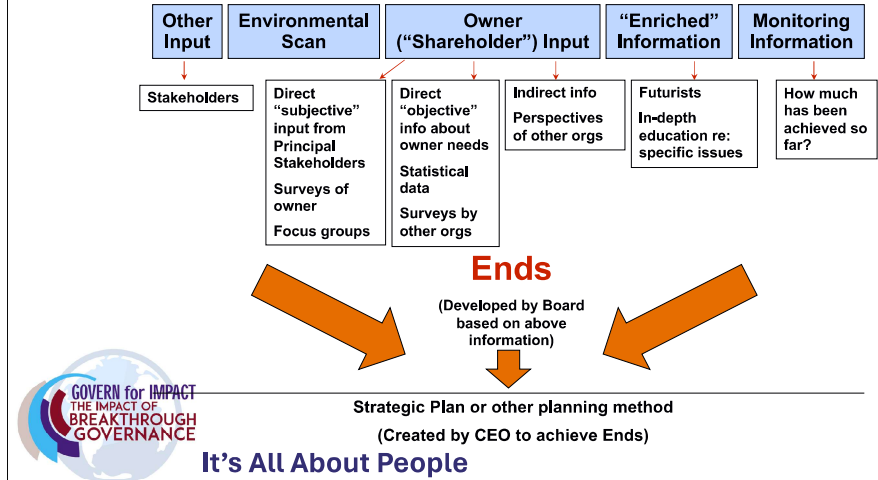
What To Do

- Debrief after every event and look for a global sense of the groups' perceptions or attitudes.
- Capture, in writing, any insights from the board collectively.
- Create a folder in which all of these insights from each linkage event are stored.
- Annually conduct a review and:
 - Organize the information into tentative categories or topics related to Ends.
 - Look for patterns and relationships within and across groups.
 - Look for common phrases, ideas, and concepts.
 - Look for specific examples and ideas.
 - Watch for your own bias.
- Consider other sources of information



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Information for Ends Decisions



12) Communicate back to Principal Stakeholders

"...effective communication requires more than an exchange of information. When done right, communication fosters understanding, strengthens relationships, improves teamwork, and builds trust."

Adapted from: NCT "Let's Chat", Professionally Speaking, The Magazine of the Ontario College of Teachers, March 2014 (6)

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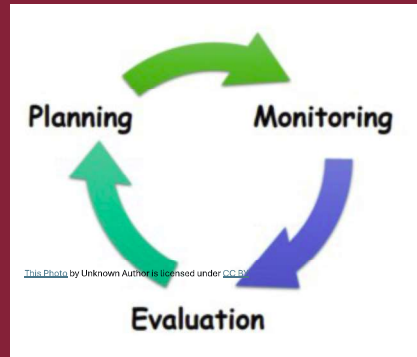
Communication is a Two-Way Street

- Let the Principal Stakeholders know what happened to their ideas
- Did you use them?
- If not, why not?



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13) Regularly **evaluate** and **update** the plan



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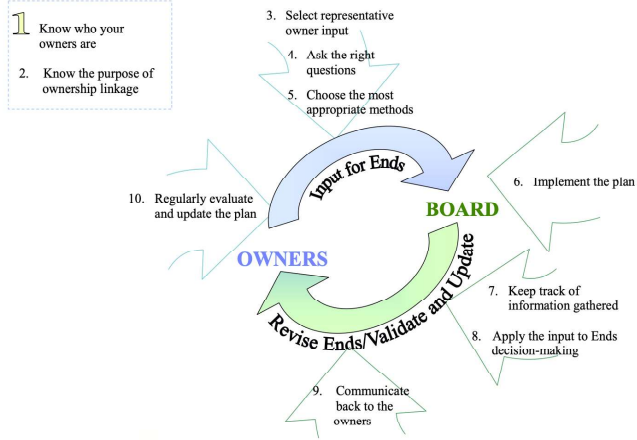
Rinse and Repeat

- Learn from your experience
- After each linkage activity, debrief and refine the process as needed
- Annually, re-evaluate year 2 of the plan and flesh it out, then add a new year to the end of the plan, to maintain a rolling 3-year plan



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Perpetual Owner Linkage Plan™



15-ENDS



Further Resources

- REALBoard Tool Kit™ Volume 3: Connect: A Guide to Ownership Linkage
- REALBoard Tool Kit™ Volume 4: Future-Focused Board Agendas
www.governancecoach.com

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