

<http://www.joangarry.com/interview-questions-non-profit-board-members/>

QUESTIONS YOU WISH YOU COULD ASK

So what are the *right* questions? Before we get to that, here's what we *wish* we could ask.

I hope you forward this to your chair of Board Governance right after you read this article.

- Are you rich? I mean, like *really* rich. We need really rich people on our board.
- Can you assure us that you won't ask any really stupid questions at a board meeting?
- Do you *really* like to hear yourself talk?
- When someone says something you disagree with, do you either sigh or roll your eyes?
- How many times in the last month have you been on a conference call, hit the MUTE button, and checked your email?
- Will you commit to agreeing with absolutely everything I say? (Asked by the E.D.)
- Do you tend to assume that someone is doing a terrible job until proven otherwise?
- Does the idea of asking someone for money make your skin crawl?
- Do you care if you are late for stuff?
- **Note: join the fun and add a comment with a question YOU wish you could ask.**

That was fun.

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK

OK, so let's get to the meat of it. What questions should you ask in a board interview to get the best possible board members? Here are six critical interview questions for non profit board members.

- **What do you know about our organization?** Why are you interested in committing your time and energy to us?
- **What do you think are the characteristics of a great board member?**
- **Fundraising is a significant obligation of board service (state give/get clearly).** Can you tell us about your experience in fundraising? Here, you need to dig and probe. Helping her daughter sell Girl Scout cookies does not count. Selling wrapping paper for her son? Nope. Ask what it looked like. Ask about comfort level.
- **Would you be willing to attend a lunch with the E.D. in which the goal was to make a major donor ask?**
- **Board members bring experience, wisdom, strategic thinking, and their rolodexes. Can you tell us about yours?** (You're probing here for who is in it and how willing the prospect is to share it.)
- **What kind of autonomy do you have over your calendar?** There will be meetings between board meetings, occasional donor lunches.

If you ask me, the single biggest problem with interviewing board candidates is that they are not interviews at all. Candidates come to "interviews" assuming that the job is theirs if they want it. The committee sells and persuades and typically does not vet the candidate in any substantive way. And real discussions about the fundraising obligation are swept under the rug for fear of chasing a good prospect away.

Come on folks. Can we please remember that board service is a privilege? That working on behalf of your organization is a gift. That public service is core to the betterment of our society.

I'd say "man up," but that would be sexist.