

## CHARITY MATTERS



*Board Meetings – Where is the vision?*

*Five years from today, what will be the legacy of the current board? What will your community, voluntary or charitable organisation look and feel like? What would you like it to be?*

Board meetings are a forum for the board to review, discuss and assess where the organisation is at from a number of perspectives. They are necessary and part of your legal framework. However, and too often, time is not devoted to determining / agreeing a vision for the organisation for the future due to time constraints, pressing issues and external factors such as the day job!

A Strategic Plan defines goals and objectives for your organisation but does not set out a vision. Yes, a vision statement is usually contained within the body of the plan but it is a statement and not an action. The Strategic Plan is always more operational than visionary.

The next time you are planning and preparing to attend a board meeting of your community, voluntary or charitable organisation, ask for time to be allocated on the agenda to discuss the following questions (and these are only a sample of the questions that should be considered by a board). At this juncture, it is important to state and recognise that the board determines the vision for the organisation and not the CEO. Equally, I would go so far as to say that this visionary work should be conducted annually during a ½ day board retreat where maximum value can be extracted.

1. What short sentence best describes our organisation?
2. What will be the most obvious difference(es) about our organisation in five years' time?
3. Five years from today, what will our stakeholders consider to be the most important legacy of our work as a board?
4. If we could successfully enter an alliance or strategic partnership with another organisation, would we pursue this and why?
5. What is the biggest gap between what our organisation claims it is and what it actually is?

Five years is a very short period of “organisational” time. Posing such questions is a critical part of the visionary work of the board. These questions are thought provoking and shift the emphasis from day-to-day activities to longer term developmental plans. The board should spend time agreeing a long-term vision for the organisation and build a framework around that. That vision should be clearly communicated to the CEO who in turn will help to turn that vision into operational goals & objectives which will feed into the culture and ethos of the organisation. You will also find that having such a vision will be rewarding and will serve as a motivating factor for staff, constituents and beneficiaries.



John Warren, JE Warren Consulting, [john@jewarrenconsulting.net](mailto:john@jewarrenconsulting.net) [www.jewarrenconsulting.net](http://www.jewarrenconsulting.net)