

One Voice and Messaging by the Board

Remember the game of whispering a message down a line of people? Inevitably the original message morphed into something different or wrong when it reached the final person. Post-board meeting reports often experience similar communication confusion.

The directors are expected to communicate key meeting results. Members will ask, "What was decided?" While meeting minutes summarize the actions of the board, they often are distributed weeks later, and can be lengthy.

Ideally, when the board adjourns there should be agreement and understanding about key messages that should be communicated. Other issues and announcements may be delayed for communication solely by the chief elected officer.

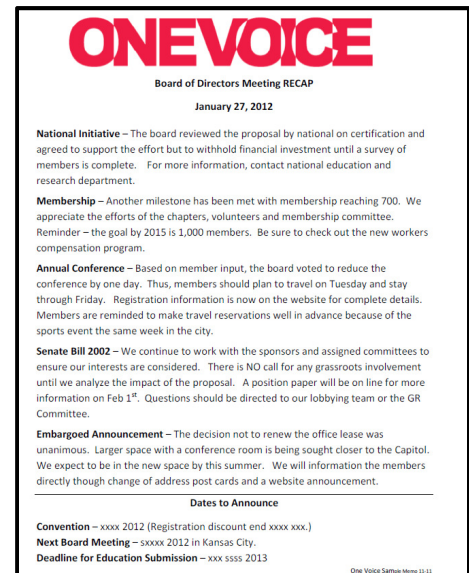
One Voice

One way to ensure consistent, clear messages is to create a meeting recap upon which directors can rely.

As the meeting is ready to adjourn, or immediately following, agree upon the key messages to communicate outside the board room. Create a recap and give it a document name such as "One Voice." Urge directors to rely on the recap to accurately communicate results. (The same document can be used to distribute to allied organizations, donors and other interested stakeholders.)

The reinforces that the official spokesperson of the organization is the chief elected officer (a.k.a. president or chair of the board). He or she can delegate authority for communication to the directors and staff. Directors should not *assume* they have authority to report information and should respect the confidentiality of board discussions and documents.

"Because the board is a single entity – the post-meeting messages should be viewed as one– not as varied opinions by individual directors."



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Note: Board resources are available free at www.nonprofitcenter.com

Graphic use:

ONE VOICE