



# Fast Fundraising Facts & Other Essentials

## THE INVISIBLE YELLOW LINE— Board and Staff Roles

I've written about this topic before, but recently I have had numerous requests for this topic in my nonprofit seminars and workshops, so it bears repeating.

Identifying and clarifying Board and staff roles is one of the most difficult relationships to define. When I ask volunteers to describe where their authority begins and ends, it is often vastly different from how the Executive Director or other staff might describe it. And, all too often, this is the main source of tension between staff and volunteers.

I call this the **Invisible Yellow Line Syndrome** because, like the yellow line that appears on your television screen during a football game to show you the next first down, the line between Board and staff is just as invisible—and it often moves!

Although examples of “rogue Boards” do exist, some of whom I have been called upon to work with, I do not believe that most Board members intend to cross into the staff's territory or usurp the ED's authority.

Frankly, many Board volunteers simply do not know how to be effective Board members. They mean well, but it is way more rewarding to get involved in direct services or staff issues than it is to serve as a strategic thinker and governor for an organization!

And, many staff members allow the dysfunction to continue until the situation is out of control, people say and do things they regret and the rift between Board and staff begins to feel like the Grand Canyon.

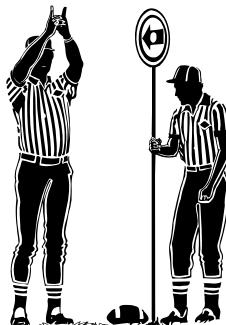
**Clarifying the Yellow Line.** There are some things you can do clarify the invisible yellow line, however.

First, and foremost, is **communication**—open, honest communication. I recommend that every incoming Board President and Executive Director have a frank and honest discussion that addresses the issue of who does what. Set the ground rules for operating effectively. Empower the ED to

speak up when micro-management might occur.

The Board President should also instruct the Board about what is and is not appropriate for individual members to do. And, the same goes for the Executive Director, who should ensure that staff members understand the chain of command.

Here is the quandary, especially in small and informal organizations where everyone is friendly and sociable. When issues arise and problems occur, it is easy for individual staff and Board to discuss the issues...but this is where discipline is required. Board members should NOT get involved in staff issues outside the chain of command, and staff members should NOT go directly to individual Board members with issues. Develop and follow the organization's grievance procedures carefully.



The second important measure is **Board Training**. If your Board members don't understand their roles and where their authority begins and ends, then you can't expect them to “play by the rules.” Hold annual Board orientation for all new Board volunteers and include a

section on Who Does What. There is a great quiz in my book **The ABCs of Building Better Boards** that might be very useful as a basis for this training, or to use as a quiz for current Board members. Visit [www.jblockinc.com/betterboards.htm](http://www.jblockinc.com/betterboards.htm) for more info, to see the table of contents, and to order your copy.

Finally, if things in your organization have gone too far for these measures, get professional help. Call in a mediator or a consultant who can help work through the problems. Your mission is too important to ignore this problem!

## If I Knew Then What I Know Now ...

A good friend and I were talking the other day about how much we had learned during our careers in the nonprofit sector; specifically, what we HAD to learn as a new Executive Director of a nonprofit.

I remember asking to review the donor database at a nonprofit I had just been hired to lead. The staff person gave me a puzzled look and led me to a pile of boxes of carbon copies of donor receipts—in numeric order (!) from the past several years. I spent days and days and days alphabetizing the receipts into piles on the floor so I could even begin to build a donor database, mailing list, etc.

I also remember the first United Way funding proposal I had to complete, the first budget I had to prepare, the first Board meeting I had to prepare for, the first ED's report I had to write, the first grant

proposal I had to complete, the first person I had to hire and the first person I had to fire.

I remember wondering if I was the ONLY new ED who was struggling, knowing in my heart that I wasn't, and wondering where I could go to find some answers without feeling embarrassed or overwhelmed by the answers.

After my friend and I shared our "remembering", she decided to put together a workbook for the new ED or the person who is contemplating a career as the CEO of a nonprofit.

## A QUICKIE QUIZ ON THE INVISIBLE YELLOW LINE

**Do you need to jump start discussions about the Invisible Yellow Line?** What follows is an excerpt from the quiz I referred to on page one. Use this as a basis for beginning discussions about Who Does What. Often, there is not the perfect "right" answer, but these questions will allow you to open dialogue and set ground rules.

### Governance

- Q: Who directs the planning process for the organization?
- Q: Who monitors achievement of organizational goals?
- Q: Who approves the annual strategic plan?
- Q: Who appoints Board Committees?
- Q: Who recruits new Board members?
- Q: Who prepares the Board meeting agendas?
- Q: Who ensures minutes are taken at Board meetings?
- Q: Who signs legal documents?
- Q: Who settles problems between Board committees?
- Q: Who ensures the organization meets legal and corporate requirements?
- Q: Who attends the annual planning retreat?
- Q: Who approves capital purchases?
- Q: Who sets billing, credit, collection policies?



### Fundraising

- Q: Who organizes fundraising activities?
- Q: Who makes a personal financial contribution?
- Q: Who solicits contributions?

### Management

- Q: Who directs the work of the staff?
- Q: Who sets staff salaries?
- Q: Who evaluates staff performance?
- Q: Who evaluates the Executive Director's performance?
- Q: Who settles problems among staff?
- Q: Who hires, promotes, disciplines, and terminates staff?
- Q: Who sets personnel policies?

### Financial

- Q: Who prepares the preliminary budget?
- Q: Who finalizes and approves the budget?
- Q: Who monitors expenditures against budget?
- Q: Who is responsible for the monthly financial reports?

Use this quickie quiz as the beginning of your annual Board President:Executive Director communication and add to it other issues pertinent to your organization. Or, use it **NOW** to get things on the right track!

## Internet Resources For Nonprofits

[www.givinganswers.com](http://www.givinganswers.com) is a new resource that provides on-line and distance learning opportunities for nonprofits, linking you with national experts.



Need help with legal issues in nonprofits? Visit [www.nonprofitcenter.com](http://www.nonprofitcenter.com) and [www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org).

Want some help with management issues? Try [www.nonprofitbasics.org/Topicarea.aspx?ID=14](http://www.nonprofitbasics.org/Topicarea.aspx?ID=14). Also visit

[www.uschamber.com/chambers/news/books](http://www.uschamber.com/chambers/news/books) for some good resources.

Sample job descriptions for various positions within a nonprofit can be found at [www.nonprofits.org/npofaq/03/02.htm](http://www.nonprofits.org/npofaq/03/02.htm).

[www.onphilanthropy.com](http://www.onphilanthropy.com) has a wealth of articles and links for all nonprofits.

And visit [www.NonEvents.com](http://www.NonEvents.com) for assistance with fundraising through a virtual event!

Found any other great Internet resources you'd like to share? Send them to me!

TWO GREAT BOOKS AVAILABLE NOW:

### ***THE ABCs OF BUILDING BETTER BOARDS and FAST FUNDRAISING FACTS FOR FAME & FORTUNE***

Now you can add two great books to your agency library. **The ABCs of Building Better Boards** is just what you need to improve your Board's potential. It includes ideas for recruitment, retention and recognition and has some great forms for you to copy and use.

Learn how to deal with unproductive Board members and how to better define the roles of staff and Board. There is a chapter on financial and fiduciary facts, one on simple parliamentary procedure and much, much more.

Discover how Board Job Descriptions and annual Commitment Letters will dramatically improve your Board's effectiveness. See how a truly effective Nominating Committee will lead to a better Board.

Get good ideas for more efficient Board management and administration, including how to set up and manage effective committees.

It's only \$24.95 plus shipping and handling. Take advantage of a volume discount of up to 20% and give this book to all new Board members as part of their orientation.

**Fast Fundraising Facts for Fame & Fortune** is full of ideas to improve your fundraising, including how to ask effectively, special events essentials and new ideas for fundraising.

Help volunteers get over the fear of asking for money and in-kind resources for your organization. Learn how marketing principles will make fundraising easier.

Learn about *Jean's Ten Rules for Fundraising Success* and apply them to your organization immediately. This book puts the **FUN** into **FUND**raising and gives good examples and ideas that really work, rather than using hard to follow formulas and theories.

At only \$19.95 plus shipping and handling, it's a Must Have for your fundraising committee members!

**Or buy both books at once and save. Buy both for only \$39.95 plus \$4.50 shipping and handling. Order your copies today!**

Email me at [Jean@jblockinc.com](mailto:Jean@jblockinc.com) to discuss volume discounts for staff or volunteers.

# ***GIVING ANSWERS, LLC***

## **WHAT IS GIVING ANSWERS, LLC?**

**Giving Answers mission is to connect nonprofit organizations (and the people who support them) to the resources, knowledge and skills that will enable them to achieve their goals, improve the productivity of their organizations and enhance the communities in which we live.**

### **Jean Block Consulting and Giving Answers, LLC**

**I am currently working with Giving Answers as a facilitator for a series of telephone based discussions relating to managing a nonprofit organization. I am offering a session on “The ABCs of Building Better Boards” and one on “Fast Fundraising Facts.”**

## **GIVING ANSWERS TELE-INQUIRY PROGRAMS**

**Giving Answers Tele-Inquiry programs bring together a dozen nonprofit professionals each week on a telephone bridge for a discussion facilitated by an expert in the field. Topics range from “The ABCs of Building Better Boards” to the “Legal and Ethical Dimensions of Managing a Nonprofit Organization.”**

**Typically, there programs consist of four weekly 60-minute telephone conferences covering a given topic.**

**The cost for each program is \$95 with a discount available for additional registrants from the same organization.**

**As a course fills, you will be notified of the time and date.**

**For a full schedule of courses and other information, please visit <http://www.givinganswers.com/learning/teleseminars/courseschedule/index.htm>**

## **SIGN UP FOR A SESSION**

**You can link directly to Giving Answers Tele-Inquiries by clicking <http://www.givinganswers.com/learning/teleseminars/courseschedule/index.htm>.**

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