



# BOARD BUILDING OVERVIEW

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One of the most important responsibilities of a board is to ensure that it continuously adds qualified new members and keeps them engaged. However, board members sometimes neglect this responsibility by spending little time or effort strategically thinking about how to shape the board's composition in a way that matches the club's culture, current needs, and strategic direction.

Swimming boards need to take a serious look at their make-up. If a board is constructed such that each person on the board has a specific job to do with the operation of the club burn-out can quickly result. More importantly, because a board is made up of specific job-related positions the board can quickly move to micro-management of the team. Clubs may need to think outside the box and possibly consider having 1/2 or more of their board be comprised of people outside the swimming community. Possibly look at having the high school principal, a local politician, prominent people in the community, etc. be a member of the board. However, if the board is set-up to run swim meets, etc. it will be very difficult to find interested outsiders to serve.

Board building is a continuous process that should include year-round activities. Clubs with strong, active, involved boards spend significant time and attention on each part of the board building cycle. Good boards don't just happen. They take care, thought, and planning.

Step 1: [Identify Board needs](#) (Skills, knowledge, perspective, connections, etc., needed to implement the strategic plan). What do we have? What is missing? Identify sources of board members with the needed characteristics.

Step 2: [Cultivate potential board members](#). Get them interested in your club and keep them informed of your progress.

Step 3: [Recruit prospects](#). Describe why a prospective member is wanted and needed. Describe expectations and responsibilities of board members, and don't minimize requirements. Invite questions, and elicit their interest and preparedness to serve.

Step 4: [Orient new board members](#) to the club-program, history, bylaws, pressing issues, finances, facilities, club chart-and to the board-recent minutes, committees, board member responsibilities, lists of board members and key staff members. **This is a KEY step that is oftentimes ignored by most swim clubs. If more clubs did this step, let alone did it correctly, many board problems would be solved (or at least greatly reduced).**

Step 5: [Activate all board members](#). Discover their interests and availability. Involve them in committees or task forces. Assign them a board "buddy." Solicit feedback. Hold everyone accountable. Express appreciation for work well done.

Step 6: Educate the board. Provide information concerning your mission area. Promote exploration of issues facing the club. Don't hide difficulties. Celebrate accomplishments.

Step 7: [Rotate board members](#). Establish and use *term limits*. Do not automatically reelect for an additional term; consider the board's needs and the board member's performance. Explore advisability of resigning with members who are not active. Have a process in place for [removing a difficult board member](#). Develop new leadership.

Step 8: Evaluate the board and individual board members. Engage the board in assessing its own performance. Identify ways in which to improve. Encourage individual self-assessment.

Step 9: Celebrate! Recognize victories and progress, even small ones. Appreciate individual contributions to the board, the club, and the community. Make room for humor and a good laugh.

Taken from the "Club Leadership Development Notebook" a publication from *BoardSource* created specifically for USA Swimming. For more information about *BoardSource* write to 1828 L Street NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036-5114. Telephone (202) 452-6262. Fax: (202) 452-6299, email: [mail@boardsource.org](mailto:mail@boardsource.org), website: <http://www.boardsource.org/>. Copyright 2000. Used with permission.