

Recruiting and Retaining Trustees - I see the enemy, and it is within?

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) recently published a survey of the voluntary sector, [Understanding Trustee Recruitment and Retention Challenges](#). Several problems were highlighted, most of which will chime with us in the Bailiwick, but many are within the grasp of charities to address. But how?

First, what are the challenges?

- Boards (including committees) report long term vacancies, with 80% of smaller charities saying this is preventing them from developing their services.
- Furthermore, 45% report that this causes stress and anxiety for remaining trustees.
- The top 5 missing skills in small and medium charities are:
 - Marketing and communications (55%)
 - Legal (46%)
 - Technology skills (43%)
 - Financial (36%)
 - Human resources/people management (36%)

Micro charities, those earning less than £10k pa, report governance (39%) as their second most missing skill.

- Retention – there is a worsening trend of trustees retiring, citing the following reasons most often:
 - They feel pressured to do more, and don't wish to or can't.
 - It was taking up too much of their time.
- Retention issues, why people say they leave;
 - Time requirements too high (51%)
 - Lack of clarity on expectations (14%)
 - Frustrations with decision – making processes (9%)
 - Lack of support from the organisation for trustees (9%)
 - Lack of training (8%)
 - Internal tensions on the board (7%)

So, what can be done to address the challenges?

If we break down the reasons given, it becomes clearer that a number of factors are within the control of boards/committees themselves.

- Review 'why people say they leave' above and you will see that 49% are reasons you can do something about;

- Follow the simple rules on recruitment and induction to ensure your new volunteers know exactly what is expected of them, ensure you know what they are looking for and why they have volunteered.
 - Provide them with a “buddy” or mentor for their first few months to ensure they find their way around (not just physically, but board dynamics, those “unwritten” rules etc.
 - Check in with any training they may require
 - The role of chair is vital to ensuring meetings are well run, decisions made fairly and based on sound advice/judgement. Board dynamics need to be managed to avoid frustrations listed etc.
 - Ensure you appoint the best individual available, and not the longest serving, last one standing etc.
- Survey/evaluation – smaller charities may not wish to have the burden of the more formal skills audits recommended for larger charities, but an informal skills audit, talking with all charities to understand their views, ideas, strengths and weaknesses etc. is good governance.
 - If you have vacancies, or expect one in the near future, list your role on www.volunteer.gg and advertise it!
 - Celebrate your trustees, not just in Trustee or Volunteer Week! Say ‘thank you’ in a sincere and meaningful way (recognising that different people appreciate different forms of appreciation).

I see the enemy and it is within, is a variation of an often used proverb, but it remains highly pertinent and much easier to retain the good volunteers, trustees and supporters that you have, rather than to recruit new ones.

To learn more and explore how to overcome the challenge, come along to our workshop **Strengthening Trustee Recruitment & Retention on 19th February 2025, Les Cotils, 5:30 – 7:30pm.**

Book your space [here](#)