



## Executive Director Evaluation Form

In the last issue of Blue Avocado, we discussed how board evaluations of executive directors (CEOs) are different from any other performance evaluation in the organization. (See it by clicking [here](#).) These differences -- including the limited ability of board members to observe the executive -- are also among the reasons why 45% of executives have not had a review in the last year (Source: CompassPoint's Daring to Lead 2011 study). In this article we draw on that discussion and on the submissions of dozens of Blue Avocado readers to propose a process and an evaluation instrument.

When we reviewed various the dozens of evaluation instruments sent in by Blue Avocado readers, we found that nearly all of them had these attributes in common:

- Most reviews used a checklist form (rather than narrative)
- Most focused on ED's actions and behaviors (rather than on organizational performance)
- Most relied on input from board members only (rather than include input from others such as staff, funders, clients, art critics, etc.)

Although we feel that evaluations that are narrative, focus on organizational performance and contain elements of a 360 degree evaluation are better ways to evaluate executives, we also realize:

- Without a checklist of some kind, the ED evaluation most likely won't take place
- An assessment of organizational performance is complex and is more likely to arise FROM executive evaluation than to occur BEFORE it, and

- Input from others in and outside the organization is more appropriately focused on organizational assessment, and not as narrowly viewed as on an ED evaluation.

Most importantly: despite the fact that board members may have little to go on and not much experience with ED evaluation, *it's still important to have the evaluation.*

What we unexpectedly learned from executive directors about the value that did emerge from evaluations is that the discussions -- if held in good faith -- result in better-aligned expectations and goals for the organization and for the executive.

As a result, we adapted instruments to:

- Spark discussions between the executive and the board (rather than to sum them up)
- Give the executive the opportunity reflect and learn (if so inclined)
- Give board members the chance to reflect not only on the executive's performance but on the performance of the board and of the organization as a whole.
- Provide a basis for salary and fire/keep decisions,
- Lead to alignment and clarification of goals and expectations.

## **Process**

A. The board should assign a small group or one person to managing the ED's [Personnel Committee](#) evaluation. This can be board officers or a task force created for this activity. .

B. The ED should review the process and instrument(s) with that committee prior to the start. This can be as simple as an email or as deep as a group discussion about goals of the evaluation.

C. The board representative can collect the information from respondents.

D. An executive session of the board (perhaps 1 hour without any staff present) should be held to discuss the survey results and general comments. .

E. Relaying the information to the executive should be handled by the board chair or another assigned member(s).

F. The executive's chance to respond (in person or in writing) to the full board.

G. The review and the response (if there is one) are placed in the executive's personnel file.

Tip: **Involve HR to make sure the review takes place.** Most supervisors would not complete reviews of their staff if there were not someone from HR reminding and nagging them. An HR or finance staffperson can keep reminding the board officers that a review must be completed for the executive's personnel file and that salary documentation must be provided.

Please do not use any of these templates "as is." Instead, use them as a basis for forms that are relevant to your organization's circumstances:

## **Performance Review for Executive Director Survey Form for Board Members**

Period under review: example: January - December 2011

Period in which review took place: example: December 2011

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

*Once a year, modify this form and use it to survey board members. Note that the form uses descriptive terms (such as "highly satisfied") rather than numerical ratings to help prevent potentially misleading averages.*

- **Outstanding:** Performance over a sustained period of time clearly and consistently exceeds expectations and is outstanding. Both results and how they are achieved are outstanding.
- **Very good:** Performance clearly meets and sometimes exceeds job requirements and significant contributions are made well beyond job demands.
- **Fine:** Solid and occasionally impressive performance.
- **Improvement needed:** Performance is frequently unsatisfactory

- I don't know.

*All members of the board should complete this form and submit (online or via mail or fax) to \_\_\_\_\_. The executive director should complete the form and bring to the discussion with the ED performance review committee (alternatively: send to the review committee in advance of the meeting).*

*This form is meant to raise questions as well as obtain your feedback. If you think the board needs to know more about the organization's work in a given area before making an assessment, use the Comment section to raise the issue.*

<b>1. Overall organizational performance</b>	
a. Works with the board and management staff to develop strategies for achieving mission, goals and financial viability.	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
b. Appropriately provides both support and leadership to the board.	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
c. Demonstrates quality of analysis and judgment related to progress and opportunities, and needs for changes.	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
d. Maintains and utilizes a working knowledge of significant developments and trends in the field (examples: AIDS/HIV, environmental law)	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
e. Builds respect and profile for the organization in its various constituencies. Supports the overall field/movement in which the organization works.	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
f. Establishes ambitious goals for excellence and impact and initiates, maintains, and adapts programs with excellence and impact	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
g. Comments on overall organizational performance:	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
<b>2. Community leadership</b>	

<p>a. Serves as an effective spokesperson. Represents the organization well to its constituencies, including clients/members/patrons, other nonprofits, government agencies, elected officials, funders, and the general public</p>	<p>Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know</p>
<p>b. Establishes and makes use of working relationships with organizations and individuals in the field.</p>	<p>Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know</p>
<p>c. Sees that communication vehicles are developed and utilized well.</p>	<p>Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know</p>
<p>d. Comments on community leadership:</p>	

<b>3. Administration and Human Resources</b>	
a. Establishes and leads an effective management team	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
b. Recruits and retains a diverse staff (as the organization has identified diversity)	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
c. Maintains appropriate balance between programs and administration	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
d. Ensures that procedures and organizational culture maximize volunteer involvement	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
e. Ensures compliance with relevant workplace and employment laws	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
f. Sees that employees are licensed and credentialed as required and that appropriate background checks are conducted	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
f. Ensures that job descriptions are developed and that regular performance reviews are completed and documented	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
g. Leads staff in maintaining a climate of excellence, accountability, and respect.	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
h. Comments on administration and HR:	

<b>4. Financial sustainability and mission impact</b>	
a. Assures adequate control and accounting of all funds, including maintaining sound financial practices	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
b. Sees that programs and activities are developed, executed, modified and dismantled to maximize mission impact	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
c. Works with the staff, finance committee and the board to prepare budgets, monitor progress, and initiate changes (to operations and/or to budgets) as appropriate	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know

d. Sees that official records and documents are retained; sees to compliance with federal state and local regulations (examples: Form 990, payroll withholding)	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
e. Develops realistic, ambitious plans for acquiring funds	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
f. Jointly with the president and secretary of the board, conducts official correspondence for the organization, and jointly with designated officers, executes legal documents appropriately	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
g. Successfully involves others in fundraising and in earned income generation.	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
h. Establishes positive relationships with institutional funders such as foundations, government agencies, churches, corporations, and so forth.	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
i. Establishes positive relationships with individual donors.	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
j. Comments on financial sustainability and mission impact:	

<b>5. Board of directors</b>	
a. With the board chair, appropriately involves	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
b. Provides appropriate leadership to the board	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
c. Sees that board members are kept fully informed in a timely way on the condition of the organization and important factors influencing it	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
d. Sees that board committees are appropriately supported	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know
e. Works with the board officers to ensure that the board is effective as a body and that recruitment, involvement and departures of individual board members	Outst    V Good    Fine Impr Needed    Don't know

are effective	
f. Comments on the board:	

6. Are there additional comments you would like to make that are not within the above categories?

**Survey form for members of management team/senior staff:**

In reviewing the performance of the organization and the executive over the last year, please give us your comments in the following areas:

<p><b>Senior Staff on Executive Director Review</b></p> <p>Please help the board of directors conduct its review of the executive director's performance over the last year by sharing your thoughts. Your comments will be shared with the members of the board of directors, but your name will not be identified with specific comments. Please submit this to _____ via _____ by _____ date.</p>
<p>1. Overall organizational performance</p>
<p>2. Community leadership</p>



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<b>3. Administration and HR</b>
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<b>4. Financial sustainability and mission impact</b>
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<b>5. Board of directors</b>
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<b>6. Miscellaneous</b>
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<b>7. Are there any specific suggestions for professional development or individual workplan that the board might consider recommending to the executive director?</b>
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## **What about 360 degree evaluations?**

Every few years it's very helpful for a board to get a sense of how its executive -- and the organization as a whole -- is experienced by volunteers, visitors, patrons, clients, members, funders, collaborative partners, and others. A 360 degree evaluation takes a good deal of time (not only from the board but from everyone who is asked to give input), and it makes the most sense to use the opportunity not only to learn about the CEO, but about the organization.

Please click [here](#) to see a Blue Avocado article on 360 degree organizational assessments.

## **Other data**

Many organizations also have established goals and objectives for the year, such as number of enrollments, visitors to the art gallery, decrease in euthanized animals, and so forth. There may also be data available such as average rating score for workshops conducted by the organization, ticket sales, attendees at annual fundraising lunch, etc.

Measuring organizational performance against such benchmarks is tremendously helpful, as is measuring performance against an updated job description. However, there are limitations to over-relying on such benchmarks:

- There may be external reasons why performance did not meet benchmarks, and those gaps may be more productively addressed in a broader context than the annual review of the CEO.
- A great many organizations do not have such organizational performance benchmarks, nor does the executive have a recently-updated job description. It's necessary to have an evaluation tool that does not require these to be in place.

## **The role of judgment**

No one ever has enough information to do a perfectly informed, "objective" evaluation of anyone. If an executive evaluation results in substantive discussion about organizational goals, organizational values about how work is done, and how the board and executive can both do better, then the evaluation "worked."

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Board Café Second Edition available [here](#) from Amazon. She has been an executive director and board member and experienced both bad and good evaluations from both ends. And lived to tell the tale.

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