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### What support do you get as Chair?

It is important that charity chair's get the support they need to fulfil their role.

Often other trustees just don't think to ask the chair what would help them, so do say if you need a bit more support.

Often it can help to talk to a chair of another charity – and you can find these through networks or asking CVs to try to put you in touch.

## news and opinion from a Chair's perspective

### Just what should we be doing?

During a time of recession trustees may worry about whether they are doing enough to make sure their charities respond to circumstances and are well placed to survive. Rodney Buse is Chair of Charity Trustee Networks and has been talking to chairs and trustees about what they are doing to help address and minimise the effects of the recession. Below are some of the things that people have told him.

Trustees are looking at:

- Cash flows
- Contingency plans
- Risk management processes
- Whether policies (especially employment ones) are up to date
- Prioritising core activities
- Examining collaborative arrangements
- Reviewing fundraising strategies
- How to deal with increased demand for services
- Sharing office space/equipment
- Purchasing consortiums
- Joint funding bids with other organisations
- Improved 'radar systems' (looking at what's going on around them and how it might affect their charity)
- Staff recruitment restrictions
- Reserve levels

Your board might want to consider whether your charity should be looking at any of these.

There also appears to be a need for:

- Better networking to identify trends and share best practice
- Strong contributions from individuals with independent views and ideas about how things can be done differently
- Good governance practices
- Greater focus
- Exploring options for greater collaboration that benefit beneficiaries
- Planning ahead
- Attracting able trustees from all walks of life

And, while it is important that trustees are well involved and engaged at this time, it is also important to respect the very hard work that staff are doing and to be careful to support and help where possible, but not to meddle!

### Recession Support

Acevo, the national membership organisation for Chief Executives of charities has launched a Recession Support website, [www.recessionsupport.org.uk](http://www.recessionsupport.org.uk)

It contains a wide range of resources, targeted at Chief Executives, but useful also for trustees and chairs, including,

- **Expert guides** on subjects such as mergers, fundraising in a recession, employee benefits, and leading and managing in a recession.
- **Finance resources**, covering insolvency, fraud, cost saving tips and sustainable funding.
- **Ideas about managing your organisation**, including, what worries staff in a recession, cutting staff costs and the CEO/Chair relationship during a recession.

### **CTN Lecture 2009 – with Jon Snow**

We are very excited that Jon Snow has agreed to give the 2009 CTN Lecture, and are looking forward to hearing about his experiences of being a trustee and thoughts on trusteeship during a recession.

Jon Snow isn't the only attraction, we also have seminars by the Charity Commission, CCLA, Media Trust, CTN and Fundraising Standards Board, and a three-course sit down lunch - all for only £40, or free if you are a member of **trusteenetplus**.

We're keen that as many trustees as possible get the opportunity to attend, so please do pass on details of the event to your trustees – it's a great way of doing some training and networking.

More details about the event, including how to book, are available at-  
<http://www.trusteenet.org.uk/events/ctn-annual-lunch-and-lecture-jon-snow>

### **Jottings of a Retiring Chair**

Mike Nussbaum is Chair of Volunteering England and shares with us his thoughts as the time draws near for him to step down.

In September I step down as Chair of Volunteering England (VE), and have been thinking about the personal journey that I have been on from the conception of the idea of a single organisation for volunteering to where we are at present. Having chaired one of the three national organisations that came together to form VE, chaired the steering group that created VE, and chaired VE since its launch in 2004, it feels strange to be saying goodbye.

For me being a good chair is an art form. It can be lonely, but immensely rewarding, it means taking complete responsibility for some tough decisions when necessary and it means working as effectively as possible with a Board. The big relationship is between a Chair and Chief Executive. That must be built on trust, respect, openness and humour. A Chief Executive needs to be absolutely sure that he/she can "offload" to the Chair in complete confidence and can, in that confidence be sure of complete support for decisions taken.

The steering group that brought VE into being knew that the key to a successful organisation would be a clear set of values and clarity of purpose. By being proactive in creating a new organisation from three national bodies we wanted VE to be greater than the sum of its original parts and to raise considerably the profile of volunteering. This I feel proud to say has been achieved by staff and trustees working well together, whilst being very clear about strategy and operational boundaries. This in itself could be the subject of a book!

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS?**

Do let us have your feedback on this e-newsletter by replying to this email. Let us know if we are getting it right or how we can improve this e-newsletter. Chair focus goes out bi-monthly, and we want as much content as possible to be from you - we would really welcome your ideas and submissions.

This newsletter is sent to you by **Charity Trustee Networks**

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For me it has been an exhilarating ride and “getting off” will leave a large hole. After a working and volunteering life in community development, at both local and national level, these are the qualities that have sustained me! – openness, seeing opportunities, not problems, listening with respect, always being prepared to learn and a good sense of humour. These are in no particular order, but I must say, without humour everything else is more difficult!

Having recently joined the Board of CTN I look forward to helping to enhance and promote the crucial role of a trustee, be that of a small local organisation or one at national level. Trusteeship is often not regarded as volunteering nor seen as greatly exciting, but a successful and effective Board is essential to the well-being of any organisation.

I leave the Board of Volunteering England with great memories and I look forward to new trustee roles with anticipation.

### **Trustee induction resources**

Everyone knows how important good trustee induction is, but knowing what that should involve can be tricky. Here are some resources to help with this.

- ICSA has a Guidance Note on a specimen induction pack for charity trustees. [www.icsa.org.uk/assets/files/pdfs/guidance/070608.pdf](http://www.icsa.org.uk/assets/files/pdfs/guidance/070608.pdf) They also produce an interesting guidance note on matters reserved for the board <http://www.icsa.org.uk/assets/files/pdfs/guidance/080307.pdf>
- The Charity Commission's guidance on the subject is available in *Finding New Trustees* at <http://www.trusteenet.org.uk/files/Finding%20New%20Trustees%20C30.pdf> look at sections G4, G5 and G6. Also from page 30 of their booklet *Trustee Recruitment, Selection and Induction* <http://www.trusteenet.org.uk/resources/trustee-recruitment-section-and-induction-rs1>
- The Governance Hub's toolkit on recruiting trustees also has a useful section and ticklist about inducting trustees - it is available at [http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/Publications/Publications\\_Catalogue/Trustee](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/Publications/Publications_Catalogue/Trustee)