

**Shur Fellow Guidance**  
**July 2018**  
**Leadership: Transitions**

Many state and local Leagues are in the midst of leadership transitions. The transition to a new group of leaders can be bumpy but there are simple steps that leadership teams and individual leaders can follow to ensure success. This applies to both new leaders and returning leaders who need to adjust to working with a new team. The below tips were written with board members in mind but can easily apply to any League leader, from committee chairs to coaches to board members.

Along with the below we invite you to share your favorite guidance with new leaders as well as any you think would be most helpful to someone in a leadership role for the first time or a role that's new to them.

Suggestions include:

- [Civility: Aiding Our Impact](#)
- [Creative Calendaring](#)
- [Guidance on the Value of Data](#)
- [Strategy Screen](#)
- [Building a Leaderful Organization](#)

[Global Learning Partners](#) offers the below tips on being an effective board member:

1. **Be prepared.** A board meeting will be more effective, interesting and productive if everyone has thoroughly and thoughtfully read all the material being discussed before the meeting. Whether something is of high or low priority in the meeting, most documents and information are interwoven and connected, and therefore important. The more you know about the work of your board and organization, the better you will be able to offer ideas, make decisions, and volunteer for projects and activities.
2. **Be punctual and attend regularly.** We all have numerous commitments and responsibilities – we are busy! To ensure the meeting finishes on time, it needs to start on time. Being punctual shows respect to the board and the work it does (you are saying, “This is important.”), as well as the organization (you are saying, “I care enough to be here and work to strengthen this organization.”). If you need to be late or are not able to attend, inform the board chair. The board will be better able to attend to work when there is a full quorum and punctual attendance.
3. **Be positive and affirming.** There is nothing that can demotivate a board member faster than a feeling of not being appreciated or being undervalued. When work is done, it needs to be celebrated. When ideas are shared, they need to be affirmed. Creating a respectful appreciative culture on your board will help maximize the possibility of its member happily attending meetings and enthusiastically serving their full term (and beyond!).
4. **Be respectful.** Most boards strive for diverse representation – this is good. However, with this diversity of people (whether cultural, gender, skill sets, experience, age, or faith) will also come diversity of thinking, styles of communicating, and expectations of a board. Affirming different ideas, inviting clarification of diverse thinking, and welcoming all questions will enrich your board, its governance and work, and you.
5. **Be a good listener.** We all communicate differently and use language differently. Whether someone speaks softly or loud, uses few words or many, speaks eloquently or simply, each board member deserves to be heard. A healthy board meeting is a safe and respectful space in which everyone's voice is invited, honored and heard.
6. **Be a team player.** Regardless of how active your board is, there is always work to do.

When decisions are made, ideas are shared and recommendations are offered, there are tasks to be picked up – so help out. The old saying is true: “Many hands, make light work.”

7. **Be honest and transparent.** There will be times when you are asked to do something you are not comfortable with or vote on an issue that you don't fully understand or participate in something you have questions about. Stop and tell the group. Full transparency and honesty are critical for a healthy well-functioning board and can foster respect and trust among board members.
8. **Be responsive.** Although most board work happens during your regular meetings and in sub-committee meetings, there is often a need to get a response to an issue or question by email, Skype, text or phone. Respond as soon as possible. This can enable further work by board members or others involved and shows respect to the matters at hand.
9. **Be loyal and a champion for your organization.** Most of us are involved in multiple organizations, communities, networks, and social circles, offering constant opportunities to talk about what your organization (of which you are a Board member) does and what you are excited about. Whether you share a link to the organization's website with a curious friend, invite a colleague to help out with an event, or slip some information to a family member, board members are important advocates for your volunteer organization and the people you serve. Maintain your loyalty to the organization and help build its support community!

More specifically for new board members we encourage sharing [this webinar](#). Created and presented by Robin Talbert, former president of the AARP Foundation and now licensed consultant for the Standards for Excellence Institute, the webinar reviews the key legal and governance responsibilities of a non-profit board. The session is a great tool for League boards to set common expectations and open dialogue about how to effectively work together.

**The following is a good team building exercise to try:**



In pairs participants plan a meeting or event together. One must start by sharing an idea. The other replies with the words 'Yes but', and a reason why the idea cannot work, and then this participant shares another idea. The first then replies with 'yes but' and so they go back and forth blocking each other's ideas. After a while stop them and ask them to plan the same meeting or event, but this time instead of saying 'yes but' they must start their sentences with 'yes and', accepting the other's idea and building on it.

**Debrief questions:**

- What was the difference between blocking and accepting?
- What are the benefits and costs of both?