

Managing the Senior Staff Member

The roles of the management committee and the organisation's senior staff member (also known as the Director, Manager, Co-ordinator etc) are interdependent.

Therefore, it is essential that the management committee and the senior staff member understand their role and boundaries and demonstrate respect for each other's position and powers.

- the management committee depends on the senior staff member to exercise leadership by building a successful team of staff and volunteers, by helping the management committee use their time most efficiently, and by acting as a primary source of information
- the senior staff member depends on the management committee to provide direction and to make sound decisions, for example, an organisational policies, strategic plans and how best the organisation can work towards its mission and purpose

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Building a good working relationship

Good working relationships develop through recognition of this interdependence and a mutual commitment to work together. There are a number of common behaviours which can threaten the success of this relationship.

Examples of management committee behaviours that hinder the relationship:

- committee members who don't understand the true financial condition of the organisation (e.g. they cannot interpret financial statements, fail to attend meetings, think they don't need to know)
- committee members who don't understand their role or responsibilities (e.g. there are no written role descriptions, no induction is provided)
- no support or appraisal provided for the senior staff member
- developing inappropriate relationships with individual staff members
- interfering with the day-to-day management
- not holding the senior staff member effectively accountable

Examples of senior staff member behaviours that hinder the relationship:

- withholding important information (e.g. debt, financial statements)
- making decisions outside delegated authority
- entering into service delivery contracts without management committee knowledge
- submitting funding applications without management committee knowledge
- developing inappropriate close relationships with individual committee members

Case Study Scenario:

The members of the Management Committee of a community group have all been involved with the group from the beginning. Despite recruiting a Director, all of the Management Committee still regularly work in the office carrying out a variety of tasks including managing some of the other staff. Management Committee meetings are monthly and typically still involve all day-to-day management decisions. The new Director is unclear whether s/he was really recruited as the chief officer or as a glorified administrator.

Learning:

In the above scenario, the Management Committee must learn to let staff get on with their job description. The Management Committee should take time to discuss how they can let go of the

day-to-day management task (as this is part of the Director's job) so that they can focus more time on strategic areas.

(source: NCVO)