



Look At This Book: Boards That Make a Difference

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Boards That Make a Difference was first printed in 1990, and the intervening 18 years have not diminished any of its relevance or importance as a seminal work in addressing deficiencies in governance.

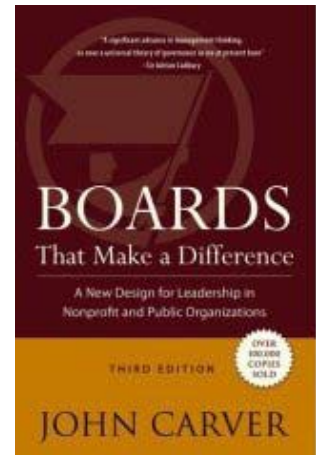
There are two basic concepts outlined in the book. The first explores the essential role of the board. According to Carver, a board only has three critical responsibilities; linkage with ownership, development of explicit governing policies, and assurance of executive performance. All of the other things that boards do are not the responsibility of a board. For example, Carver says boards should not have committees to do work, the board only works as a whole, and speak as one. He advocates the elimination of all of the traditional board committees like finance, personnel, and executive committees.

The second concept is the use of policies to guide the actions of the organization. There are four categories of policies a board should create; ends – or what will the organization accomplish, executive performance – how will the executive be evaluated, board-executive relationship which outlines how the board and executive interact, and finally executive limitation policies which give the executive guidelines as to how to achieve the ends.

These policies are the core of policy governance theory as promoted by Carver. Boards That Make a Difference clearly outlines each of these areas with examples and clear reasoning as to the purpose of each. The book discusses why each policy is important and recommends a process for developing policies within your organization. Carver even explores how policy governance can be modified to address the specific needs of schools, governments, nonprofit organizations, etc.

Carver is one of the leading authors and speakers about policy governance and offers training on policy governance. If reading Boards That Make a Difference excites you about the potential for policy governance in your organization you may want to attend Carver's training sessions. Having personally attended his training in Atlanta several years ago, I fully recommend his sessions as a good next step after reading Boards That Make a Difference.

If your board is not working the way you think it should, or if it is not working at all, revisit this classic book and make a difference today.



Source: Carver, John. *Boards That Make a Difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1990.