



Governing vs. Managing

What's the Difference?



Source of Misunderstanding

Most boards consist of people with management experience.

These members often assume that governance is merely a kind of group management – parallel to the executive's function but occurring at a higher level.

Misunderstanding Leads to Problems

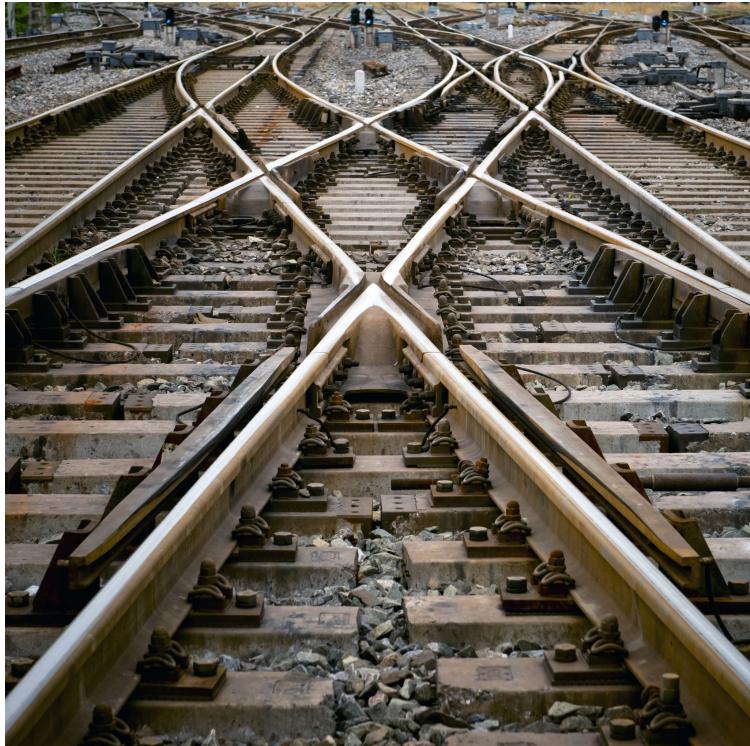
- Ongoing board interference with management.
- Wasted time discussing the wrong things in board meetings.
- Administration continuously coming to the board for permission to do its job.



And More Problems



- Lack of clarity as to who is responsible for what – and especially when things go wrong.
- A culture in which individual board members think of themselves as the executive's boss.
- Uneven results.



Intersection of Responsibilities

- The board and the executive must learn how to successfully navigate the intersection of governance and management.
- The relationship between the board and the executive is one of interdependence.
- The executive cannot hold the charter, and the board cannot run the school.

Ensuring

Boards need to ensure two things:

- That the school accomplishes the outcomes for which it was created;
- That the school avoids the things that should be avoided.





How Does the Board Ensure?

- The board defines the outcomes to be achieved by the school- according to the school's mission and vision.
- The board continuously evaluates how well those outcomes are being achieved.

A Little More About Ensuring

The job of ensuring has little to do with how things are going to be done except to ensure the processes occur within appropriate policy and financial boundaries determined by the board.



Management Executes

Executing is about getting things done.

Executing is selecting and incorporating the best processes to achieve the mission and vision.

Executing answers an endless array of "how" questions.





Management “How” Questions

- How will the school day best be structured?
- How will teachers be recruited, evaluated, developed, and retained?
- How will curriculum and assessment products be selected, integrated, and implemented?
- How will the student code of conduct be established and enforced?
- How will the administrative team be structured?
- How will the school meet its technology demands?

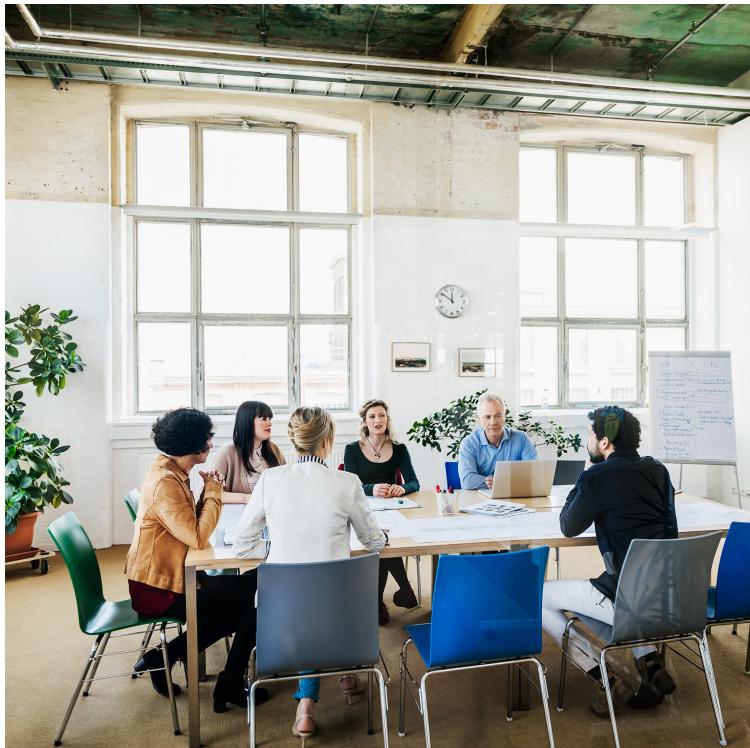
The Board Hires an Executive to Determine “How”

The board hires an experienced education expert in its Executive Director.

The board delegates authority to that Executive Director to determine how the mission and vision are accomplished.

The board evaluates the Executive Director based on that expert's performance in achieving the outcomes the board has set.





Board Oversight

- The board is responsible for financial goals and financial oversight.
- The Executive Director follows the board's financial directives by adhering to a board-approved budget and board-approved financial policies.
- The board also provides oversight on legal matters through policies and directives.
- The board and the Executive Director collaborate on finances and legal matters, but the board has the institutional authority on both through its policies and directives.

What the Board Should Avoid and Why



- The board should avoid discussing how something is done or is going to be done, or the process; the board is then managing and not governing.
- Every minute the board spends discussing a *how* question is a minute the board didn't spend discussing *how well* questions.
- When the board manages instead of governs, it diminishes its own ability to hold the executive accountable for the outcomes achieved or not achieved.

What the Board Should Do and Why

- The board should understand that it exists to govern – that the school cannot thrive, and in some cases, survive, without the board performing its governance role.
- The board should ensure that the right outcomes occur.
- The board should discuss questions that begin with “How well.”



Reflecting on Your Board Actions

- Does your board govern or manage the school?
- How much time has your board spent in your last three board meetings discussing processes versus outcomes?
- Does your Executive Director have examples of times when the board, or worse, an individual board member, has interfered with management.
- Has your board established governance policies focused on ensuring rather than executing?





Content Source

- Adapted from Brian Carpenter's *Charter Board University: An Introduction to Effective Charter School Governance, 2nd ed., 2007.*