The Use of Organizational Champions: Boards as Bridges to Resources

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Abstract:

The recent “Great Recession” has forced nonprofit organizations to consider where they fit within their own resource environments. Both the financial, as well as the psychological, impact has been profound. While there are many different strategies for organizations to diversify their funding streams, this paper considers one in particular: the use of board members as organizational champions. This phenomenon is familiar throughout the nonprofit sector: putting the mayor on the Board even if it is clear that he will not attend meetings; using a local philanthropic luminary as a Board member due to her connections. The recession merely brings to the forefront several questions: How do nonprofit organizations employ their board members as bridges to resource environments? What does this bridging activity look like? Are there different patterns of network bridging for different organizations? This paper uses the cases of three nonprofit organizations to show an effective technique for network mapping with the end result being a call to arms for researchers to delve deeper into bridging activities.