



iQuestions Faculty, Jack Herschend

Question:

How many board members are ideal for a non-profit company?

Answer:

I've had the privilege of serving on a number of not-for-profit boards, ranging in size from eight to thirty-two. I believe, in my experience, that the ideal number is twelve. It's large enough—larger than most for-profit boards—but it's large enough to bring the skill set of fundraising to the ministry that is very, very important. But it's not so large that folks feel that their contribution really doesn't amount to much, and therefore their commitment to the ministry and the organization is minimized, because of the raw number.

You notice that I mentioned, ideally, a twelve number, rather than an odd number, and that is so that votes are cast and issues are decided by more than one vote. To have, for instance, eleven board members, and have an important issue for the ministry decided on the six to five vote, I don't believe is healthy. But with twelve people, there has to be a clear majority, and when there's a tie, then the issue being voted upon does not pass. It can come back up again, in a future board meeting, but it has to have a clear majority. And, therefore, the even number best serves the ministry.