

"Driving a Healthy Culture: Hospital and Health System Boards"

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Hospital board culture often will reflect the health of the overall organizational culture, and **the most successful organizational cultures will be those with honest and open communication, mutual support and trust**. Even though board members work at sometimes far-flung organizations in addition to their work on the hospital board, the relationship between the board chair and the chief executive often steers the culture of the board. If executives are honest and open in their communications with the board, the board's culture will be similar. Other factors that influence board culture are the selection of culture-compatible personalities as board members and regular board performance evaluations. Term limits should be long enough to allow the board chair and hospital CEO to form a genuine relationship, and new members should attend a half- or full-day orientation to become acquainted with the operations. Hospital-system components may have their own boards, which can be used as "feeders" for the hospital board to glean a sense of hospital culture, mission and member styles. Furthermore, it is essential to involve senior management in board meetings so board members attain a greater grasp of each senior manager's function within the system. Prior to board meetings, an agenda should be drawn up and supporting documents sent to each member to allow for discussion preparation. Finally, board retreats and education opportunities will keep ideas fresh among board members.