

“A strong and healthy board-staff partnership provides flexible and resilient leadership that contributes positively to the organization’s overall impact. A weak or dysfunctional partnership impedes the effectiveness of both the board and the executive, and puts the organization at risk in a number of ways – lack of strategic alignment or direction, executive turnover, a toxic organizational culture; the list could go on and on”, reports [BoardSource](#).

How many directors feel like their EDs/CEOs aren’t giving them the information they need or in a timely manner? How many Executives have sticky-fingered directors in operational issues?

Considering the formal and informal rules on a board helps directors understand in part, the relationship they have with the executives.

When the Executive has the competence to fulfill their role, the board can move from operations to a supervisory role, setting policy and strategy. The board of directors can then more freely represent and protect shareholders’ (or stakeholders’) interests by acting as monitors of executive management to assure efficiency, ensuring that human and capital resources are available to fulfill the organization’s goals and objectives and providing information and advice on strategic issues.

In smaller organizations board members might feel compelled to offer unsolicited advice that could strain the boundaries between board stewardship and management discretion and authority. Care, caution, and communication are key to healthy boundaries in smaller organizations that need more from board members.

The board can and should challenge and provide counsel to the CEO/ED to support the long-term success of the organization.

Board Source recommends several steps to keep the relationship on an even keel:

- Regular check-ins between the executive and chair.
- A commitment by both parties to transparency, i.e., “no surprises.”
- Thoughtful reflection on performance including an annual performance review on both the executive and the board itself

The bottom line as stated by [Mel Gill](#), it is critical to establish the boundaries of responsibility between board, CEO and staff. However, it is equally important that the responsibilities of one do not undermine the authority of the others, and that there is a constructive process for resolution of problems in those areas where responsibilities might overlap.

The proof is in the results- when a board executes well and efficiently, their efforts should result in long-term growth, profitability for the shareholders, and will support the livelihood for a social system interconnected to the firm.