

Governance à la Mode

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Qualities of Healthy Governance

- ❑ The board's attention is focused more clearly on "big picture" matters than minutia.
 - ❑ The tendency of some boards to repeatedly micro-manage the staff's work is reduced.
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Qualities of Healthy Governance

- The tendency of some boards to micro-govern is also reduced.
 - An “economy of governance” is achieved, freeing members for ministry.
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Qualities of Healthy Governance

- ❑ Tangible and intangible assets will be conserved and expanded.
 - ❑ The board will enjoy and appropriate and productive strategic partnership with management.
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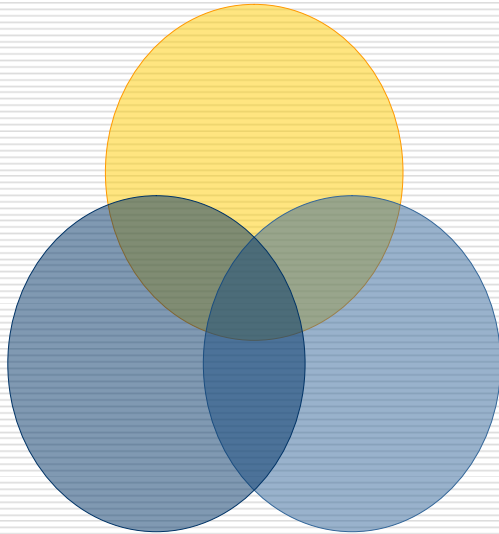
Unitarian Universalist
congregations have been
experimenting with new
governance strategies for
more than 25 years.

Lay Leadership and Development

(UUA Extension Office, 1984)

- Administrative Board Model
 - Board-Council Model
 - Policy-Making Board Model
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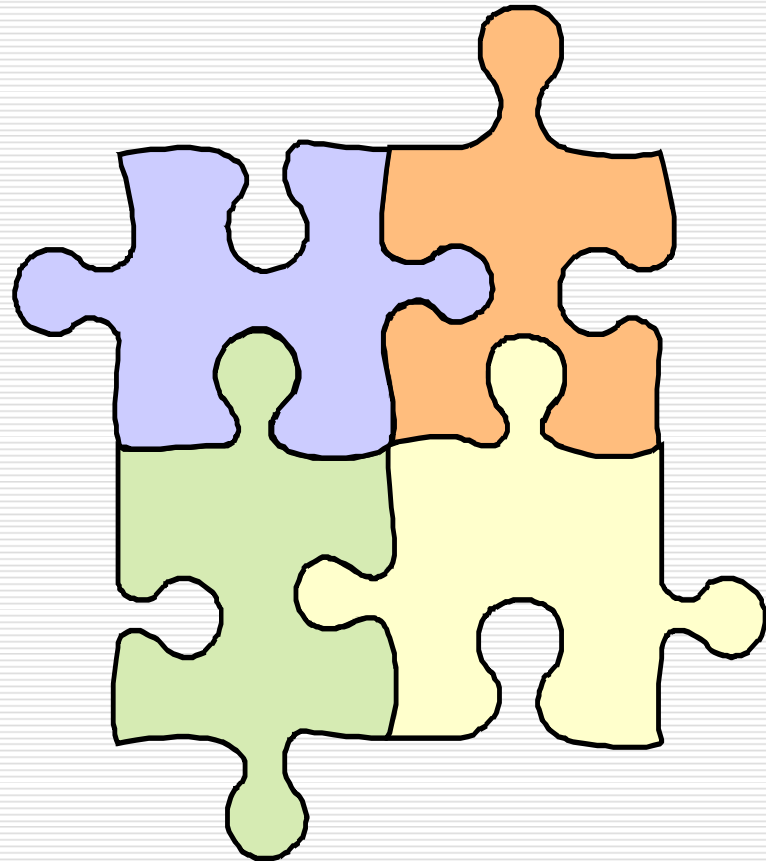
Owners, Staff and Customers



In a congregation, the “owners,” “staff” and “customers” are by and large the same persons.

Boards Do More Than Govern

In most organizations – but especially congregations and cultural or community organizations – governance is only one part of the typical board’s work.



The Six Primary Functions of Boards

- Visioning
 - Policy-making
 - Stewardship
 - Sponsorship
 - Advocacy
 - Consultancy
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Visioning and policy-making

should be the board's dominant focus, since a clear and compelling vision will set the stage for everything else that happens, while well-crafted policies extend the board's influence throughout the entire congregation.

Neither visioning nor policy-making

can be effectively pursued without a close and trusting relationship between the board and the senior staff of the congregation. If the senior staff is isolated from the board, it will be effectively insulated from the results of the board's work in these areas.

As stewards ...

the board holds the congregation's assets in trust, including moral and other intangible assets, while as sponsors, the board should collectively be among the most generous supporters of the congregation with both time and money.

As sponsors ...

**the board should collectively
be among the most generous
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As advocates ...

the board represents interests of the congregation as an institution both to its own members and, even more importantly, to the wider community.

As consultants ...

board members are available to the staff – *at the staff's invitation* – to provide counsel and encouragement from their particular areas of expertise.

Linking Governance with Systems Theory

“A systems approach to organizational problems does not deny that difficulties can be caused by individuals and/or by problems the organizational system needs to address, but it also observes the reactive patterns or nonconscious agreements or ‘understandings’ that people have about how they are supposed to act or get along.”

George Parsons & Speed B. Leas

The “Agreements” in Systems

- ❑ **Formal agreements:** contracts which are *public* and *written*.
 - ❑ **Informal agreements:** “an understanding in which the parties are aware that a bargain is being made,” which are *verbal* and may be either *public* or *private*.
 - ❑ **Tacit agreements:** “habits or patterns people establish as they interact over time.”
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Examples of “Contracts” in Systems

Adapted from *Understanding Your Congregation As a System*
by George Parsons and Speed Leas (The Alban Institute, 1993)

	FORMAL	INFORMAL	TACIT
RULES	By-laws Standard Operating Procedures	Special Cases Spoken Guidelines “Crying babies go to nursery”	Norms Dress Codes Not talking about politics
ROLES	Minister President Administrator Religious Educator	“I’m the devil’s advocate” “I’m a pinch hitter”	Conflict Smoother Gatekeeper Matriarch/Patriarch Flack-catcher
RITUALS	Sunday Worship Membership Ceremony	Going out for ice cream after winning the game	Greeting Rituals Shaking hands “How are you?”
GOALS	Vision and Mission Statements of Purpose Principles	“We need some new members around here”	“Let’s grow old together”

Formal agreements are those “contracts” we make with others that are public and usually written.

Informal agreements are understandings arrived at informally, which may be public or private and are usually verbal.

Tacit agreements have to do with the habits or patterns people establish as they interact over time.

Enter Richard Chait

- In his book *Governance As Leadership*, Chait argues that modes of governance matter more than tasks or models.
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Mode 1: Fiduciary Governance

- Ensures efficient and appropriate use of resources
 - Ensures legality, ethics and prudence
 - Ensures fiscal responsibility
 - Monitors operations without meddling
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Mode 2: Strategic Governance

- Monitors and interprets internal and external environments
 - Resolves institutional priorities
 - Reviews and enhances strategic plan
 - Monitors performance against plan
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Mode 3: Generative Governance

- ❑ Makes sense of circumstances
 - ❑ Invites questions and alternative hypotheses
 - ❑ Sheds new light on perceived problems and opportunities
 - ❑ Finds and frames new problems and opportunities
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Mode 3: Generative Governance

- ❑ Finds and frames new problems and opportunities
 - ❑ Shapes values, beliefs and assumptions—defining the meanings of the institution
 - ❑ Generates policies, strategies and decisions
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