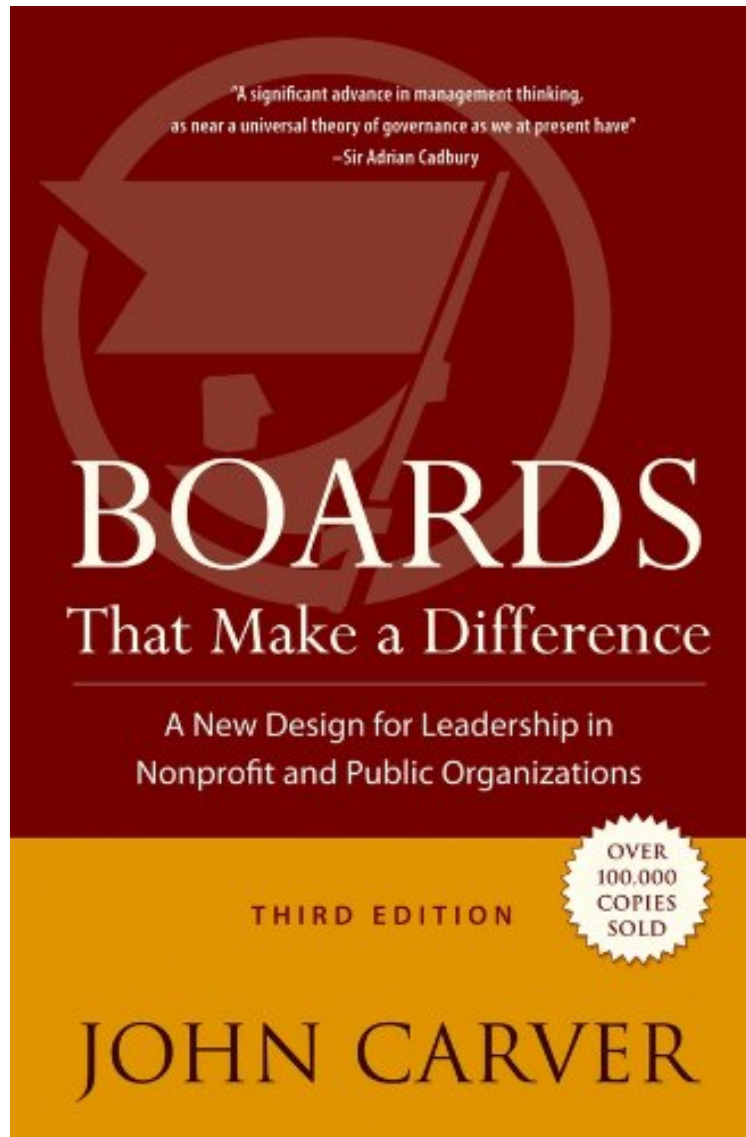


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## **Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations (J-B Carver Board Governance Series)**

*John Carver*

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**John Carver : Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations (J-B Carver Board Governance Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations (J-B Carver Board Governance Series):

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Dysfunctional Board Control By John W. Pearson If you want to spark some healthy conflict in your next conversation with nonprofit CEOs or senior pastors, throw this verbal grenade into the discussion: "Hey! What do you all think about policy governance?" According to Policy Governance Guru John Carver, "Governing by policy means governing out of policy in the sense that no board activity takes place without reference to policies. Most resolutions in board meetings will be motions to amend the policy structure in some way. Consequently, policy development is not an occasional board chore but its chief occupation." I mention this because I consult frequently with nonprofit boards--and conduct governance webinars and workshops in North America and overseas. And even though the majority of boards I work with say they function as "policy governance" boards, I don't believe them--because their micro-managing practices are so blatant. For example, consider John Carver's insight on what he calls the flaws of "The Approval Syndrome." They include: reactivity, sheer volume of material, mental misdirection, letting staff off the hook, unfairly putting staff on the hook, short-term bias, lack of clarity in the board's contribution, and fragmentation ("a sequence of disconnected and unmanageably voluminous vertical slices of the whole...instead of a holistic, manageable fabric of horizontally connected policies"). He adds, "We all profess that boards should deal with the big picture, but it is difficult to picture the forest by inspecting one tree at a time." One of my favorite Carver counter-intuitive commentaries describes what happens when a board delivers a "vote of confidence" for the CEO during a crisis situation. In this excellent policy governance bible, he writes, "Curiously, there are times when the board goes through the approval process not intending to withhold authority from the CEO but to confirm it. A board might declare its supports for the CEO by cloaking some controversial executive decision with the prestige of the boardroom. Board motivation is usually expressed thus: 'We want the staff (or others) to know the board is really behind the CEO on this.' As long as the board and CEO understand that the decision is truly the CEO's, this approval not only seems harmless but appears to be a healthy show of solidarity." Then Carver adds this zinger. "However, such a gesture of board support is called for only if the board has been sending weak signals about the nature of delegation. This kind of support is rarely warranted if the board has made it clear to all that all CEO decisions that are within board-stated bounds are always supported by the board. Official support of a specific action implies that such sporadic backup is necessary, or conversely, that the general philosophy of delegation is weak." Carver notes--in his massive 340-page hardback, with another 80 pages of resources and references--that "Board approvals are an unnecessary and dysfunctional method of board control, then, regardless of the ubiquity of the practice." He goes on--in succeeding chapters--to build the case for "a more proactive, fair, and detriualizing approach to fulfilling the board's moral and legal obligation to control the organization." If no one on the senior team or board of your nonprofit organization or church is familiar with Carver's brand of policy governance (he invented the term), this is the starting point. Whether you agree or disagree that this board approach is right for your organization, it's important to understand the continuum of choices available--and to seek consensus on defining your current reality and where your preferred governance future lies. Interestingly, the book includes an excellent "ends" policy (a big Carver term) from Lancaster County Bible Church. Note: If 340 pages are a tad too much for you, Carver has a series of booklets, focusing on niche policy governance issues. Another option is to check out the "lean and mean" approach, favored by many including myself, of a 10- to 15-page Board Policies Manual, as described in the book, Good Governance for Nonprofits: Developing Principles and Policies for an Effective Board, by Frederic L. Laughlin and Robert C. Andringa.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Book of theory with few if any practical applications. ... By Mark P Behar Book of theory with few if any practical applications. A real sleeper, especially for insomniacs. No disrespect to author, but the concepts need to be written in ways that inspire members of volunteer nonprofit Boards to take positive action. I would like to say that the book was sent from Idaho Youth Ranch, and they were EXCELLENT, book arrived quickly, in perfect, undamaged, condition, like new! Idaho Youth Ranch provided outstanding service. My criticism is of the actual content of the book and how it was treated: far more theory and academic, than practical applications which I wanted. Online summaries are far less tedious.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. As Good as a Novel By alex czerwonka This is an excellent analysis of the power dynamics within not-for-profit organisations. John Carver knows his stuff. In this book he perceptively identifies many of the problems and bottlenecks in the governance and management operations of organisations that are meant to serve communities. Not only this, he also offers solutions based on an understanding of how decisions get made, who holds power and responsibility, and who must be accountable and to whom. One of the most helpful books I have ever read on the subject. Many lights popped on and pennies dropped for me as I read reflecting on my own thirty years of experience working with many different NFP organisations. I read each chapter as avidly as a novel. Alex C

In this revised and updated third edition, Carver continues to debunk the entrenched beliefs and habits that hobble boards and to replace them with his innovative approach to effective governance. This proven model offers an empowering and fundamental redesign of the board role and emphasizes values, vision, empowerment of both the board and staff, and strategic ability to lead leaders. Policy Governance gives board members and staff a new approach to board job design, board-staff relationships, the role of the chief executive, performance monitoring, and virtually every aspect of the board-management relationship. This latest edition has been updated and expanded to include

explanatory diagrams that have been used by thousands of Carver's seminar participants. It also contains illustrative examples of Policy Governance model policies that have been created by real-world organizations. In addition, this third edition of *Boards That Make a Difference* includes a new chapter on model criticisms and the challenges of governance research.

"John Carver is a revolutionary of the very best kind. Carver's Policy Governance model has provided the means for trustees to live out Greenleaf's challenge to boards to act as both servant and leader." --Larry C. Spears, CEO, The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership; editor, *Reflections on Leadership*, *Insights on Leadership*, *Servant Leadership*, *The Power of Servant Leadership*; co-editor, *Practicing Servant Leadership and Focus on Leadership* "It took an inspired social scientist to record and describe the fundamental principles of [the Policy Governance] model, which provides deep insight into the role of the Board in the modern corporation." --Jeremy Booker, vice president corporate governance, British Petroleum, London "Dr. Carver's governance model has been the key in empowering the State Bar of California Board of Governors to focus on policy that would help our judicial system." --Andrew J. Guilford, 1999-2000 president, State Bar of California "An indispensable guidebook to leadership excellence." --George Weber, executive director, Canadian Dental Association, Ottawa; former secretary general, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva "Boards That Make a Difference explicates the model, which is simple, powerful and, above all, successful." --W. H. Hann, former executive director, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia "This book's sound premises regarding proper role delineation and its practical advice provide an invaluable resource." --Dr. John R. Seffrin, CEO, American Cancer Society, Atlanta "Dr. Carver offers a visionary yet practical approach to governance design." --Adalberto Palma Gomez, senior partner, Aperture S.C.; former director, Institute for the Protection of Bank Savings; chairman, Center for Excellence in Corporate Governance, Mexico City "Policy Governance gives governing bodies and CEOs a clear insight into their mutual relationship and their distinct responsibilities." --Jacques Gerards, CEO, Dutch Association of Governors in Health Care, The Netherlands "John Carver is a revolutionary of the very best kind. Carver's Policy Governance model has provided the means for trustees to live out Greenleaf's challenge to boards to act as both servant and leader." --Larry C. Spears, CEO, The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership; editor, *Reflections on Leadership*, *Insights on Leadership*, *Servant Leadership*, *The Power of Servant Leadership*; co-editor, *Practicing Servant Leadership and Focus on Leadership* "It took an inspired social scientist to record and describe the fundamental principles of [the Policy Governance] model, which provides deep insight into the role of the Board in the modern corporation." --Jeremy Booker, vice president corporate governance, British Petroleum, London "Dr. Carver's governance model has been the key in empowering the State Bar of California Board of Governors to focus on policy that would help our judicial system." --Andrew J. Guilford, 1999-2000 president, State Bar of California "An indispensable guidebook to leadership excellence." --George Weber, executive director, Canadian Dental Association, Ottawa; former secretary general, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva "Boards That Make a Difference explicates the model, which is simple, powerful and, above all, successful." --W. H. Hann, former executive director, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia "This book's sound premises regarding proper role delineation and its practical advice provide an invaluable resource." --Dr. John R. Seffrin, CEO, American Cancer Society, Atlanta "Dr. Carver offers a visionary yet practical approach to governance design." --Adalberto Palma Gomez, senior partner, Aperture S.C.; former director, Institute for the Protection of Bank Savings; chairman, Center for Excellence in Corporate Governance, Mexico City "Policy Governance gives governing bodies and CEOs a clear insight into their mutual relationship and their distinct responsibilities." --Jacques Gerards, CEO, Dutch Association of Governors in Health Care, The Netherlands

From the Inside Flap

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