

AIM GOLDEN RULES for GOOD GOVERNANCE

If there are just 10 things we should all do as successful enterprises, then these are they... Drawn up by the Association of Independent Museums, they are the hallmarks of a successful museum charity. Years of hard-won experience reveal these Golden Rules form the basis for successful governance for all independent museums and galleries – large and small. Everyone faces exactly the same challenges, and these often boil down to the way we behave as governors, trustees, staff, and volunteers.

The Ten Golden Rules

1. Cleave obsessively to the goals of the charity

- Be clear about the core objectives as defined in your constitution document, and commit to delivering them and only them.
- Make sure that everyone knows regularly what the core goals are!
- Trustees should understand they must only act in the charity's interests.

2. Make crystal clear the roles of the executive staff/volunteers as opposed to the non-executive chairman/trustees

- Remember, the board sets the policy, the staff/volunteers implement the policy – no mixture.
- Form a workable partnership between the board and the senior staffer/volunteer etc. Each need each other.

3. Allow not a cigarette paper to appear between the senior staffer/volunteer etc. and the chairman

- Ensure there are no surprises in public, ever, on either side by proper briefing before meetings and constant talking. Hammer out any differences in private in advance and by mutual agreement.

4. Back the staff or sack 'em!

- Back the staff totally, or sack if inadequate or un-trusted – no halfway house on this – don't dither!
- No by-passing or going round anyone, ever! Be open, honest and professional.

5. Meet up regularly!

- Set up a clear protocol of regular informal meetings between the chairman, vice chairman and the senior staffer/volunteer etc. Include frequency, timings, duration, location, and outline agenda.
- Use a degree of formality in reporting to the board and in recording board matters in proportion to the significance of issues and risks involved. Let there be no future misunderstanding!

6. Go on an awayday!

- Once a year take time out together to review objectively what you are doing and going to do. Take a chance to visit other people's successes and their failures too.

7. Answer the strategic questions!

- Where do you want to be in five years?
- What do you want to look like?

- Who do you want to serve?
- Remember that perpetuating your existence is not a core purpose of any charity – you must deliver something to somebody!

8. Go back to basics!

- Only do decision-making that relies on some evidence and first principles.
- Recognise the importance of enthusiasm and emotion in achieving the goals.

9. Make the board aware of its legal obligations, individual and collective!

- Act for the charity, not for self nor for your nominating body.
- Make sure charity does not operate insolvently.
- Declare all conflicts of interest and step outside.
- Take external professional advice on issues which might place the charity at risk e.g. employment and health and safety procedures.

10. Be on the money!

- Demand proper accounts and reports to the board regularly.
- Remind everyone that if there are funds, they are to be used!
- Remind everyone that if there are no funds, they are to be raised!