Post COVID-19 Board Meetings - Best Practice Checklist

With the onset of COVID-19, the world has changed – across multiple sectors – and it is unlikely to revert back to its old ways any time soon. We ask two critical questions:

What does this mean for the board and its ability to deliver value?

How should boards operate in this new environment?

We present to you the following checklist that helps your board adapt and confront the unique challenges that lie ahead.

PRE-BOARD MEETING

☐ **Review the composition of your board and the skillsets and experience that the members have.**
Do you have a clear view of what skills your board will require moving forward?

☐ **Establish a clear purpose for the meeting.**
It is important to communicate the intent of the meeting to all board members.

☐ **Create a well-structured agenda.**
A well structured agenda syncs up with the desired outcome of the meeting.

☐ **Circulate the agenda a week prior to the meeting.**
This allots some time for members to provide input and comment on the agenda.

☐ **Decide on how to circulate the agenda.**
Will this be done via hard copy, email, or through a board portal?

☐ **Clarify the desired outcome for each agenda item.**
Is it for information? For discussion? For decision?

☐ **Set expectations for each board member.**
Are they expected to lead certain agenda items? Are they expected to provide an update/input? Are they expected to contribute to a decision and how that decision will be made?

☐ **Prepare and circulate the board pack a week before the meeting.**
This helps ensure that board papers provide sufficient information to meet the objective of each agenda item.

☐ **Decide on how to circulate the board pack.**
Will it be done via hardcopy, email, or through a board portal? Is the method of distribution secure?

☐ **Review the quality of information in the board papers.**
Is the information in the board papers clear, understandable, accurate and current? See this post for more information on how to write effective board papers.

☐ **Verify that all board members have received all the required information.**
This places them in the best position to contribute to the meeting.

☐ **Be flexible when setting up meetings.**
It is best to have a system that allows for board meetings to be set-up quickly in response to changing factors. Also, given today's circumstances, consider your board's ability to run virtual meetings. If you have that capability, make sure that the method is tried, tested, and secure. It is also important that every board member is comfortable using the technology.

DURING THE BOARD MEETING

Holding meetings with some members present in the room, and some joining remotely, will be the norm. This does present some interesting challenges which we addressed in a previous post. (See [Best Practices: Facilitating Virtual Meetings](#))

Let's take a look at what we should consider, especially if you are the Chairperson.

☐ **Gauge your comfort level.**
Are you ready to run a meeting of this type?

☐ **Identify who will be taking meeting minutes.**

☐ **Decide on how the meeting minutes will be circulated for comment and feedback.**
This ensures that all action items and associated due dates are noted by the respective owners.

☐ **Manage all attendees to obtain everyone's input.**
It is more difficult to do this when not everyone is physically located in the same room. Those in the room may dominate the meeting. It is particularly important to be aware that a balance of input is needed across the whole group.

☐ **Keep to time.**

☐ **Run an effective meeting.**
This means that attendees will leave the meeting assured that it: a.) achieved its purpose, b.) covered all agenda items with sufficient time for each, c.) allowed input from everyone, and d.) delivered a structured set of action items/next steps with owners and due dates assigned.

POST-BOARD MEETING

Now that the meeting has been well attended and with good contribution from all, what's next?

☐ **Circulate the meeting minutes soon after the meeting concludes.**
This allows meeting attendees to comment and provide input on the document.

☐ **Circle back to the attendees.**
Obtain feedback or input regarding the meeting. Ask how the meeting went from their perspective, and how things can be improved moving forward.

☐ **Track and monitor action items.**
The agreed action items should be tracked for progress prior to the next meeting.

☐ **Incorporate action items into the next meeting agenda.**
All action items from the last meeting should be presented as part of the opening of the next agenda.

It also is worthwhile to evaluate board meeting practices by considering the following:

☐ **Frequency and format.**
Are board meetings held often enough? Perhaps the convenience factor of virtual meetings should encourage more frequent board meetups?

☐ **Duration.**
Are board meetings too long? Do they need to be shortened? Agendas are often packed with items because attendees may have to travel to meetings, and there is the priority of making the most of their time. Perhaps with more virtual meetings there could be more frequent, shorter, and more focussed meetings and agendas?