

Effective Board Meetings for Better Governance



Table of Contents

Introduction	3	How Can Technology Help?	17
How Do Meetings Promote Good Governance?	4	Arranging and setting up meetings	17
Inform those that attend	4	Managing agendas	17
Enable/facilitate decisions to be made	5	Distributing and managing accurate, timely and secure information	18
Enable/facilitate discussion or feedback	5	Enabling discussion	18
What is at the Heart of All Good Meetings?	6	Managing meeting minutes and other documentation	18
Data vs. Information	6	How Should Board Management Software Be Designed?	20
Good structure	7	Practical and easy-to-use	20
Good involvement	8	Facilitate what you want to do	20
Good management	9	Affordable	21
Documented outcomes	9	Emphasize security	21
Post COVID-19: Best Practices for Board Meetings	11	About the Author	24
Pre-Board Meeting	12	About Praxonomy	24
During the Board Meeting	13		
Post-Board Meeting	13		
What Are the Stages of Board-related Communication Processes?	15		

Introduction



The role that board meetings play in the overall governance of an organisation is key.

Effective board meetings translate to better governance.

It is important to understand what the word “governance” means. The Cambridge Dictionary states:

Definition of “Governance”

noun [U] UK /'gʌv.ən.əns/ US /'gʌv.ə.nəns/:

the way that organizations or countries are managed at the highest level, and the systems for doing this.

An organisation has many processes and roles focused on ensuring good governance, but this eBook is targeted at one element of that definition — *“the systems for doing this.”*

The *system*, as used in the context of this eBook, concentrates on the pinnacle of the organisation’s meeting pyramid: the board meeting.

This is where all of governance activities emanate. This, too, is where organisations conduct a system of checks and balances to determine if all governance tasks are in order. If they aren’t, it is the venue for the board to identify, document, and track actions to resolve relevant governance issues.

How Do Meetings Promote Good Governance?



It is essential to identify the purpose of a meeting. The ideas tackled here are pertinent to any meeting, but this eBook primarily focuses on board meetings and their desired outcomes.

For many executives and non-executives' perspectives, the "desired outcomes" of meetings they attend are not always clear. For instance, this can apply to weekly meetings that run for two hours with a fixed agenda (or no agenda). They still take place, but only because of routine. These meetings can often lose their focus and purpose over time.

With this in mind, the "high-level" purpose of any meeting should:

Inform those that attend

It is important to focus not only on the "the meeting" per se, but also on the meeting process. What goes on prior to the meeting, leading up to it actually taking place, should also be taken as an opportunity to inform.

It would make sense that the meeting and the meeting process ensure that the attendees were better informed by the time it concludes. Attendees should at least be updated with progress, clear about current status, understand issues/problems that have come up and the relevant actions to address them.

Enable/facilitate decisions to be made

A meeting should enable and/or facilitate decision making. To achieve these, the following are necessary:

- ✓ The right people attend the meeting
- ✓ They have the right information upon which to make decisions
- ✓ They have time, in the meeting, to discuss and make informed decisions
- ✓ The decisions are captured and documented

Enable/facilitate discussion or feedback

As referenced above, a good meeting allows time for -- and facilitates -- discussion and feedback. The sharing of ideas, raising of concerns, the opportunity to promote constructive propositions, are the keys to better decision making. There is a clear need to ensure that these are incorporated into meetings.

IN SUMMARY:

An attendee should leave a meeting feeling that:

- They are better informed than when they initially joined the meeting.
- They had the opportunity to discuss issues/propositions, and provide their points of view.
- Their input has been heard, understood, and factored-in as part of the decision-making process.

What is at the Heart of All Good Meetings?



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