Board Practices – A compilation of ASAE Executive Section listserv input during March, 2010.

Before

1. Focus on providing quality background information well in advance of the meeting.
2. Provide the board book and/or supporting documents two weeks in advance.
3. Rely on the chair to promote or enforce advance reading of the book --- when topics arise that were obviously provide in advance, he or she should point out, “the answer is in the information you were provided in advance.
4. Use a behavioral analysis tool at the start of the year to help the directors understand the varied personalities and get to know each other.
5. Stay in touch with stakeholders – don’t let the board think they represent the views and needs of members unless they really do.
6. Distribute a simple chart or guide of rules of order, such as ABCs of Parliamentary Procedure published by Channing Bete (about $1).
7. Be sure the room and table are conducive to board discussion; a hollow square or open-U is ideal.
8. Rely on an organizational chart to depict appropriate hierarchy, flow of information and decision making processes.
9. Post the mission, vision and values in the boardroom or display it on an easel in the meeting room.
10. If the board meeting is two days or two parts, begin the second part with a recap of what was achieved and still must be addressed.
11. Provide a summary sheet or template on major discussions to inform the board of expectations and ho they should view the matter. For example, “Up for discussion” “Information only” “Requires action” “Economic impact” etc.
12. Hire a parliamentarian to keep discussions on track; or use a parliamentarian at board orientation.
13. Hold a discussion of the agenda with the appropriate officers in advance of the meeting to avoid any surprises.
14. On the agenda, include time allocations so persons know how much time is expected for topics.
15. Identify the responsible positions/names next to agenda items; share it well in advance so they can properly prepare.
16. Advise board members the proper timing and channels for adding items to the agenda.
17. Organize the agenda by strategic goals; each committee report falls within the respective goal.
18. When providing board materials in advance, only bring extra copies of the agenda to the meeting; relying on board members to have reviewed the packet in advance – not expecting staff to bring extra packets.
19. Number pages in the board book for easy reference (a PDF feature.)

20. More effective than a timed agenda, is a chair who keeps things moving forward by not being fearful of cutting off discussion. (But don't *obsess* about time – you don't want to cover important issues because time didn't allow.)
21. "Front load" the agenda with the most important issues so not to run out of time.
22. Terminology – if your organization uses a unique set of terminology in your industry, or acronyms of associated organizations, include it in the board book – including the meaning of "consent agenda, call the question, etc."
23. Identify "action items" with a star or code so directors can see what requires the most attention on agendas.
24. Consider a conference call prior to the face-to-face meeting to help dispense with administrative issues and help the directors understand the larger issues at hand.
25. Staff reviews the financial report with the treasurer in advance and develops talking points.
26. Provide a one-page "rules of engagement" or "board conduct" for expectations of the board that are not in the bylaws (i.e. respect for new ideas, not dominating discussions, willingness to take on extra tasks, starting and ending on time, etc.)

During

27. Project the agenda and background materials on the wall with a laptop and LCD projector; this keeps board members looking up and everyone on the same page. Too often board members are shuffling papers and looking down at text messages.
28. Start and end meetings on time; hang a clock on the wall; if need be --- appoint a volunteer to serve as timekeeper.
29. When board books are being use, the chair needs to remember to point out the page number on each new topic.
30. Take frequent breaks – don't allow an overly ambitious chair to forget the need to stretch and refresh with breaks every 60 to 90 minutes.
31. Identify the strategic plan's primary goals on the agenda to keep the plan in front of the board; align reports and work under the appropriate goal.
32. Identify a "Mega Issue" on every agenda that the chair has selected from the strategic goals.
33. Include the BHAG on every agenda[1]
34. Use name tent cards to remind and familiarize directors who have forgotten names.
35. On the back or bottom of tent cards use the space for mission statement or antitrust avoidance statement.
36. Notice the conflict of interest policy and start the meeting by asking, "Everyone has seen today's agenda, is there anyone who wants to make not of a potential conflict of interest?"
37. Make note of the antitrust avoidance statement and record such in the minutes.
38. Keep a flip chart in the room in case an issue needs development through graphics.
39. Assign seats using name tentcards to mix up the dynamics and ensure that the officers are seated at the head of the table.

[1] *Good to Great's* "Big Hairy Audacious Goal"

40. Invite local members as guests (with rules for addressing the board) if your meetings rotate to chapters and components.
41. Use the tentcards to signify a desire to address the discussion by turning the tentcard on end.
42. Serving food? Suggest high energy and low carbs to avoid the afternoon sluggishness associated with a big meal.
43. When serving a meal, use a separate room so directors have a chance to stretch and get away from the work setting.
44. Make caffeine and chocolate a staple at the board table.
45. Provide time for meaningful discussions, not just an agenda of reports to check off as they are given.
46. Position the board meeting as a "safe place for deliberation" and caution against rehashing important topics after the meeting in the parking lot or by email.
47. Envision and anticipate significant results and share the vision, "Today our goal is to achieve a significantly positive outcome and implementation for the initiative we've been considering."
48. Use a consent agenda – minimize trivia, maximize the brainpower in the room. (Of course any action item can be moved from the consent agenda.)
49. Use a *dashboard* to report on performance measures the board should know about and less on "here's what we did since the last board meeting." (GRAPHIC)

Board Action Grid

Decide/Choose	**Approve, Accept, Endorse, Validate**
The Board of Directors will make a decision on a recommendation or choose among options generated internally or by committee/staff.	The Board of Directors will approve a recommendation or course of action that has policy, strategy, brand, or material budget implications.
Understand	**Guide**
The Board of Directors will better understand a critical issue, perspective, or dynamic that is critical to Board level responsibilities.	The Board of Directors will provide guidance to Committees and staff as it relates to established strategy, policy, brand, or budget.

50. Consider Policy Governance to clarify roles and processes (reference: Carver Policy Governance.)
51. Find ways to address questions through a process of values and measurement (consider a matrix to determine the importance of discussions.)
52. Make it acceptable to simply have a "conversation" without making a decision. Develop a process to explore an issue that will get a sense of the board's issues without undertaking the process of full deliberation and decision.
53. Assign new ideas to a "parking lot" for future consideration.
54. Be sure the board chair understands the role of *facilitating* the meeting; calling on members who may be quiet and quieting members who may dominate.
55. Move name tentcards after a break to change the meeting dynamics.
56. Include a brief guest speaker at each board meeting to ensure that in 10 to 15 minutes they board is introduced to something that can be of value to them in governance or careers.
57. Always add two empty seats to the board table and ask directors to strategically invite a future leader to observe and consider involvement in organizational leadership. (graphic..board table.)

58. If we take a meal break, we divide the board into three strategic groups assigned to tables so they meet different persons at each meeting (i.e. east, west, central or big, medium, small, etc.)

"Use all the brainpower for something that actually matters."

After

59. Strategically organize the agenda – more difficult decisions interspersed with "low hanging fruit." Spend the most time on issues with strategic value for the organization.
60. Give every board member a chance to lead – share assignments and help them develop leadership skills by asking various directors to make reports, lead a discussion, etc.
61. A flipchart can be used to quiet a verbose director by asking them to, "organize and outline your ideas on the flipchart at the front of the room."
62. Use the flipchart to track and document decisions as the meeting progresses.
63. Identify action items in the minutes – similar to the action items that were noted on the corresponding agenda.
64. Use time in between board meetings to get the work done. Governance should not end when the meeting adjourns.
65. The CEO prepares talking points right after the meeting so that directors know how to best communicate the achievements and issues at the recent board meeting.
66. Distribute an evaluation or use SurveyMonkey for a 3-question survey – How effective do you think this meeting was?
67. At the end of the chairman's year, give him or her a tool or form to conduct a confidential board self-assessment and ways to improve governance.
68. Celebrate! Board members are there because they want to do a great job --- celebrate their small and big achievements after each meeting.
69. Wrap up meetings with a summary of what was accomplished.
70. Recognize leadership --- be sure board members are promoted as volunteer leadership working on behalf of the industry, community and members.
71. When distributing minutes electronically (email attachment) be sure they are a PDF format and not a Word format to protect their integrity.
72. Create a PowerPoint to identify highlights, actions and outcomes at the last meeting.
73. Post everything to a shared board governance website page.
74. Distribute minutes promptly; after all the volunteers gave of their time, they deserve to see the minutes.

"It is about the content of the agenda, if you get that right everything else falls into place."

"You'll know you got it right by the degree of engaged discussion."


Cost Per Lead
Lifetime Customer Value
x 10
Marketing Cost Per Sale
$ 114.11
100%
Gross Margin
0%
HIGH
Return on Investment
LOW