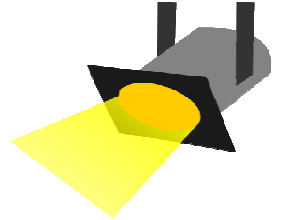


Board Room Blahs

Ever end a board meeting wondering if it was worth the time? Do the minutes show innovation and decisiveness to advance the mission and goals?

It's possible to be in a rut. Here are some board room rescues.¹

- The mission frames discussions. Keep it in front of the board by printing it on the bottom of the agenda, on the back of name tent cards, and on the wall in the conference room.
- Goals are the roadmap. Maintain focus on the strategic plan by listing the goals or core competencies right on the agenda.
- All eyes up! Project the agenda and documents on a screen so directors are looking at the key points and not lost in a stack of papers.
- Connect committees to goals. Transform the list of committee reports to a layout where goals are listed in the left column with the committees listed in the right next to their respective goals.
- A “Mega Issue” on every agenda. Spotlight one item that will make a difference and deserves more time and attention. Call it the mega or spotlight issue so board members are eager to get through the reports and to the more meaningful project.
- Save time. Use a consent agenda to reduce reports by distributing them in advance and asking for one motion to accept the consent items.
- Read to lead. Maybe “President Schwarzenegger” misspoke when he stated in *The Simpsons Movie*, “I was elected to lead, *not to read*.” Provide support documents well in advance to allow directors to prepare.



- Transform committee reports to action. Provide committee chairs with a template for their “Project Profiles.” Directors will quickly distinguish between a report and a call for action.
- What’s the value? Consider starting agenda items by asking the *value*. For instance, “this is on the agenda because we think it will add value.” Or filter items with a consistent set of questions: Which goal does this support? What resources will be required? What’s the ROI? How will we measure success?
- Assess meeting effectiveness. Use the back of the agenda for 1 or 2 questions to ask before the meeting adjourns: 1) Did the meeting advance the mission and serve the members; 2) What can we do to improve our next board meeting?
- Stay focused. Keep a copy of the strategic plan on the board table. Better yet – laminate a copy that directors know will be a resource at the meeting.
- Consistent messaging. Take 5 minutes at the end of the meeting to decide on the main message that directors should communicate to members. Create an executive summary or “One Voice” and distribute to directors so they deliver consistent messages after each meeting.

If your board has the blahs, experiment with these ideas.

Board Agenda Items and Projects

Good to Go?

- What is the primary of objective of this agenda item?
- Which goal(s) in our strategic plan does it support?
- What resources will be required (finances, time, staff, volunteers, consultants)?
- What is the ROI (return on investment)?
- How will success be recognized and measured?