



The Board Evaluation Process

In the hubris of “good governance” talk, the annual board evaluation is the prompter for directors to take time to review how the board operates. It’s a “pause” button.



The Board Performance Evaluation Process

1. Map the structure

Discuss purpose and process with the full board. Director agreement and input into the design is key.

2. Prepare the tools

Surveys and in-person interviews are two typical tools. A third is in-boardroom observation. Some boards conduct a “full” board performance evaluation one year (surveys and interviews) with assistance from an independent facilitator; and, the following year use a survey with a discussion led by the board chair. Some boards conduct a comprehensive board review one year; and comprehensive committee reviews the next year.

3. Collect the data

4. Analyze the data for themes, recurring topics

5. Discuss

The “results” discussion must be a scheduled board agenda item. Think of it as a “pause” from regular agenda items. It will help the board measure its effectiveness.

6. Actions

Note follow-up and to-do items. This often takes the form of 2-4 “board goals.”

Four Helpful Questions Following Each Board Meeting:

1. Did we accomplish what needed to get done?
2. What could we have done better?
3. Did we have the right materials in advance?
4. What key items should be on the next meeting agenda?



Could your annual board evaluation use a little constructive interaction?

Board Evaluation Types

1. Full board performance
2. Director self-assessment
3. Director peer review
4. Committee assessments
5. Senior management – board relations

Board Evaluation Tools

1. Surveys (on-line or paper)
 - Logistics
 - Substantive
 - Culture
2. One-on-one confidential interviews
 - Conversation guidelines
 - Open-ended

Nuts & Bolts

1. Frequency – annual (every 2 to 3 years guided by an independent facilitator).
2. Confidentiality and director anonymity is important.

Tips for a better assessment outcome

1. Talk candidly about how the board operates.
2. Consider “best” and “new” governance practices.
3. Confirm meetings are focused on the right issues.
4. Prioritize matters that need attention.
5. Review matters that could have been handled better.
6. Discuss board composition and board succession planning.

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Helping directors increase board effectiveness.