

Top Ten Tips for Better Board Meetings

1. Ensure that board members have minutes, reports, board information pack and a proposed agenda at least 5 days in advance.
2. Spend some time planning the agenda. This should be done by the Chair and General Manager (not by the General Manager alone) The goal should be to limit the meeting agenda to six, seven or eight key items.
3. If your CTC is focused on achieving particular objectives for the year build each meeting agenda around one or two of these items as 'themes'. Consider inviting a guest or staff member to talk at meetings particularly if it relates to one of these topics. This can make for a more interesting meeting.
4. Determine what else is to be on the agenda. Review each possible item to determine if it needs to be considered at all by the board (i.e. is it a governance or operational matter?). Consider if the board should see it, is it an item for discussion and decision or is it really for board information only. The stance: when in doubt leave it off the agenda – but provide the information in the board information / document back up pack, could work for your board.
5. Allot a specific amount of time for each item and indicate this on the agenda. You can do this when you are planning the agenda or you can assign priorities and times with the board's input when reviewing the agenda at the start of every meeting.
6. If there are resources to provide tea, coffee cakes etc as a "perk" this works very well for some boards in helping create an upbeat social and working atmosphere. Be sure this happens before the actual start of the meeting or after the meeting is over. It can be difficult to manage the meeting effectively if eating interrupts the flow and impacts on the timeliness.
7. Get into the habit of starting and ending meetings on time. Monthly meetings, especially evening meetings, that are longer than two hours should be avoided.
8. Once decisions are made ensure any actions that are required to be taken are assigned to the appropriate person with an agreed date for completion. Please note the most appropriate person is not always the General Manager. If the subject relates to Governance or any risks associated with the organisation then a board member may be better suited to completing the task. Also taking a collaborative approach and working jointly with the manager may also be an effective way to complete the action.
9. Ensure any actions remain on the board agenda until they have been completed.
10. Ensure board members are thanked for their service after every meeting and are clear before they leave when they next meeting is due to be held.