

Top 10 Practices of Great Boards

1. Be sure every member fully understands his or her accountability, responsibilities and the expectations of the office, and document it all in a written position description.
2. Choose members based on written criteria that define the professional backgrounds, skills, personal qualifications and diversity needed on the board – and reelect members based on continued strong performance.
3. Make the board a learning organization, integrating education and real-time learning into everything the board does, from fully engaging in strategic planning to policy-making, oversight and stakeholder relations.
4. Build a strong working partnership with the CEO, but never forget the board's independent accountability to oversee executive performance.
5. Fully utilize strong working committees to perform detailed oversight and bring well-documented recommendations to the board.
6. Develop and use a dashboard or balanced scorecard of key performance indicators for finances, operations, business strategy, clinical quality, customer service and community benefit.
7. Ask why: Fully understand the information provided to the board, get to the root causes of variances and apply innovative thinking to board work.
8. Pay attention to building a healthy board culture — to how the board works as a team, asks questions, and takes action — as well as to its more tangible board structures and processes.
9. Develop a Board Policy Manual, including policies on how the board will perform important governance functions, such as strategic planning, budgeting, quality review, CEO evaluation, audit, executive compensation review, board recruitment, succession planning and board self-evaluation, among others.
10. Make self-evaluation an integral part of ongoing board development; assess the performance of the full board and the chairperson, and when the board has established a strong culture of trust and confidence in itself, carefully begin a process of assessment and improvement of individual performance.

Best Board Practices Checklists

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