



How to have great board meetings: Get SMART!

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Does your board have great meetings?

No, not likely. Too many meetings are poorly attended, take far too long, are unproductive, and without purpose or outcomes. Having great meetings is not mandatory, but holding meetings that people want to attend is a smart approach. Now is the time to make your meetings SMART. I'm flipping the script on board meetings and starting with the T first. Yes, I know SMART is spelled **S – M – A – R – T**, but at BoardSpace, we think differently.

T is for technology

SMART meetings are powered by technology. Board management software such as BoardSpace offers the best tools to collect, manage, use and store everything in one spot. Nothing is ever lost. No one ever forgets an assigned action because BoardSpace tracks them and reminds you about due dates. SMART meetings eliminate paper, and as a bonus, meetings can be held anywhere. This allows directors to attend from around the world.

R is for regular

SMART meetings are held regularly. For example, set meetings for the second Tuesday of each month and keep to this schedule. When everyone knows when the meetings will be held they can plan ahead and work around other commitments. Remember, board members are volunteers with their own busy lives.

A is for accessible

SMART meetings are accessible. Accessibility is a right and the right thing to do. If accessibility is always a consideration, then disability (permanent or temporary), cultural considerations such as religious holidays, food or drink restrictions, or any other obstacles will never prevent board members from attending meetings.

M is for managed

SMART meetings are managed – in a good way.

Before the meeting

Encourage members to bring their laptop, tablet or smartphone to every meeting.

Make sure meeting reminders are sent well in advance. It doesn't hurt to send a second one too. Include the date, time, and location of the meeting and consider adding a short note that includes:

- the top items on the agenda
- reminders about overdue or coming due action items (with the hope that this will spur the responsible individual to get their work done)
- request that directors come prepared with questions about the top item being discussed.

During the meeting

The Chair and the Secretary are key to keeping meetings on track.

Consider asking one member to be a timekeeper – who advises the Chair when time is running out.

If anyone gets off-topic or tries to jump ahead in the agenda, the Chair redirects them to the topic at hand.

After the meeting

Whether before, during, or after the meeting, communication is key to keeping a group connected and focused on shared goals.

- Good Chairs always end meetings by thanking the board members for their time and service.
- Recording Secretary never forgot to ask directors to review the minutes by a certain date.
- BoardSpace helps by sending automatic reminders that gently nudge directors to get their assigned to-do-lists completed.

S is for short

Short as in concise and mission driven. Don't make meetings any longer than absolutely necessary. Board members are volunteers who have their own schedules and busy lives.

Lengthy meetings are a sign of a lack of direction. Meetings must end on time.

Include nothing on the agenda that isn't in direct support of the organization's mission.

Starting every meeting with the Chair reading the organization's mission keeps the board on topic. Be SMART and disciplined about the agenda.

Why do “SMART” Meetings matter?

SMART meetings matter because if meetings are not short, manageable, regular, and technology-enabled, they will lack purpose, direction, and positive outcomes. In short, no one will want to attend.

Don't suffer death by meetings. SMART boards leverage all the tools available to them to deliver meetings that people will want to attend. BoardSpace board management software is one of these tools.

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