



# BoardWorks

## Putting the board to the ten-minute test

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In keeping with our current board performance review stream of articles, here's another way that your board might consider undertaking in order to stay on top of its job. A well-constructed 'traditional' approach to board review, i.e., once a year event, can produce data that are then translated into development goals and improvement programmes. But to be effective, the process should produce more than just a score card. It should not be the only occasion for board self-review and reflection. Like any other performance improvement programme, be that for a golf swing or a workplace skill, improvement is likely to be incremental and the work required to bring about the improvement will typically be ongoing.

We suggest that a board should view performance review and improvement as a continuous process. To achieve this, we recommend a 10-minute addition to each board meeting. We call this 'the 10-minute test'. The process is undertaken at a time when board members are focused on their job and provides the opportunity to address performance issues while they are 'hot'. It's very simple.

Here's how it is done. At the conclusion of every board meeting 10 minutes is routinely set aside to review the meeting just completed. Board members would each take a turn at leading the review, each choosing, say, two or three themes for their session.

Themes might include:

1. Satisfaction with the CEO's and other reports considered at the meeting
2. Preparedness of the board and individual directors for the business transacted at that meeting
3. Time management by the Chair
4. Opportunities for participation in the dialogue
5. Soundness of decision making
6. Sense that directors' time was well-spent
7. Sufficiency of data/information in support of decisions
8. Conflicts well-managed (if there were any)
9. Maximum use made of the CEO's expertise
10. Sufficient time allocated for the 'big' issues
11. Adequacy of committee reporting and recommendations
12. The extent to which board dialogue remained focused at the governance level
13. The extent to which the strategic direction statements, e.g., the mission/purpose, values, KRAs etc formed the basis for board dialogue. (Or in other words to use the Carver Policy Governance language, the meeting was "Ends" focused.)
14. Specific items arising from the annual performance review.

Some of these might be regularly assessed, e.g., 6, 10, 12 and 14. Other issues might be reviewed as selected by individual board members. The chairperson would keep track of themes to ensure that throughout the year there was full coverage. Each director would design their own approach to the 10-minute test. Where an improvement opportunity is identified the chair might then lead a brief

discussion designed to agree what might be done at future meetings. Using this regular 10-minute review, the board tests its focus on its job and on the efficiency and effectiveness in carrying this out.

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