

WORKOUT SHEET

# The High Impact Board Pack Workout



BOARD  
INTELLIGENCE

THE DISCIPLINE OF FOCUS

# Introduction

Navigating the short-term demands of the COVID-19 crisis and calibrating plans for recovery from the harsh economic aftermath that looms are front of mind for many boards.

Now, more than ever, boards need high-quality information to tackle the current challenges and guide their organisations towards an unimagined future.

# What are the challenges?

## Common reporting mistakes to avoid

Producing a high-impact board pack can feel challenging when you are faced with an overcrowded or ever-changing agenda, time pressure and a burdensome collation process.

- Papers are too long
- Papers are too backwards-looking
- There is too much information and not enough insight
- The purpose of the papers is unclear
- The input required from the reader is unclear
- The focus is too operational and there is not enough strategic coverage
- The style of the papers makes them difficult to read

Read our guide [7 Costly Board Pack Mistakes](#) to find out how you can avoid common costly mistakes on your journey to a better board pack.

# Where do you stand?

## Understanding what good looks like

A high-impact board pack contains papers that answer the questions the board want answering in a short, sharp and focused way – priming them for an effective discussion. It's structured in a way that uses time and data wisely.

A high-impact board pack:

- ✓ Delivers insight
- ✓ Drives focused, effective discussion and robust decision-making
- ✓ Engages the reader with a clear, concise style
- ✓ Enables your board to work at its best

The first step towards a high-impact board pack is understanding the gap between where you are and where you want to be. That's the purpose of this brief workout – think about it as a light exercise class – not a Bootcamp!

To complete a full assessment and get detailed personalised recommendations visit The Board Intelligence [Board Reporting Assessment](#).

Ask yourself the following questions about your current board pack. Note: If you are a governance professional it may be more helpful to answer these questions from a board member's viewpoint.

1. DOES YOUR BOARD PACK HELP YOU HAVE FOCUSED, PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS?

- Yes
- No

2. ARE THE QUESTIONS EACH PAPER MUST ANSWER CLEARLY SET BY THE BOARD AND UNDERSTOOD BY THE AUTHOR BEFORE WRITING STARTS?

- Yes
- No

3. IS THE PACK STRUCTURED SO THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEMS COME FIRST?

- Yes
- No

4. DOES YOUR BOARD PACK TYPICALLY CONTAIN LESS THAN 20 PAPERS?

- Yes
- No

5. IS THERE A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN PAPERS FOR DECISION AND DISCUSSION VERSUS PAPERS FOR MONITORING AND SUPERVISION?

- Yes
- No

6. ARE DECISION PAPERS CONSTRUCTED USING A WELL-UNDERSTOOD STRUCTURE TO ENABLE THE BOARD TO REACH A FASTER DECISION?

- Yes
- No

7. DOES EACH PAPER IN THE PACK BEGIN WITH A ONE-PAGE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY THAT:

Provides context, linking the topic to the bigger picture?

- Yes
- No

Sets out the scope of the paper and the key questions it focuses on?

- Yes
- No

Presents all the key messages on a single page?

- Yes
- No

Specifies the input required from the reader?

- Yes
- No

8. ARE YOUR PAPERS TYPICALLY UNDER 10 PAGES (INCLUDING APPENDICES)?

- Yes
- No

9. DO DIRECTORS FEEL SUFFICIENT ATTENTION IS PAID TO STRATEGY IN THE PACK AND INDIVIDUAL PAPERS?

- Yes
- No

10. IS DATA EASY TO INTERPRET AND USED TO ANSWER RELEVANT QUESTIONS?

- Yes
- No

11. DO YOU HAVE A FEEDBACK MECHANISM FOR ASSESSING PAPER AND PACK QUALITY AND IMPACT?

- Yes
- No

If you answered 9 or more questions with a 'yes' well done - your board pack is officially high-impact! If fewer than 9 of your answers were 'yes' chances are that your board is operating at a level that is less than optimal – unable to focus its time and energy on what matters most – and almost certainly leaving Directors frustrated at how well their time is spent.

To explore what needs to change in more depth why not take the Board Intelligence [Board Reporting Assessment](#) for more insight into how your board pack stacks up and where you go from here. Alternatively, [request a demo](#) to see how our platform could help you transform board effectiveness.

# How do you embed high impact reporting?

## Things to consider

Research has shown that standalone report writing training doesn't embed lasting change. Old habits die hard. Over time, inconsistencies creep in and page lengths creep up.

### 1. BRIEF AUTHORS CLEARLY

Be specific. Rather than asking your authors to submit reports on a broad topic or function, unpack the item into a set of high-quality questions for the report authors to structure their paper around. Armed with a clear brief of what is required, they will be better positioned to focus on what matters and create a high impact paper that hits the mark first time.

### 2. GIVE GUIDANCE ON WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Templates needn't be straitjackets. Supported by ongoing video-based training they can help paper authors structure their thinking and unpack the answers to the key questions their paper focuses on, whilst giving them freedom to demonstrate their subject matter expertise and consistently produce high-impact reports.

### 3. LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY TO EMBED BEST PRACTICE

Power the process from a single platform to bring out the best from everyone at every stage of the pack preparation process. Underpin best practice and training with technology that allows you to manage the entire reporting cycle from one place and streamline the production of a high impact board pack.

# How can you build the business case for change?

## Next steps

The shift to remote meetings has shown that over 80% of boards want shorter, sharper papers. Yet, 63% of board members classify their papers as weak or poor, and 64% say they don't help the board conversation.

To start building the business case for change at your organisation, share the [Board Intelligence Board Reporting Assessment](#) tool results with your CEO and Chair. Invite them to complete the assessment themselves and ask them what they think.

## Additional questions you can ask your board members:

- How much value are you getting out of the meetings?
- Does the information you receive enable you to steer the organisation well? (Chair)
- Is this something you want to fix in the next three to six months?

If improving the quality of your board pack is a priority, speak to us about the solution. You can achieve a step-change in a couple of board cycles.

# Board Intelligence

We know that board members and leaders want to do a good job but the truth is that they're not enabled to do that. The challenge is in the board and leadership meeting itself.

Too often, agendas are packed with backwards-looking, operational and short-term issues, meeting papers are long and poorly written, there's not enough alignment within the board, and there's too little focus on strategy and long-term success.

And the challenge of data overload, the growing weight of compliance, and the need to serve all stakeholders mean it's even harder for boards and leaders to focus on the important matters.

That's why we have developed the world's only platform that enables boards and leadership teams to focus on what matters most, ensuring smarter meetings, decision, and actions.

It starts with priority planning and agenda management tools that drive alignment across the board and leadership teams and ensure time is spent on those issues that will make the biggest difference.

The briefing tool and best practice templates ensure key questions are answered and that writers produce sharp, clear reports and papers that get to the heart of the issue quickly.

The portal ensuring a single view of the truth, and finally, our monitoring tools drive constant, consistent improvement.

For more information  
or to request a demo,  
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