

Delegating board responsibilities

Group discussion

Description: A facilitated group discussion to audit your last board meeting agenda and delegate responsibilities to the executive team, committees, and other leadership forums.

Goal: The output of this discussion is a list of updates and decisions that regularly come to the board and the leadership body they should go to instead moving forward. Ideally, groups complete this exercise after several board meetings to come up with a comprehensive list that outlines how responsibilities should be delegated across the group. This ensures that future meetings remain focused on the agenda items that require board attention and discussion.

Necessary materials:

1. Your last board meeting agenda
2. Pens

Participants: Complete this exercise with current board members. Consider inviting representatives from the executive team and committees to participate as well.

Facilitation guidance:

1. Make sure all participants have your **last board meeting agenda** in front of them.
2. Start by asking everyone to complete a **verbal self-evaluation** of your last board meeting. While it can be uncomfortable to collect feedback like this, **candid and open conversation** is more effective for pinpointing the problem. Board members should take turns expressing their honest opinion on the meeting's effectiveness and answer questions such as:
 - Was this meeting productive?
 - Did we select the right agenda items?
 - Was time allocated appropriately across topics?
3. Turn to your last meeting agenda. **Go line-by-line** and discuss each agenda item. The goal of this exercise is to **decide which agenda items should continue coming to the board** and which should go to other forums or decision-making bodies. For each item, discuss questions such as:
 - Could this information have been sent via email?
 - Should this agenda item have gone to someone else for deliberation first?
 - Is this a decision that only the board can make?
 - Does this agenda item require discussion or can we move directly to move?
4. After auditing each agenda item, market down **who or how it will be addressed next time**. (e.g., the board, executive team, committee, consent agenda, email update, etc.)
5. Complete this exercise after a few board meetings until you have a comprehensive list of the types of updates and decisions that regularly come to the board. **Share it with key stakeholders**—especially those to whom you delegated new responsibilities.

Tip: Conduct this verbal self-review immediately following your next board meeting while it's fresh.

Tip: Use a consent agenda to consolidate items requiring minimal attention into a single list that the board votes to approve at once (e.g., committee reports, meeting minutes).

Tip: Anticipate other related agenda items that might come to the board and proactively assign those too.