



How can you refresh your board review?

A board effectiveness review every year probably seems too frequent – it all comes around too soon. At worst, tedium can set in, undermining the process or giving it a bad name. Or simply not enough has changed to make it worthwhile – or so much has changed that there has not been time for the impact to be felt. But there are ways to change the approach to keep it fresh. Here are a few of our thoughts...



Good practices to consider...

Focus on last year's actions. If other things were going smoothly then, they probably still are now. So concentrate on what needed sorting out.

Go for a "deep dive" review. If there are one or two specific areas of concern, look at them in detail. Perhaps look at how the Board discusses risk governance, or focus on the people strategy or on technology as a driver and a risk.

Switch to a full scope committee review. Take one or more committees and look at the many factors affecting its work – the Audit and/or Risk Committees and Remuneration Committee are often good places to start.

Change the structure. If using self-assessment, pick up one topic a quarter (eg succession planning in Q1, board information in Q2). A series of, say, four "short and sharp" reviews can be more palatable and insightful than an annual exercise covering a lot of ground.

Things to avoid...

Don't just repeat the same questions but check where you've got to and go into more depth to make sure the changes have reached the parts that matter and are well-embedded.

Discuss at the Board (even better, at a board dinner!) any specific issues the directors' would like to see covered. Individuals are likely to have pet concerns, or to see the governance and oversight issues in different lights.

Make sure you look at how the committees work together and interact with the full Board. And make sure the questions aren't just covering process but are based on a rigorous assessment of what makes these committees have the right impact.

Explain the approach properly so directors know what's happening. Make sure the theme doesn't expand outside the agreed topic. Keep each one short. Managed properly this approach can reduce the pain but let it drift and it will be resented.

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[Uncertainty, Human Nature and Board Effectiveness Reviews](#)

Coming soon...

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- Risk Governance (September)
- Succession planning (October)

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