



Finnnet

Building a Better Tomorrow, Today



Emotional Intelligence at Board Level Governing with Head and Heart

DATE 24TH – 27TH
SEPTEMBER 2024

GOVERNANCE, ETHICS RISK AND COMPLIANCE
WORKSHOP

GOVERNANCE . TRAINING . EMPLOYEE BENEFITS . TECHNOLOGY

What Is EI at Board Level?

Beyond Compliance: The Strategic Power of Emotional Intelligence

- Understanding your own emotions and biases in decision-making
- Reading the emotional climate across the organization
- Managing conflict and power dynamics without escalation
- Influencing stakeholders through trust, not coercion
- Governing wisely, not just legally

Self-Awareness - Know Thyself

The Foundation of Effective Governance

- Recognizing when ego, politics, or fear drive your decisions
- Identifying personal triggers like criticism or media pressure
- Inviting challenge instead of silencing dissent
- Understanding that authority does not equal infallibility

Self-Regulation - Stay Steady

Emotional Control Equals Institutional Stability

- Remaining calm during crises and public scrutiny
- Avoiding reactive decisions driven by panic
- Separating oversight responsibility from micromanagement
- Creating space between impulse and action

Empathy - The Missing Piece

Understanding Impact Beyond the Boardroom

- Appreciating pressures faced by management, staff, and the public
- Considering social, cultural, and political realities
- Asking "How will this decision land on the ground?"
- Governing for people, not just spreadsheets

Social Awareness - Read the Room

Preventing Groupthink and Elite Capture

- Noticing who speaks, who stays silent, who dominates
- Managing board diversity productively across all dimensions
- Handling executive presence without intimidation
- Creating space for all voices at the table

Relationship Management - Unity Through Disagreement

The Best Boards Argue Well and Unite Fast

- Building trust with management while maintaining independence
- Managing disagreement respectfully and productively
- Ensuring succession conversations are humane, not humiliating
- Fostering loyalty through respect, not fear

Why EI Matters Now

Navigating Complexity in High-Stakes Environments

- High public scrutiny and intense political pressure
- Complex, competing stakeholder demands
- Crisis-prone economies and institutions
- Leading change without destabilization or backlash

Red Flags - Low EI in Action

Warning Signs of Board Dysfunction

- Defensive reactions to criticism or external feedback
- Dominant personalities overpowering deliberation
- Silencing dissent as "disloyalty" to the board
- Crisis decisions driven by image management
- High CEO turnover or chronically disengaged management

Building Board EI - Practical Steps

From Awareness to Action

- Conduct regular board self-evaluations beyond compliance
- Invest in chair training on facilitation and conflict management
- Ensure diverse composition with genuine inclusion
- Create space for reflection, not just reporting
- Provide coaching for chairs and committee leads

Effective Trusteeship & board Dynamics

Pension Schemes/Fund



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EFFECTIVE TRUSTEESHIP: STRATEGIC MONITORING FOR TRUSTEES

Pension Schemes/Fund



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The Task of the Pension Fund -(Trustees)

1

Invest Productively

2

Administer Effectively

3

Advise Wisely

Being an Effective Trustee

- While the authority of a governing board lies in the collective action of its members, each individual trustee contributes to—or limits—the effectiveness of the board as a whole.
- There are basically **THREE** Areas of Focus with three sub-sections that determines Effective Trustees
- **UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNANCE**
- **LEADING BY EXAMPLE**
- **THINKING STRATEGICALLY**

(A) UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE

Pension Schemes/Fund



1. Embrace the full scope of your responsibilities



This supports the fundamental function of understanding governance by embracing all of your responsibilities in a structure of shared leadership. In order to achieve this, you must:

- **Fulfill your fiduciary responsibilities.** As a fiduciary, you are charged with acting on behalf of the public to further the best interests of the organization on whose board you serve.
- **Recognize that governance is a collective endeavor.** As a trustee, you are part of a team in service to the whole enterprise. That team includes not just other board members but also the Management, staff, & other partners in governance and leadership.
- **Prepare in advance, show up fully present, and participate productively.** You are not expected to have all of the answers, but you are expected to do your homework in order to ask the right questions and make informed decisions about your organization and the community.

“There are two attributes that distinguish the better board members from the lesser board members.

The first is the level of engagement: those who are intensely engaged—not only at the meetings but between meetings—and are well prepared and intense about what they do. The second is they understand their role as a board member. I think that understanding the role is incredibly important because, honestly, most don’t as they join the board.”

- 1. Why were you asked to serve on this board?** What expertise and experience do you bring to the board?
- 2. What is your level of engagement as a board member** during meetings? Between meetings? What prevents you from being more engaged?
- 3. What is expected of you as a board member?** What do you expect of your fellow board members? The administration?
- 4. What is the work of this board?** How does it advance the institution's focus and future?
- 5. How well does the board function?** What does it do very well? What could it do better?

2. Respect the difference between the board's role and the administration's role.



This supports the fundamental function of understanding governance by defining how boards, faculty, and administrators should work collaboratively toward a common vision.

In order to embrace shared governance, you must:

- **Honor the norm of shared governance, which includes the board, CEO & Entire Management.** The board has primary fiduciary responsibilities, and it delegates primary management responsibility to the management.
- **Be humble and respect your partners in governance and leadership.** Use your position to better understand others' perspectives and take them into account.
- **Provide advice and counsel but leave operational decisions to the administration.** Serve as a thought partner, sounding board, and pro bono advisor by sharing your relevant expertise and experience.

“My experience is that when trustees don’t respect the distinction, it’s because they don’t understand the distinction.”

- 1. What knowledge, skills, and abilities do you have** that could be useful to the administration? How do you share your expertise and experience without crossing the line into management?
- 2. What is the nature of the relationship between your board and CEO?** How does the board show its support? How does it hold him or her accountable?
- 3. How do board members interact with the Management,** formally and informally?
- 4. How does shared governance function at this organization?** Among whom is it shared? When and where does it work well? When and where is it challenging? How could it be strengthened?
- 5. What responsibilities rest with the Management?** When and where does its work intersect with board work? How do the board and Management communicate?

3. Be an ambassador for your institution



This supports the fundamental function of understanding governance by outlining how board members should convey the value proposition of the organization they serve. In order to be an impactful ambassador, you must:

- **Advocate on behalf of your organization. Become** comfortable articulating the institution's strategy and priorities in your own voice and be prepared to promote its goals , as well as its values.
- **Represent the institution proudly and recognize who speaks for the board and for the institution.** While you can dissent within the boardroom, your communication with stakeholders must reflect the board's collective decision, not your personal position.
- **Engage actively and appropriately.** Support the institution you have chosen with enthusiasm and generosity. Fundraise on behalf of the institution and leverage your network to advance its strategic priorities.

“A really strong trustee is someone who is engaged with the organization holistically: their willingness to learn, their Patience to listen before speaking, their focus to build relationships, and being engaged in events that the institution is holding and being engaged with the Management .”

- 1. How do board members support the CEO and administration in their advocacy efforts?** How do you support the CEO?
- 2. Whom do you know who could be helpful to the institution?** How can you help the CEO & administrators gain access to community leaders who might have common concerns and interests?
- 3. What do constituents think of the institution?** The board? How does the institution look from different points of view?
- 4. How would you respond to a constituent who approaches you with a sensitive question?** Whom should you inform about these interactions and when?
- 5. Have you made the institution or foundation one of your top philanthropic priorities?**

(B) LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Pension Schemes/Fund



4. Conduct Yourself with Impeccable Integrity



This supports the fundamental function of leading by example through standards that ensure public trust in both the fiduciaries and the institution or foundation. To ensure transparency, you must:

- **Act in the institution's best interests, putting it ahead of your personal preferences and political allegiances.** Regardless of how you were selected, as a board member you do not “represent” a particular group of constituents.
- **Pre-emptively disclose conflicts—actual and perceived—and dualities of interest.** As a member of the board, err on the side of disclosing more—rather than less—information and then step aside from voting and, sometimes, discussions.
- **Uphold the highest ethical standards.** Model the values, ethics, and morals that the board expects of the administration.

4.1. Conduct Yourself with Impeccable Integrity



“Some board members uphold their gubernatorial or electorate responsibilities as first and foremost on their priority list. Too many stories can be told of fiduciary boards not exercising independence, which is not to say they are bad board members. It simply means the conflicts need to be managed or they need to be better oriented to their role. Their priority should be what’s best for the institution.”

4.2. Questions for self Reflections



- 1. To whom are you accountable** as a board member? To whom else do you feel accountable?
- 2. What personal and professional relationships do you have that could interfere** with your ability to make decisions in the best interests of the organization?
- 3. What organizational information is appropriate for you to share with others?** What must remain confidential? How do you make this distinction?
- 4. How do your behaviors, actions, and reputation reflect** on the institution on whose board you serve?
- 5. What ethical expectations do you have** of your fellow board members?

5. Embrace the full scope of your responsibilities



This supports the fundamental function of leading by example through making your own judgments and reflecting the highest level of accountability. To ensure independence, you must:

- **Constructively challenge and support the chief executive, administration, and committees.** Think for yourself, reach your own conclusions, and share your perspective productively.
- **Speak up on important issues, even if they are uncomfortable or unpopular.** The board and institution lose out—or may even be put at risk—when trustees remain silent.
- **Express your concerns diplomatically to the appropriate person(s) at an appropriate time.** Be intentional about what you communicate, how, when, where, and to whom.

5.1. Embrace the full scope of your responsibilities



“Most of our trustees could either be alumni or current employees . They come with their own fraternity affiliations. They have their friends inside the institutions. It’s very easy for a trustee to be coerced into taking up somebody’s mantle. But they are here to look out for this institution as a whole, not any subgroup or any other people who might have a different opinion. Believe me, opinions are fine. Everybody has them, and they are all welcome.

But when we as trustees have to make a decision, it has to be about the well-being of the institution as a whole.”

- 1. To what extent does board culture encourage candor and robust discussion?** Do you feel that all voices are heard and respected? Do you feel comfortable expressing your opinion?
- 2. How will you determine which issues are worth speaking up in favor of or against,** regardless of their popularity? When, where, and how will you raise sensitive issues?
- 3. How open is the board to dissenting opinions?** How are tensions among board members handled?
- 4. To whom do you turn if you have concerns related to the CEO?** Concerns about the board chair?
- 5. What happens when the board and the administration disagree?**

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6. Champion justice, equity, and inclusion.



This supports the fundamental function of leading by example through removing systemic barriers to student success and creating a sense of belonging for all Stakeholders. To ensure justice, equity, and inclusion, you must:

- **Protect and promote justice and equity throughout the enterprise.** The board is ultimately accountable for ensuring that the institution creates a welcoming and safe environment in which all stakeholders feel respected and valued.
- **Seek diversity and model inclusion on the board.** Diverse boards are better positioned to address the complex problems the organization because they include different perspectives.
- **Be mindful of how your experience shapes your assumptions.** The hard work of advancing justice, equity, and inclusion is an ongoing, a personal, and an often difficult journey.

“Diversity adds to the wealth of the board and the productivity of the board, where you’re bringing different life experiences.”

6.2. Questions for self Reflections



- 1. How do our institutional mission, vision, and strategic plan support diversity and inclusion?** To what extent do our policies and practices, intentionally or unintentionally, foster inequity?
- 2. To what extent does the board consider the needs and experiences of stakeholders?** How does it consider the impact of policies and decisions on different groups? How does it measure institutional success in regard to different groups?
- 3. What has the board done to demonstrate a commitment to racial equity and social justice?** How has the board educated itself on diversity and inclusion? What have you done personally?
- 4. How well does board composition reflect our community?** How diverse is the board? What do board dynamics reveal about board inclusion?
- 5. What experiences do you bring to board service?** What experiences do other trustees bring? What perspectives are missing?

(C)THINK STRATEGICALLY

Pension Schemes/Fund



7. Learn about the mission, constituents, culture, and context.



This supports the fundamental function of thinking strategically by committing to continued learning, improvement, and accountability. To engage in higher learning, you must:

- **Shape your institution's vision and strategy based on its unique purpose and constituents.** Let the characteristics of your stakeholders and your community shape your thinking about the challenges and opportunities facing your college or university.

- **Understand the present state of the enterprise and focus on its future needs.** Stay informed about trends and developments at your institution and in higher education, such as changing clients/ members demographics, novel teaching pedagogies and advances in instructional technology, community employment needs, and increased funding for research or scholarships.

- **Become a student of higher education.** Develop an awareness, appreciation, and working knowledge of its unique characteristics, such as student success, academic freedom, and shared governance.

“We all know that higher education is going to change in the next five years.

How we serve—and what our mission is—is going to be vitally important.”

7.2. Questions for self Reflections



- 1. How is serving on the board similar to your professional experience?** What do you need to do differently as a board member from what you do “at the office”?
- 2. How is your organization different from your industry?** What will help you adapt your expertise and experience to this context? What issues and areas are new to you?
- 3. How has the organization changed since you were a staff?** How has your institution changed in the past 10 years? How might it change in the next 10 years?
- 4. What is the value proposition of services from your institution?** What does success look like for your institution and members? What other metrics of institutional success does the board monitor?
- 5. Do you have adequate information needed to be a productive board member?** What would help you better understand the issues, our circumstances, and/or the alternatives? Who is your primary contact for additional information?

8. Focus on what matters most to long-term sustainability..



This supports the fundamental function of thinking strategically by questioning the status quo and pointing toward a desirable and sustainable future. To focus on long-term impact, you must:

- **Make decisions based on the strategy and vitality of the entire enterprise.** Especially during times of disruption, use your perspective as a fiduciary—removed from day-to-day operations—to ensure that decisions made now support long-term sustainability.
- **Help define what constitutes success for your institution.** As part of the leadership team, work with the administration to develop a shared vision of what success looks like for your institution, given its particular mission.
- **Focus your personal and professional talents on significant strategic issues.** If you have expertise and experience to share, be intentional about when and how you do so.

8.1. Focus on what matters most to long-term sustainability..



“We’re fiduciaries of our institutions, and we have to think strategically about the future.

Especially in challenging times—whether it’s hiring the CEO, dealing with financial issues, or the pandemic—we have to rise above it all and think about what’s in the best interest of the institution.”

8.2. Questions for self Reflections



- 1. Which areas of the strategic plan align most with your knowledge, skills, and abilities?** How do you contribute to strategic conversations? When do you get caught up in tactics?
- 2. How well do you understand your institution's business model and financial circumstances?** What are the industry trends, revenue, and expenses for the past five years? How do these compare with other enterprises in your industry?
- 3. What will make your institution relevant for the next generation?** What is the board's comfort with and capacity for anticipating and bringing about change?
- 4. What are your institution's strategic priorities for the future?** How have they evolved? Where have you had the most success? The greatest challenges?
- 5. Who are your traditional peer institutions?** Who are your aspirational peers? What new competitors are surfacing? What is truly distinct about your institution?

9. Ask insightful questions and listen with an open mind.



This supports the fundamental function of thinking strategically by asking thoughtful questions and really listening to stakeholders. To achieve this, you must:

- **Pose the right questions, rather than prescribe answers.** Help the board pressure-test assumptions, strategies, and recommendations by asking probing questions that frame problems, move discussions forward, and illuminate alternative approaches.
- **Listen actively and seek to understand.** Come prepared to participate in a cooperative conversation, not a competitive debate.
- **Bring genuine curiosity and an open mind to board service.** Welcome alternative points of view and value them as a reflection of a community committed to the common goal of advancing the institution.

9.1. Ask insightful questions and listen with an open mind



“Good board members are able to ask exactly the right strategic question at the right point without having that ‘step aside, let me fix this’ kind of attitude.”

9.2. Questions for self Reflections



1. How open are you to having your ideas and opinions challenged? What assumptions do you bring? How comfortable are you with competing perspectives?

2. How do board members build on work that has been done in advance? How do board members advance the conversation? When do they inhibit conversation?

3. What questions are appropriate to ask of the administration? Of the committee? When should I ask these questions? In advance or during the board meeting?

4. How does this board explore important issues that don't have easy answers? How does it frame questions and discern answers?

5. What decision are you being asked to make in this situation? What is the appropriate level of board—and trustee—involvement?

Thank You



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