

Launch a Private Website for your Board

By James C. Galvin

THIS IS EASIER THAN IT SOUNDS. If you already have a website for your ministry, simply add pages exclusively for your board members that are password protected. The private pages on your website can provide all the information a board member could wish for, and then some. For example, some essentials include constitution and by-laws, the absolutely up-to-date board policy manual, minutes for all past meetings, organizational history, and new board member orientation materials. You could also include links to other helpful websites, such as BoardSource (boardsource.org), and John Carver's website on Policy Governance (carvergovernance.com). Don't you think your board members would want their own private website?

The Acton Institute of Grand Rapids, Mich. (acton.org) has a well-developed section of its website for the board. Acton is an internationally recognized ministry that organizes seminars aimed at educating religious leaders in sound economic principles. Its website includes monthly balance sheets, most recent audit, list of current and past board members, brief board member bios, scorecards on every program area, current strategic plan, calendar of events, and monthly management dashboards. The website is expertly executed. I wish I could show it to you but, you know, it's private.

Even if you don't want to or can't afford to construct a site this elaborate, at least putting your board policies and past minutes on the website will replace hefty three-ring binders that conscientious board members sometimes tote to the meetings.



Begin With a Consent Agenda

By James C. Galvin

SOME BOARDS FEEL COMPELLED to discuss every item on the agenda, even routine reports received ahead of time by email. Every report and routine item on the agenda does not deserve equal deliberation. To save time, put all reports received ahead of time in an early agenda item called the consent agenda. This includes the ministry report, budget report, advancement report, and other routine information. If any of these items require additional discussion or board action, any board member can ask that it be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda for further discussion. The rest of the reports can then be received with one motion and one vote.

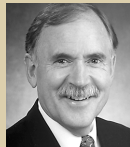
The consent agenda requires that board members receive information ahead of time. This means CEOs and board chairs will need extra discipline to get information out earlier. It also requires that board members actually take time to read and study the ministry and financial reports they receive. Board members who prepare will have better questions and raise the quality of discussion, while those who habitually arrive unprepared will have fewer opportunities to ask questions as they scan the reports for the first time during the meeting.

Some board chairs allow simple questions for clarification on any report and others allow no discussion at all ahead of the vote to accept the consent agenda. Either way, this is a best practice, proven to save time and allow the board to deal with more important issues and stay focused on board work. Organizations of all kinds have adopted this best practice and use it near the beginning of every board meeting.

James C. Galvin, president of Galvin & Associates, Winfield, Ill., is an organizational consultant dedicated to helping faith-based nonprofits achieve breakthrough. Visit galvinandassociates.com or contact him at jim@galvinandassociates.com

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Dan Bolin

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Dan Bolin, Section Leader (2004-2006)
Board Governance
Email: dbolin@tyler.net, Phone: (903) 593-5863, Fax: (903) 509-9942
Dan Bolin is president of Encouragement FM, Tyler, Texas, and a member of CMA's board of directors.