

Improving boardroom behaviour

Guidance note

Contents

Introduction	3
Simple tips to understand, develop and improve board behaviours	4
Positive boardroom behaviour	6
Conclusion	17

If you have any feedback on the content of these resources, or additional questions that you'd like to discuss, please contact the SGA:

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Introduction

Good governance is about more than having in place certain policies, procedures and protocols. Focusing on behaviour in the boardroom allows us to move beyond the simple mechanisms and formal structures necessary for effective boards and address personal dynamics as well as the implementation of various processes.

The board is a collection of people who share a common interest in furthering the organisation's aims, delivering their sport and its benefits to their community. However, that should not mean that the boardroom is a cosy environment with little or no tension or disagreement. Constructive challenge is essential to making robust decisions. This requires board members to act professionally and dispassionately.

Behaviour is an indication of the culture of the board, and productive culture is essential to build a thriving organisation.

The Code for Sports Governance (Requirement 1.21) makes it clear that boards shall:

- 'adopt policies and practices that
- (a) foster openness and debate among directors; and
- (b) set out clear expectations with respect to the running of Board meetings and director behaviour'.

This encompasses codes of conduct and documents defining appropriate meeting etiquette, but it is also productive to build a shared understanding of the behaviour and commitment that board members expect of their fellow directors and of themselves.

Simple tips to understand, develop and improve board behaviours

Tip #1:

Know what behaviour is acceptable and can be expected from each other (and what behaviours you don't want!)

Examples of desirable behaviours may include:

- Integrity
- Ability to challenge
- Eager to learn
- Enthusiastic
- Committed
- Strategic
- Trustworthy
- Honest
- Understanding
- Team oriented
- Accountable
- Openness

And, behaviours to discourage could be:

- Grandiosity and greed
- An over-concern with public profile
- A hub and spoke style of leadership
- Over-management of the board's work
- An absence of contrary voices
- A disdain for succession planning
- Distorted thinking and decision making

Discuss as a board or with wider stakeholder groups to develop lists suitable for your organisation.

Tip #2

Using the Code for Sports Governance, consider how desirable behaviours can map to each of the five principles of the Code (Structure, People, Communication, Standards and Conduct, Policies and Processes).

Tip #3

Lead by example – the chair, chief executive and every board member can encourage appropriate behaviour in others by demonstrating these behaviours themselves.

Tip #4

Challenge existing practices and ways of thinking. Encourage a diversity of opinions in all discussions and decision making processes to encourage an inclusive and open culture.

Tip #5

Embrace and encourage evaluation processes to provide feedback on performance at all levels of the organisation.

Tip #6

Reward desirable behaviour. Create mechanisms and reward systems to encourage a positive, cohesive and equitable culture rather than focus on punishing undesirable behaviour.

Tip #7

Encourage an understanding of different points of view, sources of evidence in discussions and decision making; recognise that people have conscious and unconscious biases that change over time and can be influenced through training and education.

Tip #8

Remain focused on organisational objectives rather than personal ones.

Tip #9

Encourage independent mindsets that can also contribute to collaborative purposes, to facilitate responsibility for individual and group behaviour and performance.

Tip #10

Avoid complacency in discussions and decision making, identify someone to be the 'devil's advocate' in all discussions (not the same person every time) to ensure a variety of alternatives are considered.

Positive boardroom behaviour

Different boards and different organisations may seek different skills, experience and personality types according to their own needs and their individual culture. However, it is also possible to identify attributes and behaviours which can be considered as positive and desirable in those charged with the leadership of an organisation.

Below, we have provided a series of such attributes and examples of how these might be manifested in the behaviour of those occupying the roles of board member, chair, chief executive and governance lead. The lists are not exhaustive, and organisations are encouraged to explore what they consider demonstrates positive behaviour. The recruitment process and the role of the chair will be integral to helping develop and maintain a team that demonstrates the appropriate boardroom behaviours.

Behaviour 1 – Committed to the cause

An effective board member will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dedicate sufficient time to their role• Invest time to better understand all aspects of their sport and the organisation's activities, including the environment it operates in, its history and goals• Arrive at meetings fully prepared• Contribute meaningfully at meetings• Seek excellence in pursuit of the organisation's objectives• Make decisions in the best interests of the organisation• Be able to articulate clearly to relevant stakeholders what the board has agreed
In addition to the above, an effective chair will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that they can give the appropriate amount of time to the organisation, understanding that this may increase in times of crisis• Speak up and on behalf of the organisation and its board when criticism is levelled at the organisation and/or its decisions
An effective CEO will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a strong attachment to the organisation's objectives and to the sport• Be passionate but calm and objective• Demonstrate a strong desire to achieve• Articulate a clear vision to staff, volunteers and participants
An effective governance lead will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act as the conscience of the organisation, ensuring that decisions are made in line with the stated objectives• Ensure that the organisation's objectives are put at the centre of the board's decision making

Behaviour 2 – Clarity of focus (understanding role and purpose)

An effective board member will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act in accordance with their powers laid down in legislation and the governing document• Be able to articulate their legal and ethical duties to different audiences• Take a strong position on promoting good governance• Ensure the organisation's governance structures are fit for purpose

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that the board may need to think differently in order to achieve the organisation's stated objectives and deliver the sport to its community • Be prepared to operate outside of their comfort zone in order to deliver for the sport and its participants
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that each board member understands the purpose of the board • Ensure that each board member understands the key issues to be discussed at each meeting • Summarise discussions before moving to a consensual/majority decision
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the different roles of board members and senior managers • Accept the different leadership roles performed by the chair and the CEO
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate future training and development needs of the board • Be proactive in offering opportunities for board development • Commit to continuous personal and board improvement

Behaviour 3 – Being strategic

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about emerging trends in the sport and the environment in which the organisation operates, and other factors which could impact its objectives • Focus questions and comments on how the organisation's activities help to deliver its objectives • Focus on strategic rather than operational considerations • Review the organisation from all relevant perspectives and see its sustainability and impact from a range of stakeholder views
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a strategic approach to the skills and experience required by the board • Reframe discussions that become too operationally focused • Encourage board members to bring their wider skills and experience to the service of the organisation
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use conceptual and analytical thinking to achieve the organisation's objectives • Show a keen awareness of external developments that may impact the organisation • Research, share and be open to new opportunities to achieve the organisation's objectives • Be flexible when considering alternative methods of delivery
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the board in its strategic activities by delivering board agendas and papers that under normal circumstances strive for a 50:50 split between operational/historical information and strategic items

Behaviour 4 – Leads by example

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behave in a professional manner • Demonstrate a passion for their work and the sport they promote and care about the people who come into contact with the organisation • Speak to a wide range of people with interest in the sport and in the organisation
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act in a manner that reflects and exemplifies the organisation's values • Moderate different points of view expressed at board meetings • Provide timely feedback to board members, staff and stakeholders • Set high expectations of conduct and behaviour • Identify and cultivate leadership potential on the board
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have passion and enthusiasm for the sport • Be a convincing communicator • Be visible to all stakeholders • Encourage excellence in peers and staff/volunteers • Be a positive influence in the development of staff/volunteers • Be able to take people with them in order to achieve more than was thought possible • Celebrate success • Empower, develop and set high expectations for direct reports, peers and others
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be professional in their dealings with the board, staff/volunteers and stakeholders • Display tact and diplomacy • Take their duties seriously • Invest time and effort to improve their skills and abilities

Behaviour 5 – Team player

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use appropriate and respectful language • Accept that not everyone will share the same views • Make an effort to build effective relationships within and outside the boardroom • Work collaboratively • Support and challenge the CEO and senior management team
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate an approach that promotes a win-win outcome in decisions • Look to develop their effectiveness as a chair and a leader • Promote and foster healthy working relationships with and between the board/CEO/senior management/governance lead • Speak last when difficult decisions have to be made • Notice tensions in the boardroom and move to resolve them before open conflict emerges • Meet expectations as a leader and a team member • Hold others to account and give praise where it is due
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the person the board and staff trust to get things done • Foster productive relationships with every board member and the chair • Build partnerships and coalitions to further the organisation's objectives • Define success in terms of the whole team, the wider sport, participants, communities and other stakeholders • Have humility and recognise that others may be better equipped to deliver or lead on certain activities
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and maintain effective relations with the chair, board, CEO and senior management team • Seek to resolve tensions in the boardroom before open conflict emerges • Ensure that the chair receives the support and information they need to provide effective leadership

- Identify and work to remove any obstacles preventing the board from doing its work and making the best decisions

Behaviour 6 – Integrity

An effective board member will:

- Avoid any behaviour that may tarnish the reputation of the organisation or the wider sport
- Declare any real or perceived conflicts of interest
- Respect the confidentiality of matters discussed in board meetings and elsewhere
- Make decisions that are in the best interest of the organisation
- Act fairly, transparently and consistently
- Ensure that the organisation complies with any applicable external codes of integrity

In addition to the above, an effective chair will:

- Display political acumen, tact and diplomacy
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour in the boardroom

An effective CEO will:

- Respect the decisions of the board and support them in public
- Work towards the furtherance and achievement of the organisation's objectives, putting aside any personal interests
- Deliver the tasks delegated in a calm and efficient manner

An effective governance lead will:

- Take the issue of integrity seriously, as part of their professional code of conduct
- Advise the board on potential ethical impacts of their decisions, alongside legal considerations
- Know when to share concerns with the chair, senior independent director, CEO, committee chair or others
- Observe the board and intervene when behaviours are not appropriate
- Speak up when knowing that a board member has forgotten to declare a conflict of interest

Behaviour 7 – Ethical

An effective board member will:

- Maintain high ethical standards in all areas of their work
- Think critically about the implications of proposals before the board
- Take action against illegal or immoral behaviour or activity
- Put the interests of the organisation at the centre of decision making

In addition to the above, an effective chair will:

- Treat all board members and the senior management team even-handedly and fairly
- Be proactive in protecting the reputation of the organisation (though not at the expense of tackling inappropriate behaviour)

An effective CEO will:

- Safeguard the organisation's reputation (though, again, not at the expense of tackling inappropriate behaviour) and take measures to promote public trust and confidence
- Ensure transparency and openness in staff recruitment, the awarding of contracts, etc.

An effective governance lead will:

- Take action against illegal or immoral behaviour

- Offer advice and support on managing stakeholder expectations, including third-party relationships

Behaviour 8 – Independent thinker

An effective board member will:

- Challenge established thinking and play 'devil's advocate' when required to improve decision making
- Ask questions to ensure they understand data and differing opinions
- Decide and take action by applying intuition, experience and sound judgement to the data available
- Speak up if they have any continuing concerns
- Question if the right data is being collected and presented in order for the board to monitor progress
- Assimilate various and conflicting information and opinions into a well-considered decision
- Seek evidence to support what is being reported by the CEO/senior management team

In addition to the above, an effective chair will:

- Challenge the accepted wisdom of the board and the senior management team
- Encourage input from all board members and those in attendance at board meetings
- Question assumptions and expect others to interrogate data and other information presented
- Not accept the senior management team's reassurance if, in their opinion, a matter has not been satisfactorily resolved

An effective CEO will:

- Present reports to the board in a range of formats to aid comprehension, discussion and decision making
- Appreciate the thorough interrogation of proposals in order to achieve a better decision
- Demonstrate flexibility when plans and proposals are not fully supported by the board
- Understand and explain the implications of individual actions or recommendations on other aspects of the organisation's systems, functions, activities, the wider sport and the environment in which the organisation operates

An effective governance lead will:

- Advise the board calmly, objectively and dispassionately
- Suggest different approaches if agreement cannot be achieved
- Support the chair and board members in requesting additional information, including seeking external advice where necessary, to help decision making

Behaviour 9 – Probing

An effective board member will:

- Ask questions of the CEO/senior management team to check and challenge progress against strategic aims
- Empower staff to enact board decisions
- Challenge constructively and provide robust scrutiny based on data and material information
- Seek assurance and not blindly accept reassurances
- Request information in different formats if it will assist in decision making

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a range of data to challenge the assumptions and assertions of the CEO/senior management team
<p>In addition, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegate those matters that should be delegated to others, including fellow board members and the CEO • Ensure that assumptions made and explanations given by the senior management team are appropriately considered by the board
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge and accept challenge • Support the board in its pursuit of understanding the issue at hand • Respect the oversight function of the board • Respect the matters that are reserved to the board
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the board in their deliberations and understanding • Proactively provide opportunities for board members to improve their ability to constructively challenge • Recognise when the board is struggling and liaise with the chair with a view to offering solutions

Behaviour 10 – Risk aware (not averse)

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about how a proposal will positively impact the pursuit of the organisation's objectives, the wider sport and/or participants' experience • Be up-to-date with the risk register • Balance the risk of lost opportunities and cumulative risks • Recognise that generating greater impact for participants or better outcomes for the organisation may require taking greater risks • Use sound judgement to assess when to have the courage to take action where outcomes are uncertain but the potential rewards significant • Recognise that decisions often have to be made based on incomplete information
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge the board to set an appropriate risk appetite • Encourage board members to be up to speed on the top five risks faced by the organisation • Ensure that equal discussion is given to the pros and cons of a contentious or unusual proposal
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be tolerant of board members' aversion to risk, but will provide assurance to counter or mitigate such risks • Present papers that give due consideration to all relevant risks and potential opportunities • Think about the overall impact of decisions on the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives • Promote activities or actions that are in the best interest of the organisation and which support the strategic plan
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that board papers are balanced and address risks and opportunities of proposals in the round • Encourage the board to make decisions that are in the best interest of the organisation and the sport's participants • Highlight the legal, compliance and ethical impacts of proposals

Behaviour 11 – Self-aware

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on, and seek feedback from, a wide range of people on their performance. And will act on it.• Appreciate other board members' strengths and how they complement their own• Ask for advice and support when needed• Participate in the board's self-evaluation exercises• Recognise their own behaviours and how they can affect those around them• Be curious, confident and modest• Read others' reactions and adjust own behaviour/language accordingly
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek clarity and further expert guidance when the board is uncertain or unconvinced on a proposed action• Promote and prepare for appraisals of board members, CEO and oneself• Receive feedback on their performance positively
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possess confidence and humility• Accurately assess their own strengths and weaknesses and take action to improve• Ask for support from the chair• Seek out a mentor/coach to help with their board relationships
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that the board undertake board reviews/appraisals, ensuring that any review includes the work of the governance lead in supporting the board• Create and deliver board review exercises and devise effective programmes to address issues highlighted• Seek a coach/mentor to improve their softer skills in supporting the board

Behaviour 12 – Creative/innovative

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embrace change and new ways of working• Encourage creative actions to mitigate risks or overcome challenges• Welcome different, novel approaches to problem-solving
<p>In addition, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt different approaches to promote better board dynamics• Recognise when to seek external and/or professional help• Be comfortable in trying new ways of working
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage the board to adopt new approaches to thinking, decision making and the organisation's activities• Be comfortable with board members visiting facilities, venues, training complexes or other areas of the organisation's activities – and taking part in them – in order to gain a better understanding of the organisation's work• Be aware of advances being made and changes in current thinking in the sport (and elsewhere) and look to apply these to the organisation's activities• Share new ways of working that other organisations are adopting
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggest ways to improve board dynamics and decision making• Proactively suggest changes to the governance framework, where appropriate

- Look outside their sector for ideas on how to improve the work of the board

Behaviour 13 – Keen to learn and improve

An effective board member will:

- Understand why each fellow board member gives their time to the role
- Appreciate the diversity of thought and experience that each board member brings
- See complaints and negative feedback as an opportunity for the organisation to learn and improve
- Learn from mistakes – those made both personally and collectively
- Maintain a personal development plan to improve their own effectiveness
- Be open to training and development opportunities
- Spend time with different parts of the organisation to experience its facilities and activities, in agreement with the CEO/governance lead

In addition, an effective chair will:

- Network with other chairs to share experiences and seek out personal development opportunities
- Be accessible to all staff and stakeholders
- Know when to delegate matters to the senior management team and when not to, especially on sensitive matters such as whistleblowing
- Act on review/evaluation feedback and instigate action plans
- Be open with stakeholders as to the programme of board development adopted as a consequence of a board review/evaluation
- Encourage self-reflection and self-assessment by the board
- Actively avoid hubris

An effective CEO will:

- Seek out professional support and create/join relevant networks to share experiences with their peers
- Accept when they are wrong or have made a mistake and be keen to learn and to make amends, where possible
- Apologise to board colleagues, staff or other stakeholders when necessary
- Avoid hubris

An effective governance leads will:

- Proactively seek opportunities to enhance their professional competence
- Network with their peers in the sports sector to share knowledge and experience
- Share examples of good governance with the board
- Be open and upfront about mistakes and will apologise accordingly
- Constantly monitor the need and opportunities for board development activities
- Undertake a professional qualification or career development training

Behaviour 14 – Open-minded

An effective board member will:

- Champion equality and diversity, in all its forms
- Recognise diversity as an important value and will work to develop and contribute to developing a diverse team
- Embrace diversity of thinking, experience and perspective to make the best decisions for the organisation

In addition, an effective chair will:

- Ensure that different voices and perspectives are heard in the boardroom, are heeded and are recorded

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an atmosphere of open, honest discussion that embraces different approaches and experiences • Create a sense of inclusiveness and an environment where each board member feels that their contribution is valued
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome different approaches to achieving the organisation's objectives • Promote diversity and equality of opportunity throughout the organisation and the sport for which it is responsible • Recognise that new ideas and ways of working can come from anywhere in the organisation and encourage everyone to contribute • Encourage staff, volunteers and coaches to accept and embrace the diversity of values, opinions, backgrounds and cultures of everyone who is or seeks to be part of the organisation
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate flexibility and empathy in the way they support the board • Respond positively to new suggestions of board work • Encourage and support unheard voices in the boardroom

Behaviour 15 – Courageous

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote different opinions and points of view even when it challenges the consensus • Raise difficult issues in a brave and respectful manner • Seek to overcome setbacks and challenges facing the board and the organisation • Take bold action when the anticipated outcomes are believed to be right • Confront problems directly and face adversity head-on • Be comfortable in making unpopular decisions, if believed to be in the best interest of the organisation • Be prepared to champion an issue or course of action • Publicly support board decisions, even after speaking internally against a proposal
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate decision making in difficult situations and manage expectations • Seek to resolve misunderstanding at the earliest opportunity to prevent conflict
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take difficult or unpopular decisions for the benefit of the organisation, when necessary • Ask for support from the chair, board members and elsewhere, when needed • Admit when they are wrong • Have resilience • Take on stretching goals and work outside of their comfort zone
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingly accept new ways of working on the board, if it will improve effectiveness • Stand up to uncomfortable practices or inappropriate behaviours • Challenge decisions, in an appropriate manner, that are not in the interests of the organisation • Where necessary, report illegal or indecent behaviour or activities to the appropriate authority • Speak to the chair, board members, CEO or senior management team if their behaviours and (in)actions are jeopardising the achievement of the organisation's objectives

Behaviour 16 – Good listener

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek out divergent voices in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation• Take the views of all stakeholders into consideration when making decisions• Use different communication styles with different stakeholder groups• Value the different priorities and experiences of all stakeholders• Reflect on the feedback received from all areas of the organisation, its activities and operations and all those who come into contact with it
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek out different voices to gain a more balanced understanding of the organisation's impact• Understand that silence does not necessarily equate to agreement• Be approachable for all stakeholders• Introduce and present stakeholder stories/perspectives into the boardroom – hearing a story of the organisation's impact can be a powerful way to start a meeting• Provide feedback to stakeholders as to how their information has been used to influence board decisions
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to the concerns of the board and address those concerns in board reports and other conversations• Reflect on the feedback received regarding each aspect of the organisation's activities• Appreciate that effective communication is about listening and being listened to; silence does not necessarily equate to agreement
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be attuned to the voices of the board and stakeholders• Pick up on board concerns and deliver options to address them• Report concerns or discontent to the chair, senior independent director or other board members, where appropriate

Behaviour 17 – Inspires trust

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do what they say they will• Deliver on what they promise• Promote two-way communication with various stakeholders• Act as an ambassador for the organisation and for the sport more widely• Provide timely and concise information to others
<p>In addition, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be honest, reflective and self-critical about mistakes made and lessons learned• Act with the utmost integrity when representing the organisation• Explain difficult decisions taken by the board and the reasoning behind them• Act with humility and accept that they don't have all the answers• Follow through with actions and promises
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate regularly and openly• Use clear and thoughtful oral and written communications to influence, negotiate and collaborate effectively

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate a 'no surprises' approach to interactions with the board • Be professional, even when a decision goes against them • Gracefully share success and/or freely give credit where it is due • Deliver what was agreed on time, within budget and in the desired form
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a professional demeanour and approach in supporting the board • Be confident, knowledgeable and willing to share insights and experience • Support the board to be the best they can be

Behaviour 18 – Takes and accepts responsibility

<p>An effective board member will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently meet commitments to the organisation, its stakeholders and the sport • Determinedly pursue the achievement of the organisation's objectives • Quickly translate the organisation's requirements into actions by defining "who does what, by when" and monitoring the implementation of plans • Place safeguarding matters at a premium • Publicly support board decisions, especially after speaking against a proposal • Welcome challenge from inside and outside the boardroom • Accept collective responsibility • Know when it is time to move on
<p>In addition to the above, an effective chair will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only use 'chair's powers' in urgent and emergency situations • Accept that ultimately they will need to resign in certain circumstances • Apologise publicly, when necessary • Welcome questions from stakeholders at relevant junctures/events • Approach relevant bodies (including the appropriate sports council) in instances of significant non-compliance or governance failure
<p>An effective CEO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept the decisions of the board • Be open when there has been a mistake and apologise publicly when things go wrong • Acknowledge that they may no longer be the best person to lead the organisation
<p>An effective governance lead will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resign in those circumstances where they can no longer support the actions of the board • Be open about governance failures and take steps to resolve such matters • Accept other responsibilities that will support the work of the board

Conclusion

Professional conduct and sound behaviour is critical to board effectiveness. Policies, procedures and protocols only go so far in promoting good governance.

For a board to be really impactful, its members must have a range of skills, experiences and attributes that they are willing to put to use for the benefit of the organisation. MWM Consulting highlighted the five 'C's of character essential for high performing boards¹:

- Having the right catalyst or motivations
- Demonstrating commitment and engagement
- Adopting a challenging and independent mindset
- Using a collaborative and constructive style
- Having the courage to remain focused

As The Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland and Henley Business School research reported, tension in the boardroom is an important aspect of board discussions.² Having a board member or two (or more) who act as grit in the oyster can help the organisation to grow, achieve its objectives and deliver the impact it wants, growing the sport and contributing to the community.

While the boardroom should not necessarily be a comfortable place, it should be one where all board members can be confident in the behaviour and motivations of those around them. This requires honest reflection and individual and collective commitment to a set of shared expectations.

¹ *The behavioural drivers of board effectiveness: A practitioner's perspective*, MWM Consulting.

² *Conflict and tension in the boardroom: How managing disagreement improves board dynamics*, The Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland and the Henley Business School, 2017.