

## TOOL #5: The Board's Annual Self-Assessment Survey

Select the board self-assessment survey option that best fits your board's culture and your board's aspirations for continual improvement.



### “Writing in the Dark Is Hard!”

#### Self-Assessment Is Not an Optional Task

“Board self-evaluation is an inseparable part of governing, not an extraneous or optional task. To see how integral evaluation is to the task, try writing in the dark. If you cannot see where your pen marks, you will not write well and may not even write legibly. Yet writing is a familiar skill with which you have a lifetime of experience. It is so automatic that you scarcely give the arm, and hand, finger muscle movements a conscious thought. But writing in the dark is hard. How much more must we need feedback for a complex social task such as governance?”<sup>1</sup>

#### Peter Drucker on Self-Assessment:

“**Self-assessment** is the first action requirement of leadership: the constant resharpener, constant refocusing, never really being satisfied.”<sup>2</sup>

“**Self-assessment** can and should convert good intentions and knowledge into effective action—not next year but tomorrow morning.”<sup>3</sup>



#### Attn: Church Boards

While the following board self-assessment options are designed for nonprofit boards, they can easily be customized for church boards.

<sup>1</sup> John Carver, *CarverGuide 8: Board Self-Assessment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 16. This is one of several short booklets from *The CarverGuide Series on Effective Board Governance*.

<sup>2</sup> Peter F. Drucker, Frances Hesselbein, and Joan Snyder Kuhl, *Peter Drucker's Five Most Important Questions: Enduring Wisdom for Today's Leaders* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6

## The Board's Annual Self-Assessment Survey

### Options and Opportunities

Select your option from these three sections:

Section	Process
<input type="checkbox"/> Section 1	Do-It-Yourself
<input type="checkbox"/> Section 2	Facilitated by a Consultant or Board Coach
<input type="checkbox"/> Section 3	Template: "Best Governance Practices" Survey (use with SurveyMonkey)

### INTRODUCTION: Why Assess?

Why assess?

Assessment is one of the most effective ways to move your board to the next level of performance. And that is a worthy goal for all boards.

Why conduct a board self-assessment?

Are you wondering whether you should change your board's size or governance model? Restructure your committees? Put term limits in place? Do you want to step up your board's engagement? Explore how to improve board members' stewardship roles? Or determine how to keep your board from tilting towards micromanagement?

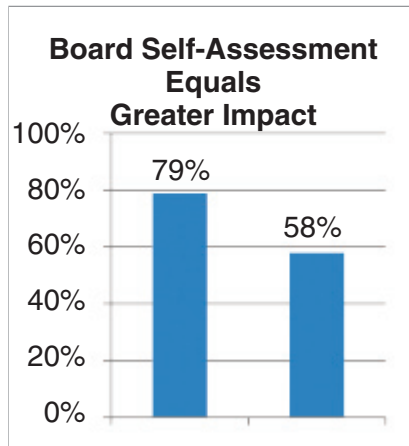
A board self-assessment is an effective way to get input from all of your board members on how the full board is performing against generally accepted best practice standards and use that information to create positive change! It leads to a shared understanding of the board's responsibilities related to compliance, accountability, financial oversight, and ultimately, setting direction for the organization. And it provides the framework for setting priorities that will maintain your strengths and will address areas in need of improvement.

### Is Enough Self-Assessment and Outside Assessment Happening?

ECFA Research Says...

In the last two years, have you had an **outside person** help your board look in the mirror to do self-assessment for how it could improve?

**31% said yes**



### Leading With Intent:

Research From BoardSource

According to BoardSource's research with nonprofit CEOs:

**"...boards that have conducted a self-assessment have greater impact on the organization's performance than those that have not (79% vs. 58%)."**<sup>4</sup>

### From the *Leading With Intent* Research:

While there are many ways boards can be intentional about reflecting on board performance, a formal board self-assessment ensures that board members are engaging in a process of group- and self-reflection.

Boards that assess themselves regularly perform better on core responsibilities.

**Boards that assess their own performance get higher grades across all areas of board performance, as rated by chief executives.** The largest positive variances are in the following categories:

- ✓ Evaluating the chief executive
- ✓ Adopting and following a strategic plan
- ✓ Monitoring organizational performance and impact against strategic plan goals
- ✓ Understanding board roles and responsibilities

The majority of boards are prioritizing performance assessment, with 58 percent reporting their board has conducted a formal self-assessment at some point; up from 23 percent of boards in 1994. Only 40 percent of all boards have done an assessment in the past two years, however, which is BoardSource's recommended practice.<sup>5</sup>

ECFA Research Says...

### Ineffective Boards Reveal a Greater Need for Outside Intervention

Board Members Who Agree They Need "Much Help" or "Major Help" with...

	Effective Boards	Ineffective Boards	Difference
Assessing ministry results and kingdom outcomes	8%	37%	29%

<sup>4</sup> BoardSource, *Leading with Intent: 2015 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*, <https://leadingwithintent.org/previous-reports/>.

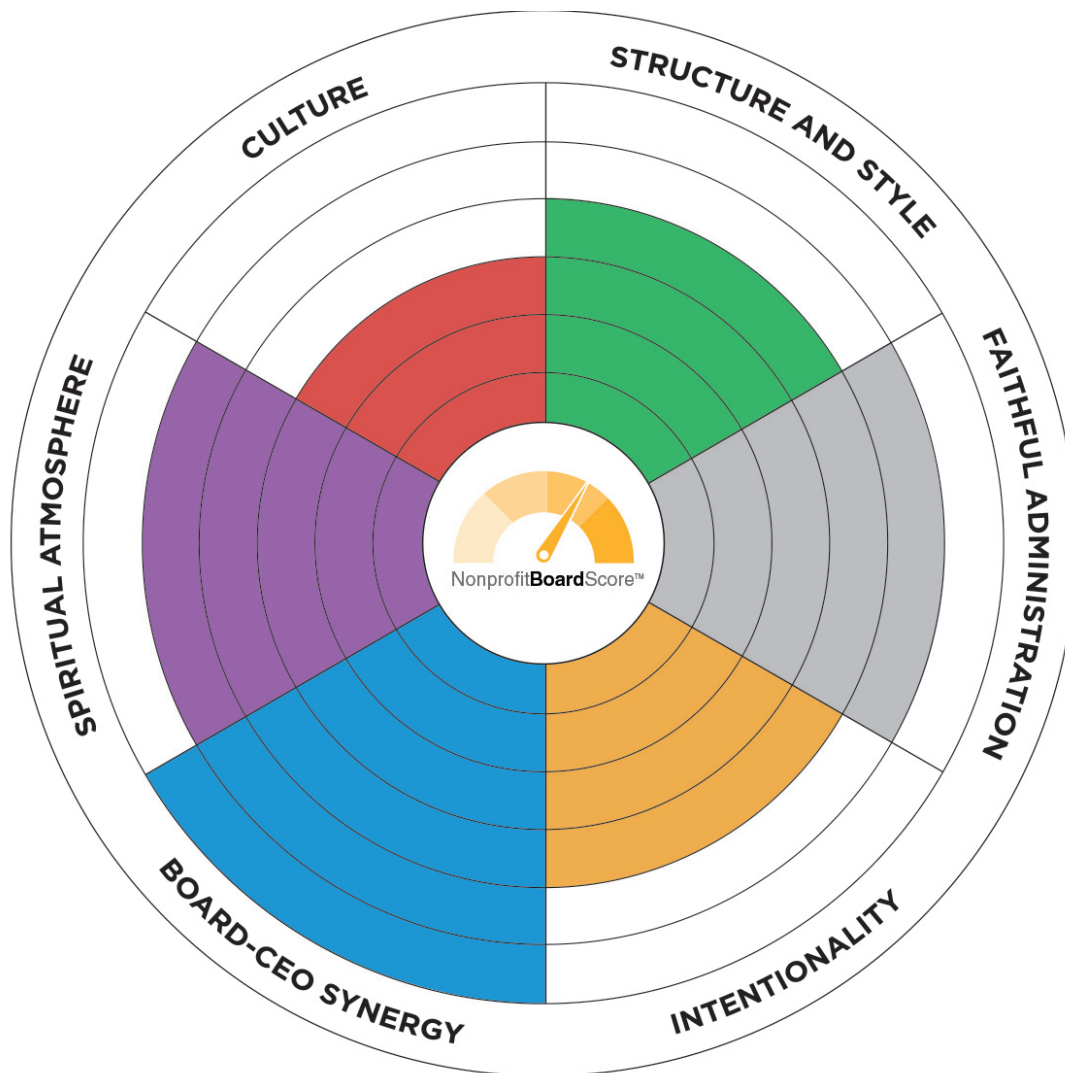
<sup>5</sup> BoardSource, *Leading with Intent: 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*, <https://boardsource.org/research-critical-issues/nonprofit-sector-research>.

**SECTION 1:****Do-It-Yourself****7 OPTIONS****❑ OPTION #1. NonprofitBoardScore™**

ECFA has developed an online tool called NonprofitBoardScore™ to help your board evaluate its performance. It is very easy to use, absolutely free, and only takes a few minutes to complete.

NonprofitBoardScore™ gives you instant feedback, lets you take the evaluation over and over (you may want to take it every six months or annually), and allows you to save and print the results to share with your board, including a matrix reflecting the results specific to your ministry.

**NonprofitBoardScore™ Sample Matrix**



[www.ECFA.org/Score](http://www.ECFA.org/Score)

Governance Elements	Sample Topics Included
<b>1 Spiritual Atmosphere</b>	Scripture reading, prayer, discernment, silence, Christ-centered character, spiritual gifts inventory, humble service, and loving community of grace and truth
<b>2 Board-CEO Synergy</b>	Regular fellowship, attention to physical health and soul care, board assessment, and annual review of CEO's performance and compensation/benefits
<b>3 Intentionality</b>	Clear agendas, Board Policies Manual, Prime Responsibility Chart, 80/20 focus on strategy, risk prioritization, and protection of all God's children from abuse
<b>4 Faithful Administration</b>	Avoid conflicts of interest, implement controls to prevent fraud and properly handle designated gifts, budget responsibly, and report with appropriate transparency
<b>5 Structure and Style</b>	Committed chair, board size, majority of independent board members, roles and responsibilities, meeting frequency, and annual commitment form
<b>6 Culture</b>	Spirit-led, mission-minded, self-disciplined, proactive, respectful, keen listeners, lifelong learners, integrity, accountability, confidentiality, and full of grace and truth

**How to use.** Ideally *every board member* including the CEO, should take the survey so the board can compare and discuss the results. Alternatively, the board chair (or the vice chair, if the CEO is the chair) should take the survey for the board.



**Attn: Church Boards**

ChurchBoardScore™ is also available at [www.ECFA.Church/Score](http://www.ECFA.Church/Score).

## ❑ OPTION #2. BoardSource Assessments

Visit [www.BoardSource.org](http://www.BoardSource.org) to review several options for board self-evaluations and board self-assessments.

*Assessments Lead to Good Governance*

### WHAT ASSESSMENT TOOLS DOES BOARDSOURCE OFFER?

<https://boardsource.org/board-support/assessing-performance/>

From BoardSource:

BoardSource offers a variety of assessment tools for both boards and chief executives. In fact, we feel so strongly about assessment as a driver of nonprofit effectiveness that we offer either complimentary or discounted assessment tools as a benefit of our organizational membership program. If you are considering one of BoardSource's assessment tools, you may want to consider becoming an organizational member.

#### Board Performance Assessment Tools

- **Board Self-Assessment (BSA)** survey gathers feedback from individual board members and measures the collective performance of the board.
- **Peer-to-Peer Assessment (P2P)** survey asks board members to evaluate their individual performance and that of their peers to learn how the performance and culture of the full board is affected by the style and engagement of its individual members.

#### Visit...

<https://boardsource.org/board-support/assessing-performance/board-self-assessment/>

...and click on "SAMPLE SURVEY" at the bottom of the page—for several pages of the BoardSource survey.

#### ECFA Note to Christ-centered Organizations and Churches:

While BoardSource serves both secular and faith-based boards, the materials do not reference what we believe are the unique distinctives of Christ-centered boards. Should you create your own "do-it-yourself" tools/process, we encourage you to add those distinctives for Christ-centered boards such as: spiritual discernment practices, prayer, understanding strategic planning and mission outcomes from a theological perspective, Matthew 18 principles of conflict management, and much more.

#### RESOURCES:

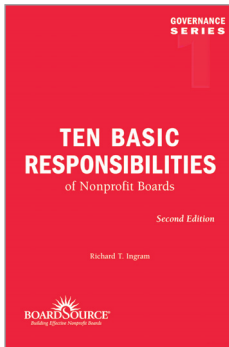
Read these two helpful resources for ministry boards: *The Choice: The Christ-Centered Pursuit of Kingdom Outcomes*<sup>6</sup> and *The Council: A Biblical Perspective on Board Governance*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Gary G. Hoag, R. Scott Rodin, and Wesley K. Willmer, *The Choice: The Christ-Centered Pursuit of Kingdom Outcomes* (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Gary G. Hoag, Wesley K. Willmer, and Gregory J. Henson, *The Council: A Biblical Perspective on Board Governance* (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2018).



❑ **OPTION #3. Book/Assessment: Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards**



*Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards* (Third Edition), by Richard T. Ingram (106 pages, BoardSource, 2015), includes an 18-question self-assessment survey example.

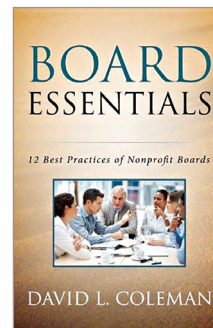
The first title of six in BoardSource's "Governance Series" delivers the generally agreed-upon list of the 10 roles and responsibilities of nonprofit board members. (Boards of faith-based organizations will likely add one or two more.)

The book includes an excellent 18-point self-assessment for board members, with probing questions like:

- ☑ Are there ways in which your talents and interests can be more fully realized at or between board or committee meetings?
- ☑ As a director, are you reasonably clear about what is expected of you?
- ☑ Which aspect of your service on the board has been the least satisfying and enjoyable?<sup>8</sup>

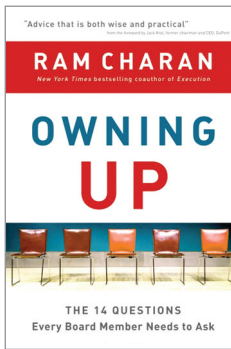
Read John Pearson's review of *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*, along with three other governance books here: [http://urgentink.typepad.com/my\\_weblog/2014/11/serving-as-a-board-member-4-books.html](http://urgentink.typepad.com/my_weblog/2014/11/serving-as-a-board-member-4-books.html)

- ☑ *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*, 3rd ed., by Richard T. Ingram (106 pages, BoardSource, 2015)
- ☑ *Serving as a Board Member: Practical Guidance for Directors of Christian Ministries*, by John Pellowe (188 pages, Canadian Council of Christian Charities, 2012)
- ☑ *Best Practices for Effective Boards*, by E. LeBron Fairbanks, Dwight M. Gunter II, and James R. Couchenour (191 pages, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2012)
- ☑ *Board Essentials: 12 Best Practices of Nonprofit Boards*, by David L. Coleman (109 pages, Andrew/Wallace Books, an imprint of BoardTrek Nonprofit Consulting, 2014)



<sup>8</sup> Richard T. Ingram, *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*, 3d ed. (Washington, DC: BoardSource, 2015), 98–99.

❑ **OPTION #4. Book/Assessment: *Owning Up***



Another helpful approach is to take Ram Charan's book, *Owning Up: The 14 Questions Every Board Member Needs to Ask* and assign the five most significant chapters (out of the 14 questions) to five different board members and work through those. (See the "Read and Reflect" worksheet to be used with the book in Tool #13.)

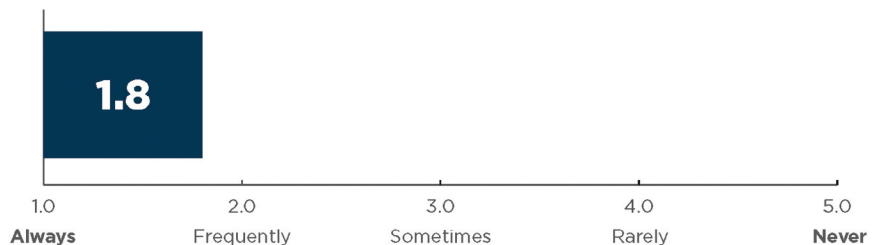
### Board Member Self-Assessment

Note: Several questions from *Owning Up* (Question 5: "Does Our Board Really Own the Company's Strategy?") were adapted for use in *Unleashing Your Board's Potential: Comprehensive Report from ECFA's Nonprofit Governance Survey* (see Option #5).

**What do boards indicate as the places where they're weakest?** ECFA's national survey of accredited ministries asked people to rate their board about best practices. The numbers range from low to high, from undesirable to very desirable. These self-scores are from everyone combined—CEO, board chair and board member. The following question had the lowest best-practice score:

#### The Board Struggles with Staying at 30,000 Feet

"How often does the board discuss tactical versus strategic topics?"



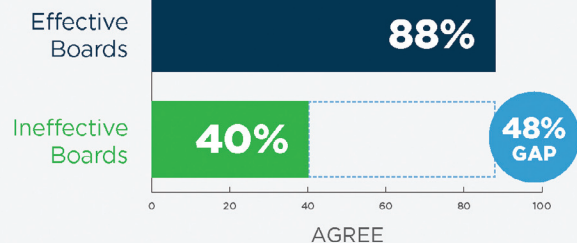
#### Effective Boards Have a Lot Going for Them

But what happens when we compare survey participants who rated their boards as effective against those who don't think their board is effective?



#### Prioritize Planning and Strategizing

"Our board ensures that the ministry has an active strategic planning process in place."



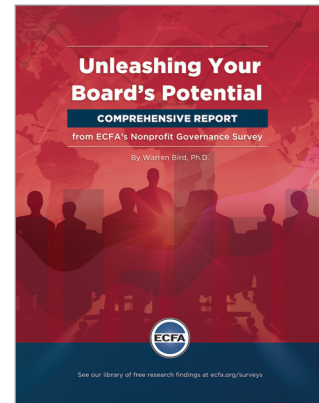
ECFA Research Says...



❑ **OPTION #5. Self-Assessment: ECFA Survey**

*Unleashing Your Board's Potential: Comprehensive Report from ECFA's Nonprofit Governance Survey*<sup>9</sup> included 20 questions that are included on the following page as the "Board Member Self-Assessment." The one-pager includes the average scores for those questions from more than 1,700 board members.

Download a PDF of the survey findings here:  
**[www.ECFA.org/Content/Surveys](http://www.ECFA.org/Content/Surveys)**



**See the next page for the  
ECFA "Board Member Self-Assessment" survey  
with 20 questions. →→→**

This self-assessment will help you evaluate those areas in which your board can improve as it governs your ministry with integrity and effectiveness. For more governance resources, visit [ECFA.org/surveys](http://ECFA.org/surveys) or email [survey@ECFA.org](mailto:survey@ECFA.org).

***"Boards need to understand basic strategy,  
but it's not their job to create it."***<sup>10</sup>

Ram Charan

<sup>9</sup> *Unleashing Your Board's Potential: Comprehensive Report from ECFA's Nonprofit Governance Survey* (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Ram Charan, quoted in "Leadership Tip of the Day" email from the (now named) Frances Hesselbein Leadership Forum, Sept. 26, 2013, [www.HesselbeinForum.org](http://www.HesselbeinForum.org).

**Board Member Self-Assessment**  
***Unleashing Your Board's Potential:***  
***Comprehensive Report from ECFA's Nonprofit Governance Survey***  
**(photocopy for your next meeting)**

Use these 20 questions to compare your board with the Average ECFA Scores. For each question, place a checkmark ☒ in the box that best represents your level of agreement with the statement on the left.

How Does Your Organization Compare?	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	*Average ECFA Scores
1. Our board carves out time to creatively address the current and future needs of our "customers."						3.6
2. Our board clearly sees its work as Christ-centered.						4.7
3. Our board has been very effective over the last 12-18 months.						3.9
4. Our board understands its roles and responsibilities.						4.0
5. Our board ensures that the ministry has an active strategic planning process in place.						4.0
6. Our board annually affirms and "owns" the ministry strategy.						4.0
7. We know the spiritual gifts (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12) of every board member.						3.0
8. Our board members have high passion for the ministry.						4.5
9. We expect every board member to be an annual giver.						4.2
10. We provide training and encouragement to help board members encourage others to give.						2.8
11. Most people on the board help the CEO in appropriate ways by offering strategic input (as opposed to tactical input).						3.9
12. Outside of board meetings, most people avoid offering opinions that differ from agreed-upon board decisions.						3.9
13. Our board devotes creative energy and board meeting time to assess risks and opportunities—and thus is well informed about the outside forces impacting the organization.						3.8
14. Our board has policies—and the spiritual integrity required—to ask an underperforming board member to resign.						3.3
15. Our board is very focused on measuring mission impact.						3.8
16. Our board conducts an annual performance review of the CEO.						3.8
17. Our board approves the CEO's annual measurable goals that align with the strategy.						3.9
18. The working relationship between our CEO and Board Chair is excellent.						4.5
19. Our board chair (or a designated board member) regularly encourages our CEO to address "soul care" topics in his or her own life.						3.8
20. Board members pray regularly for the ministry and the CEO.						4.6

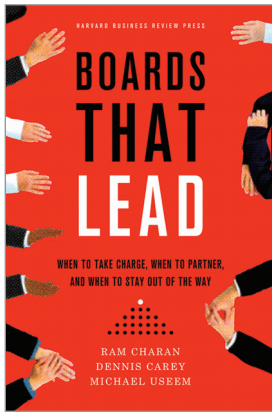
Add up checkmarks in each column	$\frac{\quad}{\downarrow} \times 1$	$\frac{\quad}{\downarrow} \times 2$	$\frac{\quad}{\downarrow} \times 3$	$\frac{\quad}{\downarrow} \times 4$	$\frac{\quad}{\downarrow} \times 5$	Overall Score $\downarrow$
Column Total X Column Value (See next page for scoring legend.)						= See next page

\*Average ECFA Score based on responses from 1,754 board members of ECFA-accredited organizations.

How to Interpret This Self-Assessment	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	*Average ECFA Scores
A. Compare your “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree” choices with the choices of others on your board. Discuss with your board. Add up checkmarks in each column						
B. Compare your choices with the ECFA averages. Circle three where your score is closest to the ECFA averages. Draw squares around those where your score is farthest from the ECFA averages. Discuss with your board.*						
C. Add up your total score and compare it to the interpretations below. Now discuss with your board.	How many 1's? —	How many 2's? —	How many 3's? —	How many 4's? —	How many 5's? —	
	Multiply by 1 —	Multiply by 2 —	Multiply by 3 —	Multiply by 4 —	Multiply by 5 —	
	<p>Create a total score by adding the five numbers in the row above:</p> <p>If your total score is:</p> <p>91-100, your board is well above average</p> <p>81-90, your board is above average</p> <p>75-80, your board is average</p> <p>65-74, your board is below average</p> <p>0-64, your board is well below average</p> <p>(The ECFA survey average is 78.)</p>					

\*For more details on the comparison numbers, see *Unleashing Your Board's Potential: Comprehensive Report from ECFA's Nonprofit Governance Survey* by Warren Bird, available for free download at [ECFA.org/surveys](http://ECFA.org/surveys).

❑ **OPTION #6. Book/Assessment: *Boards That Lead***



***Boards That Lead: When to Take Charge, When to Partner, and When to Stay Out of the Way***, by Ram Charan, Dennis Carey and Michael Useem, is an excellent resource and could also be an important book for the board to read prior to a board retreat or a strategic planning day.

Just when you thought you were knowledgeable in governance, along comes a 219-page poke-in-the-ribs, plus an incredible 40-page section with 18 checklists for board members, a bonus chapter on “Trends in Director Monitoring and Leading,” a director evaluation worksheet, and six golden pages on “Division of Responsibilities Between the Board Leader and the CEO.”

If you're leading a board, on a board, or considering board service, you'll want to read Chapter 3, “Recruit Directors Who Build Value.” The co-authors, including Ram Charan, author of *Owning Up: The 14 Questions Every Board Member Needs to Ask*, are big on questions. This chapter asks eight mission-critical questions of prospective board members, including: “Will the candidate be ready to stand tall and engage constructively when vital issues are on the line, the stakes and stress are high, and leadership of the company becomes even more essential?”

“Root Out Dysfunction” is Chapter 4's theme. “In our experience, as many as half of Fortune 500 companies have one or two dysfunctional directors.” The authors identify three types:

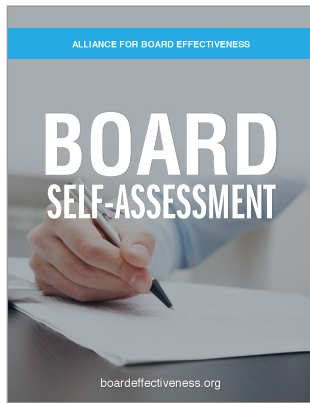
- “Some see themselves as the smartest person in the room.
- Others seek recognition.
- Others are frustrated would-be CEOs.”

They add, “Whatever their personal motives, they tend to micromanage or take boardroom discussions down dark alleys. We have seen a director interrupt the first five minutes of a CEO's boardroom presentation and sour the mood of both board and management for the remainder of the day. The result is to impair, even negate, a board's capacity to lead the firm. As in any group, a dysfunctional member can sabotage the entire team.”

The authors recommend six personal qualities to look for in a board leader (often the board chair in nonprofit circles): 1) Executive experience, 2) Respect and confidence, 3) Collaboration and restraint, 4) Personal bonding, 5) Personal comfort, and 6) Resilience. (*Frame these qualities, perhaps, into your annual board self-assessment survey.*)

Board service is not for the weak-hearted! Board leaders (or board chairs) “can anticipate at least one major crisis during their tenures.” Under the “personal comfort” commentary, they share this wisdom: “Yet another factor defining the board leader is a sense of comfort in one's own skin and place in life, with nothing yet to prove or still to achieve, most often the product of a long and successful career as a corporate leader in one's own right—no coveting of the chief executive's office, no longing for operational control.”

❑ **OPTION #7. Self-Assessment: *Alliance for Board Effectiveness***



**80-Question Self-Assessment**

<http://boardeffectiveness.org>

The Alliance for Board Effectiveness provides a free do-it-yourself 80-question self-assessment on their website, based on the governance tool “80 Principles/Practices of Effective Boards” from the Good Governance Toolbox of The Andringa Group.

**Sample Self-Assessment Questions**

Below are Questions 74 to 80 from the five-page “Board Self-Assessment” of Alliance for Board Effectiveness (used by permission). To download all 80 questions, visit <http://boardeffectiveness.org>.

Other Characteristics of Good Governance	We need to make significant changes	We need to make minor adjustments in this area	We need to discuss this for possible changes	We are doing well, no changes needed	We are excelling in this area
74. We invest in professional development for board members, staff, and volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5
75. Our board protocols are documented, including our commitment to confidentiality.	1	2	3	4	5
76. We ensure that technology is maximized for efficiency in governance and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
77. We ensure that contracts and agreements with others include alternative dispute resolution.	1	2	3	4	5
78. We make sure to thank and honor board members and staff when they depart.	1	2	3	4	5
79. We regularly review Articles and Bylaws to reflect changing culture, laws, and regulations.	1	2	3	4	5
80. Our board knows why, when, and how it would close or merge with another organization.	1	2	3	4	5

**SECTION 2:****Board Self-Assessment Facilitated by a Board Coach/Consultant****2 OPTIONS — A or B****❑ OPTION A. Coach/consultant customizes the ECFA Self-Assessment Survey specifically for your board**

In this option, your coach or consultant could customize *Unleashing Your Board's Potential: Comprehensive Report from ECFA's Nonprofit Governance Survey* for your use (free download at [ECFA.org/Surveys](http://ECFA.org/Surveys)). Drop the questions into a survey software program, such as [www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com). You could then benchmark your responses against the responses of ECFA-accredited organizations. Your coach or consultant could include some value-added elements, such as phone coaching.

**Details:**

- Approximately 30-35 questions with 7 to 10 optional questions.
- Approximately 12 to 15 minutes required to complete the assessment, depending on how many optional questions a board member answers.
- Anonymous—but all open-ended responses/comments will be included in the results.

**Process:**

- From beginning to end, the process generally can be accomplished in 30 to 60 days, depending on urgency and board meeting schedules.

No.	Steps
1	Board Chair and CEO (or senior pastor) review customized survey (Draft #1) and suggest edits (by email or phone). Depending on the consultant, this could include up to three drafts; and could include additional questions that are not part of the ECFA survey.
2	When survey is finalized, the Board Chair or CEO (or senior pastor) sends an email to all board members with a brief memo (written by your consultant) with a link to the online survey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey deadline (usually 14 days, with a reminder sent 2 days before the deadline)</li> </ul>
3	Survey Results delivered via 3 options (see next page)

***“When is the last time you as a board member acknowledged that another board member was right and you were wrong?”<sup>11</sup>***

Peter Greer and David Weekley

<sup>11</sup> Peter Greer and David Weekley, *The Board and the CEO: Seven Practices to Protect Your Organization's Most Important Relationship* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2017), 72.



### Delivery of Survey Results by Consultant/Coach:

Options	Description of Services (including survey design)	Coach's Time
<b>Option 1:</b> Results Only	Survey Results emailed in PDF format <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your Executive Committee or Governance Committee discerns how best to analyze and review the information; and how best to share it with the board.</li> </ul>	About 4 hours
<b>Option 2:</b> Briefing via <i>Go to Meeting</i>	Survey Results emailed in PDF format to Executive Committee or Governance Committee with one-hour "Go to Meeting" session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PowerPoint presentation of Survey Results</li> <li>Q&amp;A</li> <li>Recommended Next Steps</li> </ul>	About 6 hours
<b>Option 3:</b> Presentation at Committee or Board Meeting	On-site Briefing of Survey Results with full Board and/or Executive Committee or Governance Committee to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey Results (photocopied for each participant)</li> <li>PowerPoint presentation</li> <li>Q&amp;A</li> <li>Recommended Next Steps</li> </ul>	1 day

***"Social sector leaders are not less decisive than business leaders as a general rule; they only appear that way to those who fail to grasp the complex governance and diffuse power structures common to social sectors."***<sup>12</sup>

Jim Collins

<sup>12</sup> Jim Collins quoted in the "Leadership Tip of the Day" email from the (now named) Frances Hesselbein Leadership Forum, August 3, 2010, [www.HesselbeinForum.org](http://www.HesselbeinForum.org).

**❑ OPTION B. Coach/consultant creates an original self-assessment survey—unique to your current needs**

In this option, your coach or consultant would start from scratch and create a customized survey tool—based on numerous factors unique to your board, including:

- Your current governance model
- Experience of current board members
- Tenure and experience of the CEO/Senior Pastor and/or senior team
- What season or cycle you're in (example: google Charles Handy and the Sigmoid Curve)

Or...read how Jim Collins identifies five stages of decline in his book, *How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In*. The five stages:

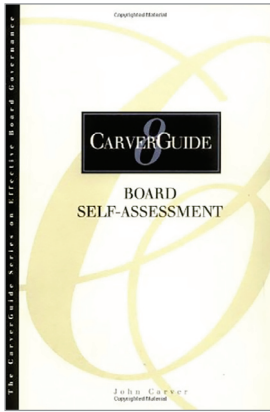
- ✓ Stage 1: Hubris Born of Success
- ✓ Stage 2: Undisciplined Pursuit of More
- ✓ Stage 3: Denial of Risk and Peril
- ✓ Stage 4: Grasping for Salvation
- ✓ Stage 5: Capitulation to Irrelevance or Death<sup>13</sup>

- Previous governance enrichment help from other consultants and/or board training
- Other factors (Are you in chaos? Growing? Declining? Healthy? God-honoring? Board dissension? Staff departures? Community concerns? Inability to agree on a governance model, perhaps due to the recruitment of new board members, with different views and past board experiences and/or dysfunctions?)

Options	Description of Services (including survey design)	Coach's Time
<b>Option 1:</b> Bronze	Design customized survey based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone interviews with up to 5 board members (including the CEO/Senior Pastor and board chair)</li> <li>• On-site presentation of results and next steps</li> </ul>	1.5 days
<b>Option 2:</b> Silver	Design customized survey based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone interviews with all board members (including the CEO/Senior Pastor)</li> <li>• On-site presentation of results and next steps</li> <li>• Phone coaching over the next 6 months (about 4 hours)</li> </ul>	2 days
<b>Option 3:</b> Gold	Your suggestions!	___ days

<sup>13</sup> Jim Collins, *How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), vii.

## Bonus Resources on Board Self-Assessment



### **Carver Guide 8 Board Self-Assessment**

*CarverGuide Series on Effective Board Governance*  
by John Carver 1997, 18 pages

Even if your board does not function as a true Policy Governance® Model board, John Carver's work in this area is worth noting. Perhaps inspire a board member to read *Boards That Make a Difference: A*

*New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations* by John Carver. Carver's book is over 400 pages, but his booklet series might be more realistic for you.

**In the 18-page booklet, *Board Self-Assessment*, Carver summarizes his definition of the process. Check the paragraph that resonates most with your board's needs.<sup>14</sup>**

- ☐ The primary purpose of evaluation is not to reward or punish but to achieve continual improvement in performance. A board can engage in healthy and useful self-evaluation if it lays aside the judging connotation. I want boards to see self-evaluation as similar to what goes on between eyes, brain, and muscles when you practice a skill. Typically, you make little comparisons, little adjustments—a nip here, a tuck there, hold your mouth a little differently—in a never-ending sequence.
- ☐ Self-evaluation is most meaningful when related to established expectations. Evaluation requires a standard of comparison, an expectation. Unless a board is clear about what constitutes responsible governance, its attempt at evaluation will merely meander. Evaluation, therefore, done as a freestanding action, can never make up for not having put into place carefully considered expectations, against which the board then does its evaluation.
- ☐ Board self-evaluation is an inseparable part of governing, not an extraneous or optional task. To see how integral evaluation is to the task, try writing in the dark. If you cannot see where your pen marks, you will not write well and may not even write legibly. Yet writing is a familiar skill with which you have a lifetime of experience. It is so automatic that you scarcely give the arm, and hand, finger muscle movements a conscious thought. But writing in the dark is hard. How much more must we need feedback for a complex social task such as governance?
- ☐ Self-evaluation is a continual rather than sporadic activity. If you want to improve performance, evaluation must be continual. **Consequently, I have little use for the annual board self-evaluation.**

Board self-evaluation is the responsibility of the board—not the staff. Because self-evaluation is integral to the job to be done, and because governance is surely the board's job, the board has little choice but to accept the responsibility of evaluating how well it is doing its job. Like other parts of the board's job, people outside the board may be engaged to help the board evaluate itself, but it is critical that the board begin with the sense that it alone is responsible in a very direct and personal way.

<sup>14</sup> John Carver, *CarverGuide 8: Board Self-Assessment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 16.

## More Bonus Resources on Board Self-Assessment



### **ECFA Knowledge Center – Nonprofit**

[www.ECFA.org/KnowledgeCenter](http://www.ECFA.org/KnowledgeCenter)

### **ECFA Knowledge Center – Church**

[www.ECFA.church/KnowledgeCenter](http://www.ECFA.church/KnowledgeCenter)



### **ECFA Blog:**

#### **Governance of Christ-Centered Organizations**

<http://ECFAgovernance.blogspot.com>



### **John Pearson's Board Bucket webpage:**

<http://managementbuckets.com/board-bucket>

**SECTION 3:****“Best Governance Practices” Survey**

Customize this survey for your board!



**Drop these survey questions into the  
SurveyMonkey software  
(or your preferred survey software).  
[www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com)**

**Background**

The following “Best Governance Practices” survey questions were developed in 2016 with the help and feedback of over 20 governance consultants, many who served as board coaches in one of the board enrichment programs funded in part by M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust.

John Pearson asked consultants to rank order several laundry lists of “best governance practices.” The responses were summarized by John and provided to Kay Edwards, President & CEO of Oversight Network ([www.oversightnetwork.com](http://www.oversightnetwork.com)).

The attached survey was then completed by the CEOs and board members in the 2016 CCCA Thriving Boards Program, an initiative of Christian Camp and Conference Association ([www.CCCA.org](http://www.CCCA.org)), and funded in part by Murdock Trust. For more information, visit: [www.ccca.org/ccca/Thriving\\_Boards.asp](http://www.ccca.org/ccca/Thriving_Boards.asp) and [www.BoardLeadership.org](http://www.BoardLeadership.org).

**Survey Contents**

- ☐ 1. & 2. Introductory Questions
- ☐ 3. Mission, Vision, and Values
- ☐ 4. Executive Leadership
- ☐ 5. Governance
- ☐ 6. Board Member Recruitment and Engagement
- ☐ 7. Board Member Character and Relationships
- ☐ 8. Strategic Planning and Strategy
- ☐ 9. Sustainability, Financial and Fiduciary Oversight
- ☐ 10. Tools and Templates: Board Best Practices
  - Part 1: The Board's Role With the CEO
  - Part 2: The Board's Governance Role

**Attn: Church Boards**

While the following board self-assessment survey is designed for nonprofit boards, ask a board member or staff member to customize it for the unique needs of your church board.

Customize this survey for your board!



**Drop these survey questions into the  
SurveyMonkey software  
(or your preferred survey software).  
[www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com)**

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### Introduction to the BEST GOVERNANCE PRACTICES Survey

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*Cover memo and introduction on first page of survey:*

SURVEY DEADLINE: \_\_\_\_\_(date)

**Attn: All Board Members**

As part of our board's annual self-assessment process, we're asking all board members to complete this important survey. Your survey responses will be anonymous, and your participation is extremely important to the process. We will be using your responses to improve our governance, so thanks for investing your time on this.

Survey results will be shared with the full board at our next meeting.

IMPORTANT! Survey references to "CEO" (chief executive officer) refer, of course, to \_\_\_\_\_,  
*the one staff person who reports directly to our board.*

Thank you for your board service as we continue on our journey to become a more healthy and more effective governing board!

Name

Board Chair

Organization



## Introductory Questions

- ◆ 1. How many years have you served on the board?
- ☐ Less than 1 year
  - ☐ 1 – 3 years
  - ☐ 4 – 6 years
  - ☐ 7 – 9 years
  - ☐ 10 – 12 years
  - ☐ 13 or more years
- ◆ 2. Counting our board, how many other boards (including your local church board) are you currently serving on?
- ☐ 1 board
  - ☐ 2 boards
  - ☐ 3 boards
  - ☐ 4 boards
  - ☐ 5 boards
  - ☐ More than 5 boards

## ◆ 3. Mission, Vision, and Values

**One of the board's fundamental responsibilities is to establish the mission, vision, and values of the organization.** The board should review the mission at least every three years. Each member of the board should understand and support the mission, vision, and values.

*For each statement, please indicate how much you agree, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being "Describes Completely" and 1 being, "Does Not Describe At All."*

Mission, Vision, and Values	1 Does Not Describe At All	2	3	4	5	6	7 Describes Completely
Our board members have high passion for our mission, vision, and values.							
Our board ensures that our programs align with our mission, vision and values.							

#### ◆ 4. Executive Leadership

One of the most significant decisions a board makes is the selection of a chief executive. An effective board will provide a clear job description that outlines the duties of the chief executive, and will undertake a carefully planned search process to fill the position. The board will support its chief executive by providing him or her with frequent and constructive feedback, and by conducting an annual evaluation to help the chief executive strengthen his or her performance.

*For each statement, please indicate how much you agree, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being "Describes Completely" and 1 being, "Does Not Describe At All."*

<b>Executive Leadership</b>	<b>1 Does Not Describe At All</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7 Describes Completely</b>
Our board agrees that their most important responsibility is having the right CEO in place.							
Our board approves our CEO's annual measurable goals.							
Our board monitors our CEO's annual measurable goals at least quarterly.							
Our board conducts an annual performance review of our CEO.							
Our board has a written plan for an emergency CEO transition—and it is reviewed annually.							
Our board ensures that we have an on-going continuous process of succession planning.							
Our board agrees that compensation/benefits for our CEO are at the right level.							

◆ 5. Governance

**Effective boards ensure effective governance by putting organizational policy documents in place and periodically reviewing and updating those documents.**

*For each statement, please indicate how much you agree, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being “Describes Completely” and 1 being, “Does Not Describe At All.”*

<b>Governance</b>	<b>1</b> Does Not Describe At All	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Describes Completely
Our board member roles and responsibilities are in writing.							
Our board members understand their roles and responsibilities.							
Our board members are knowledgeable about the numerous governance models, including the “policy governance” model.							
Our board agrees that our current governance model is appropriate for us.							
Our board has a dynamic written document (such as a “Board Policies Manual”) to ensure that both long-standing and the latest board policies are easily accessible by the board, CEO, and senior team.							
Our board meetings are well-planned, well-led, and achieve our desired results.							
Our committee meetings are well-planned, well-led, and achieve our desired results.							

## ◆ 6. Board Member Recruitment and Engagement

**An effective board needs a plan to identify and recruit qualified people to serve on the board.** It is the responsibility of the board to effectively orient new members to their responsibilities and to the activities of the organization.

*For each statement, please indicate how much you agree, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being “Describes Completely” and 1 being, “Does Not Describe At All.”*

<b>Board Member Recruitment and Engagement</b>	<b>1 Does Not Describe At All</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7 Describes Completely</b>
Our board (not our CEO) owns the responsibility to recruit and build a competent board.							
Our board has a formal orientation process for new board members.							
Our board members understand the unique “roles/hats” that board members wear (in and out of board meetings), such as the Governance Hat, the Volunteer Hat, and the (Event) Participant Hat—and there is agreement on the protocol for each unique role.							
Our board members sign an annual “re-commitment/reminder” document such as a “Board Member Annual Affirmation Statement.”							
Our board has written policies addressing charitable giving expectations for board members.							
Our board’s self-evaluation process improves the functioning and output of the board.							
Our board has policies in place—and the spiritual integrity required—to ask an under-performing board member to resign.							
Our board is prepared to do its job well when a crisis erupts.							

## ◆ 7. Board Member Character and Relationships

**Board members must act with integrity and be exemplary role models of the organization's values and character, carrying out their duties in a Christ-like manner.**

An effective board will display healthy relationships with each other, and between the board and staff.

*For each statement, please indicate how much you agree, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being "Describes Completely" and 1 being, "Does Not Describe At All."*

<b>Board Member Character and Relationships</b>	<b>1 Does Not Describe At All</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7 Describes Completely</b>
Our board members conduct our work and relationships with Christ-centered character.							
Our board practices spiritual discernment in our decision-making.							
Our board ensures that there is a healthy and effective relationship between our board chair and our CEO.							
Our board members annually read and sign our "conflicts of interest" policy that addresses legal and ethical integrity.							
Our board "speaks with one voice, or not at all."							

## ◆ 8. Strategic Planning and Strategy

**The board is responsible for establishing the organization's direction and goals.**

The board engages in a formal strategic planning process, and monitors changes in the environment that may present new challenges or opportunities that call for new direction.

*For each statement, please indicate how much you agree, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being "Describes Completely" and 1 being, "Does Not Describe At All."*

<b>Strategic Planning and Strategy</b>	<b>1 Does Not Describe At All</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7 Describes Completely</b>
Our board ensures that there is an effective and on-going planning process in place.							
Our board "owns" the organization's strategy to achieve our mission.							
Our board regularly addresses the risks that could send our ministry over the cliff.							
Our board reviews program reports that address measurements and ministry outcomes.							



◆ **9. Sustainability, Financial and Fiduciary Oversight**

**The board is responsible for stewarding the organization's resources and assets.**

This includes ensuring that income is managed wisely, financial guidelines are established and adhered to, and the organization is properly reporting sources and uses of funds. It also includes making sure the organization is complying with local, state, and federal requirements.

*For each statement, please indicate how much you agree, on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being "Describes Completely" and 1 being, "Does Not Describe At All."*

<b>Sustainability, Financial and Fiduciary Oversight</b>	<b>1 Does Not Describe At All</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7 Describes Completely</b>
Our board ensures that there are adequate financial resources to achieve the mission.							
Our board is competent in protecting organizational assets and providing proper financial oversight to ensure our sustainability.							
Our board monitors the organization's compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations that govern our operations.							
Our board has the information, including financial information, it needs to govern well.							

## ◆ 10. Tools and Templates: Board Best Practices

### PART 1: The Board's Role with the CEO

So they don't have to "re-invent the wheel," many boards look for tools and templates that other nonprofit boards have found helpful—and then each board customizes the templates to their unique situation. (One size doesn't fit all.)

Below is a list of frequently used tools and templates that embody one or more of the most common board best practices.

*Check YES or NO if your board is currently using the following tools and/or templates (or a variation of the template).*

Tools and Templates: Board Best Practices	Yes	No	Not Sure	N/A
<b>CEO's "5/15" Monthly Board Report.</b> A standardized monthly report from the CEO, updating the board with agreed-upon topics and metrics—and takes just 5 minutes to read and normally just 15 minutes for the CEO to write.				
<b>CEO's Annual S.M.A.R.T. Goals.</b> A board-approved list of 3 to 5 annual goals for the CEO that meet the "S.M.A.R.T." test: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-related.				
<b>CEO's Monthly Dashboard Report on CEO's Annual S.M.A.R.T. Goals.</b> A one-page dashboard reporting the year-to-date progress on the CEO's 3 to 5 annual "S.M.A.R.T." goals (often color-coded in green, yellow and red).				
<b>CEO's Position Description.</b> The document that describes the roles and responsibilities of the CEO.				
<b>Board's Annual Evaluation of the CEO.</b> The agreed-upon process and written (or online) survey instrument completed by all board members for the board's annual assessment of the CEO.				

◆ 10. Tools and Templates: Board Best Practices

**PART 2:** The Board's Governance Role

**So they don't have to "re-invent the wheel," many boards look for tools and templates that other nonprofit boards have found helpful—and then each board customizes the templates to their unique situation. (One size doesn't fit all.)**

Below is a list of frequently used tools and templates that embody one or more of the most common board best practices.

*Check YES or NO if your board is currently using the following tools and/or templates (or a variation of the template).*

Tools and Templates: Board Best Practices	Yes	No	Not Sure	N/A
<b>Board Policies Manual.</b> A 15- to 20-page document that gathers all board policies into one document; and revised occasionally—based on the ever-changing environment (financial, leadership, strategy, etc.).				
<b>Prime Responsibility Chart.</b> A one-page document clarifying roles between the board, committees, board chair, board treasurer, CEO, CFO, etc.				
<b>Board Meeting Agenda &amp; Recommendations Template.</b> A board-approved template for each board meeting's agenda, recommendations, reports, minutes, etc.—and mailed or emailed to board members at least X days prior to every board meeting (per policy).				
<b>Board Position Description &amp; Board Member Annual Affirmation Statement.</b> A board-approved document that includes the board member position description, signed annually by every board member.				
<b>Board Chair Position Description.</b> The written position description for the board chair that details roles and responsibilities, plus protocol for enriching the important relationship between the board chair and the CEO.				
<b>Board Nominee Orientation Resource.</b> The annually-updated resource that the Nominating Committee uses to inspire and inform both board prospects and board nominees.				
<b>Board's Annual Self- Assessment Survey.</b> The written (or online) annual survey completed by every board member, assessing his or her own performance on the board, and the performance of the full board.				
<b>The Board's 3 Powerful S's: Strengths, Spiritual Gifts and Social Styles (and/or Other Assessments).</b> The assessments that many boards use to help members better understand themselves, each other, and their CEOs.				

Check YES or NO if your board is currently using the following tools and/or templates (or a variation of the template).

Tools and Templates: Board Best Practices	Yes	No	Not Sure	N/A
<b>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</b> A monthly or quarterly report that identifies agreed-upon metrics or measurements, outcomes, and impact for programs, products, and services.				
<b>Dashboard Reports.</b> The monthly or quarterly dashboard reports that help “nonprofit leaders focus their attention on what matters most in their organizations, and in doing so, gain greater insight and ascribe greater meaning to other available data.” <sup>15</sup>				



**Attn: Church Boards**

While this board self-assessment survey is designed for nonprofit boards, ask a board member or staff member to customize it for the unique needs of your church board.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence M. Butler, *The Nonprofit Dashboard: A Tool for Tracking Progress* (Washington, D.C.: BoardSource, 2007), vii.