

## TOOL #19: Ten Minutes for Governance

Use this tool at every meeting to enhance lifelong learning.



Read Lesson 39: “Invest ‘10 Minutes for Governance’ in Every Board Meeting.”

*Lessons From the Nonprofit Boardroom: 40 Insights for Better Board Meetings*<sup>1</sup>

### Just 10 Minutes Will Enrich Your Governance

#### The Big Idea

In every board meeting, we want to remind board members that good governance does not happen by osmosis. It happens only with intentionality, training, and keeping critical governance topics (like focusing on policy, not operations) on everyone’s radar.

To get started, create a master list of possible topics (board policies, recruiting board members, understanding financial reports, ten basic responsibilities of nonprofit boards, the distinctives of Christ-centered governance, etc.). You might also find helpful topics using selected tools and templates from this book.

Teachers often learn more than their students, so rotate the leadership of this segment. Give board members advance notice when asking them to prepare a presentation. Suggest that each 10-minute segment include at least four to five minutes of interaction and dialogue.

*Example:* ‘In groups of two, read these ten listening guidelines and identify the one guideline that is most difficult for you.’ (Use a timer that buzzes at ten minutes.)

In addition to assigned reading prior to board retreats, and inspiring board members to read at least one governance book a year, you’ll discover that a ‘10 Minutes for Governance’ segment at every meeting will keep Christ-centered governance on the front burner.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dan Busby and John Pearson, *Lessons From the Nonprofit Boardroom: 40 Insights for Better Board Meetings*, 2d ed. (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2018), 202–6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 204–5.

*Example:* Here's the one-page "Ten Minutes for Governance" template used by the board of directors at Christian Community Credit Union, which meets monthly. Note: In most cases, we recommend that boards meet four to six times a year (not monthly), but regulatory requirements for credit unions in California require a monthly board meeting.

**Ten Minutes for Governance: Lifelong Learning for Board Members**

Facilitator: Rick Jones  
 Date: March 22, 2020  
 Assignment: Read pages 115-119 before the meeting and check out the blog:  
**40 Blogs. 40 Wednesdays.** <http://nonprofitboardroom.blogspot.com/>



**LESSON 23: Focus on Mission Impact and Sustainability**

The "dual bottom line" equips boards to address dead horses and sacred cows (or goats). "Dakota tribal wisdom says that when you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount." (Elmer Towns and Warren Bird)

More on the book at: [www.ECFA.org/LessonsNonprofitBoardroom/](http://www.ECFA.org/LessonsNonprofitBoardroom/)

Questions – Discuss in groups of two or three	
#1.	With our leadership succession changes, the developing technologies, and increasing competition in the marketplace, what "dead horses, sacred cows and goat programs" are keeping us from doing the "Star" programs (per Lesson 23) we could and should be doing? And what is keeping us from identifying them?
#2.	How is the balance between business and ministry? Do we lean more toward Heart or Money Tree programs? How do we move towards the "All-Stars?"

Month	Facilitator	Lesson	Topic
December	Dale Bee	1	Wanted: Lifelong Learners <i>Would you trust a surgeon who stopped learning?</i>
January	Dave Matlock	18	Do Not Interrupt! <i>Don't Assume Board Members Know How to Listen</i>
February	Mike Barrett	12	Vision Growth Must Equal Leader Growth <i>Caution! Vision-casting often backfires.</i>
March	Rick Jones	23	Focus on Mission Impact and Sustainability <i>The "dual bottom line" equips boards to address dead horses and sacred cows (or goats).</i>
April	Tom Torry	9	Serve With Humility and Experience God's Presence <i>One board chair creates a holy moment for his CEO search committee.</i>
May	Cathy Barton	17	Sidetrack Harebrained Ideas <i>Some motions should never gain unmerited oxygen!</i>
June	John Pate	19	Never Throw Red Meat on the Board Table <i>Boards need advance preparation to fully address complex issues.</i>
July	Mark Roe	2	Ask the Gold Standard Question <i>A "pruning moment" can improve your board meetings.</i>

*Example:* for another “Ten Minutes for Governance” segment, view the short video on conflicts of interest and provide each board member with the *Read-and-Engage Viewing Guide*.<sup>3</sup> (See all four toolbox topics at [www.ECFA.org/Toolbox](http://www.ECFA.org/Toolbox).)

**Ten Minutes for Governance:** *Why do we need governance insights?*



**“We are blind to the obvious and blind to our blindness!”**

**ECFA Governance Toolbox Series No. 3: Addressing Board and Organizational Conflicts of Interest: Avoiding Trouble, Trouble, Trouble with Related-Party Transactions**

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

**Self-Assessment: Board and Organizational Conflicts of Interest**

How strongly do you agree . . . or disagree with the following statements?	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Our organization has a written policy on “Conflicts of Interest and Related-Party Transactions.”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Every board member is required to annually sign a certification document affirming that he or she has read and understands the organization’s “Conflicts of Interest and Related-Party Transactions” policy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Every board member that has real or apparent conflicts of interest, per our policy, is required to declare this information annually in a signed disclosure statement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our top leader (CEO or senior pastor) and other senior staff are also required to read and understand our conflicts of interest policy—and annually sign a certification document.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the video, “Patricia” noted that the board “finally, finally had an executive session (without any staff members in the room).” Agree or disagree: “The frequency of our executive sessions is about right.”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Also in the video, “Jamell” remarks: “Policies should never trump relationships. That’s just not biblical.” Do you agree or disagree?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my opinion, our organization is “crystal clear” and “squeaky clean” in addressing board and organizational conflicts of interest—and “We’re being as careful in our reputation with the public as in our reputation with God.” (2 Cor. 8:21)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<sup>3</sup> See Board Member Read-and-Engage Viewing Guide, *ECFA Governance Toolbox Series No. 3: Addressing Board and Organizational Conflicts of Interest* (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2015), 9.

**Different Views Surface on the Amount of Future Focus**

If you divide board meeting agendas, in terms of time spent, into a **future focus** vs. reviewing the present or past, CEOs say that in board meetings less agenda time focuses on the future than what others say. (Policy setting/review falls under a future focus.)

**CEOs Don't Experience a "Future Focus" as Much as Board Members Do**

ECFA Research Says...

"Roughly what percent of a typical board meeting is spent on the **FUTURE** (as opposed to reviewing the present or past)?"

