

TOOL #10: The 5/15 Monthly Report to the Board

Use this tool to keep the board informed and inspired between meetings. Once formatted, it takes just 15 minutes to write and 5 minutes to read.



In the hallways of board-rooms, perhaps the most constant whine is, “**We don’t hear anything from our CEO [or senior pastor] in between board meetings.** How can I steward this ministry, if I’m not in the loop?”

Leaders also whine. “My board runs the continuum: the micro-managers want a weekly report. Others don’t want email. They just call when they have a question. Frankly, I don’t really bless anyone.”¹

Try This Board Reporting Tool for 90 Days

POP QUIZ! Check: True or False?

T	F	Board Members
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Informative reports to the board from our top leader are received regularly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	As a board member, I’m sometimes the last to hear both good and bad news.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I receive way too many emails from our CEO (or senior pastor)—and I can’t discern what’s really important and what’s really just an FYI.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I faithfully respond to every email or phone call from our top leader within 24 hours.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our Board Policies Manual establishes the type and frequency of reports from our top leader.

T	F	CEO/Senior Pastor
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel guilty that I’m not reporting adequately to the board in between meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	To be honest, I used to send more reports to the board, but no one ever read them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I wish I felt more supported by the board. This is hard work. I don’t think board members pray for me.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have to keep the main thing the main thing. If I take time to write board reports that no one reads, it’s a lose/lose.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our Board Policies Manual establishes the type and frequency of reports from our top leader.



Attn: Church Boards

Invite your senior pastor and/or executive pastor to create a first draft of this tool—and then ask for suggestions at your next board meeting. Customize it for the unique needs of your church—and your senior pastor’s reporting style. Once you’ve tested it for several months, it should require only about 15 minutes per month for the senior pastor’s final touches—before it goes out to the board. Try it!

¹ Adapted from Dan Busby and John Pearson, *Lessons From the Nonprofit Boardroom: 40 Insights for Better Board Meetings*, 2d ed. (Winchester, VA: ECFAPress, 2018), 29–35. See “Lesson 6: Eliminate Hallway Whining.”

The 5/15 Monthly Report to the Board

A Communication Template

“CEO’s 5/15 MONTHLY REPORT TO THE BOARD”

✓ 5 Minutes to Read and 15 Minutes to Write

✓ emailed on the 15th of every month

John was blessed a few years back when Pat Clements, board chair at Christian Management Association (now Christian Leadership Alliance), introduced John to a simple, time-saving template. Like clock-work, on the fifteenth of every month, Clements, then CEO at Church Extension Plan, sent his 5/15 Report to his national board. So John borrowed his brilliant idea and customized the template for the board of CMA and sent it out—like clockwork—on the fifteenth of every month. The hallway whining stopped.

The Big Idea. Once formatted and tested, leaders can write this report in just 15 minutes each month and board members should be able to read it in just five minutes—and have a regular diet of both the good news, the new news, and the bad news. The content and frequency can be memorialized in the Board Policies Manual, by board action, so there is 100 percent board agreement on a report that serves the board’s needs and expectations.

The Content. Customize the report so it meets your needs, but it will likely be five or less pages, easy to read, with a standard template. The content might include (in this order):

- Date/To/From/Subject
- Next Board Meeting (date, location, special details)
- Monthly Dashboard Report on 3-5 Board-approved Annual “SMART” Goals (Peter Drucker: “If you have more than five goals, you have none.”)
- Committee Highlights (bullet points only—and only if there is new information)
- Board Nominating Committee “Pipeline Report” (the running list of confidential prospect names under consideration)
- Monthly Financial Report Summary (YTD vs. Budget for revenue and expense)
- Major Program Notes (bullet points)
- Ministry Events Calendar & Top Leader’s Travel Schedule (12 to 24 months)
- A Brief Ministry Story—for the Board’s Encouragement (maximum of one-half page)
- Prayer Requests
- Personal Note from the Top Leader (one brief paragraph)
- Board Meeting Schedule (12 to 24 months: dates/locations/times and 2-4 key agenda items for each meeting: audit, CEO/Senior Pastor annual performance review, budget approval, annual board self-assessment, etc.)

After you have created and tested the first draft, with feedback from the board and the senior team, it’s ready to systematize and delegate to the executive assistant or another team member.

5/15 MONTHLY REPORT TO THE BOARD - SCHEDULE			
Point Person	Task	Deadline	Done Date
Executive Assistant	Begin Draft #1: request reports from others	7th	
Senior Staff and Committee Chairs	Submit updates for reports	10th	
CFO	Submit Monthly Financial Report Summary	12th	
Executive Assistant	Draft #2: All reports compiled	13th	
CEO/Senior Pastor	Dictate or approve “Ministry Story” and personal note; approve final draft	14th	
Executive Assistant	Email PDF of report to all board members (cc: senior team). Plus: quarterly or occasionally, also email to selected former board members.	15th	

REMINDER #1: Readers or Listeners? Not all board members are readers. Listening is the preferred learning style for some people. If possible, accommodate both styles. So for your listeners, record the information, and email the recording—but keep it to five minutes or less.

REMINDER #2: The Four Social Styles. It’s important for CEOs to communicate effectively to all four social styles:

- **The Analytical Style** appreciates communication that is clear and concise.
- **The Driving Style** prefers a “just stick to the facts” report.
- **The Amiable Style** says “get to know me”—and content is often a lower priority.
- **The Expressive Style** wants you to listen to their opinions—so in your report ask for feedback and input.²

NEXT STEPS:

- Step 1. Decide:** Assess the current status of between-meeting reports to the board and discern if a “5/15 Monthly Report to the Board” is worthy of a 90-day test period.
- Step 2. Delegate:** Inspire your top leader to delegate to the executive assistant or another staff person the gathering of information.
- Step 3. Respond:** Ask board members to respond to every monthly report—with a quick email thanks, a note, or a voicemail message.

² For more on the four social styles, visit <http://tracom.com/social-style-training/model> or read the faith-based resource by Bob Phillips and Kimberly Alyn, *How to Deal With Annoying People: What to Do When You Can’t Avoid Them* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2005).

CUSTOMIZE THIS TEMPLATE TO INFORM AND INSPIRE YOUR BOARD—BETWEEN MEETINGS!

5/15 Monthly Report to the Board



5 Minutes to Read 15 Minutes to Write

- ☑ **CEOs/Senior Pastors:** Use this monthly report template and delegate the “starter” to a team member or your executive assistant.

Then you can finish it with your unique style. Email it on the same date each month.
- ☑ **Board Members:** Feedback is the breakfast of champions. Email a quick “Thanks—I got it!”

CEOs:

The 5/15 Monthly Report template on the following pages is designed for a CEO’s report to the nonprofit board.



Senior Pastors:

Download the 5/15 Monthly Report template and customize it for your church board’s unique culture and reporting requirements.

“Just because it’s common for CEOs to ask for forgiveness rather than permission doesn’t mean it’s acceptable.”³

Jim Brown

³ Jim Brown, *The Imperfect Board Member: Discovering the Seven Disciplines of Governance Excellence* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 111.

Nonprofit Template

3J Global Ministries “5/15 Report”

“5 MINUTES TO READ—AND 15 MINUTES TO WRITE”

CEO’s Monthly Report to the Board of Directors

Office: (555) 123-1234 • Mobile: (555) 987-6543
 P.O. Box 123 • Anytown, CA 92673
 John@3JGlobalMinistries.org • www.3JGlobalMinistries.org

DATE: May 15, 2020

TO: 3J Global Ministries Board of Directors
cc: Bob Brown and Brenda Smith, Senior Team

FROM: John W. Doe, CEO

RE: CEO’s 5/15 Monthly Report to the Board

Greetings. This is the first of what will now be monthly board reports to you, generally emailed on the 15th of each month. I’m calling this the “5/15 Report” – because it will take you just five minutes to read and it will take me just 15 minutes to write (with Bob’s help).

This new report format will be especially helpful to show to board prospects as we brief them on the work and ministry of 3J Global Ministries.

● **Board Governance**

Board Meeting Schedule: Draft #1. As we confirm dates for future board meetings (calls and in-person meetings), we’ll fill in the meeting grid (see attached).

Next Board Meeting. See you soon! Our next board meeting is our annual board retreat, as you know. (See the email from Bob with all the details.)

Date May 21-22, 2020

Day/Time Thursday 4:00 p.m. to Friday 4:00 p.m.

Location ABC Conference Center, Phoenix, Arizona

CEO’s Annual S.M.A.R.T. Goals. Attached is the Monthly Dashboard Report and update on my 2020 CEO S.M.A.R.T. Goals.

Board Documents. I am working with Enrique, and the team, to create drafts for your consideration on the following board documents:

- Board Member Annual Affirmation Statement (& Conflict of Interest Statement)
- Board Nominating and Election Policies (tied to our bylaws and/or proposed bylaw changes)
- Board Chair and Officers Position Description (roles and responsibilities)
- Board Policies Manual and Prime Responsibility Chart
- Board Member Orientation Notebook
- ECFA Accreditation (www.ECFA.org)

CONFIDENTIAL!

“Prospect Pipeline” for Future Board Members. Here’s an update from the Nominating Committee on the board prospects they are interviewing. See the board schedule for when board members will be elected.

No.	Prospect	Recommended by:	Status	Nom. Comm. Action
1	Jane Doe	Nominating Committee	Fully vetted	Yes
2	Billy Kim	Nominating Committee	In process	
3	Alberto Villa	CEO	Fully vetted	Yes
4	David Burry	Former Board Member	Still “dating”	
5				

● **Financial Reports**

As of April 30, 2020, we are \$_____ ahead/behind of our proposed four-month budget forecast.

Financial Report	FY2020 12-Month Budget 1/1/20 - 12/31/20	FY2020 4-Month Budget 1/1/20 - 12/31/20	FY2020 4-Month Actual 1/1/20 - 12/31/20	FY2020 4-Month Variance 1/1/20 - 12/31/20
Revenue	\$	\$	\$	\$
Expense	\$	\$	\$	\$
Net Income	\$	\$	\$	\$

The full four-month financial reports and dashboards will be uploaded to the board portal by May 25, 2020.

● **2020 Major Program Notes**

Per board consensus, the following programs are updated here monthly, along with the staff’s color-coding of the progress on program goals YTD.

	Program	News/Changes/Concerns
1	3J Global Ministries Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance is up by 30% YTD. Revenue will hit, perhaps, 40% of annual budget.
2	Vision 2022 Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow start due to staff changes, but we will recover.
3	Mission Agency Partners Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just exceeded our FY goal of 10 partners. PTL!
4	Local Church Ambassadors Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May need to postpone until next fiscal year. Pilot program was a dismal failure, but we learned a lot!
5	Care Coaches Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our consultant brought huge value. Client satisfaction goals of 4.2 on a scale of 1.0 to 5.0. Exceeded goal!
6	MissionFuture Capital Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frankly, a disappointing start. May ask our Executive Committee to address our rather conservative fund development policies. Consultant is concerned, but we just received a major unrestricted gift of \$100,000. (Details at our meeting.)

GREEN on Target	YELLOW Caution!	RED Alert!
----------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------

Additional Program Notes:

● **2020-2021 Calendar**

Here are our key calendar dates, our travel, speaking engagements, etc. This is listed for board members both as an “FYI” and as a prayer reminder.

Date	Event	Venue City, State	Sponsored by:
Year 2020			

Year 2021			

● **A 3J Global Ministries Story—For Your Encouragement!**

Here’s a portion of an email we received from an enthusiastic volunteer!

“Headline ...”

Insert story here

Thank you, Board Members!

Thank you for investing your time and resources in 3J Global Ministries! (Add more here...)

Gratefully,

John

P.S. Please note our future board meeting dates on the attached pages.

2020 Board Meeting Schedule (Draft 1 as of Jan. 15, 2020)

Year 2020	Day/Time	Location	Agenda
February 20	Thursday 10:00 a.m. PDT	Telephone Conference Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review FY2019 financial reports Quarterly Update Call
May 21-22	Thursday 4:00 p.m. to Friday 4:00 p.m.	Annual Board Retreat ABC Conference Center Phoenix, AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2021-2022 Strategic Plan brainstorming Board Governance update Nominating Committee Report Financial Reports (4 months) CEO's Annual S.M.A.R.T. Goals – Review Board Meeting Schedule approval
August 20	Thursday 10:00 a.m. PDT	Telephone Conference Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review 7-month financial reports Quarterly Update Call CONFIDENTIAL: Prospect Pipeline Report (future board members)
November 19	Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Optional Dinner with spouses at 6:00 p.m.	Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome to New Board Members Financial Reports (10 months) 2021 Annual Plan, Calendar, Leading Indicators and CEO's 2021 S.M.A.R.T. Goals 2021 Budget Plans for CEO's Performance Review (based on 2020 S.M.A.R.T. Goals) Board Governance Committee Report on Board Member Self-Assessment Survey (Oct.) Appointment of Auditor

2021 Board Meeting Schedule (Draft 1 as of _____, 2020)

Year 2021	Day/Time	Location	Agenda

Note to CEOs:

Some CEOs also attach their **Monthly Dashboard Report** (see Tool #11) to the *5/15 Report*. Or you may prefer to email it as a separate document.