

Co-operative Board Behaviours

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The basics

- Having the right skills, experience & competencies to deliver the strategic objectives
- Clarity of role & remit
- Appraisal & review of effectiveness
- Induction, training & development
- Comprehensive, accessible governance documentation
- And essentially – a **statement of expectations** for Board behaviours



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Statement of expectations

- Unifying statement
- Drives collective behaviours
- Mechanism for members to hold the Board to account

Exercise: what behaviours and standards would your co-operative include in a statement of expectations?

Building good board behaviours

Always go back to your purpose

- Base decision making in the “why”; the purpose, cause, values or beliefs
- Rather than the “how (your methods & process) & the “what” (your products or outcomes)

Know the benefits of good board behaviour

- “people don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it” Simon Sinek September 2009
- Working with real collaboration, challenge & respect can:
- Strengthen decision making processes
- Make best use of governance resources
- Build a sound culture
- Increase overall effectiveness, efficiency & credibility



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Building good board behaviours

Collective working

- Develop a cohesive, collegiate approach
- Shared understanding - all members take collective responsibility for discharging the role of the Board
- Be prepared for meetings, aim for full attendance & be able to participate in discussion in an open, respectful manner
- Do not avoid difficult matters, abstain or be passive
- Avoid aggression, reopening old decisions or reiteration of “favourite” topics

Building good board behaviours

Individual members

- Take time to reflect upon their own performance & contribution – robust & proportionate self-awareness of individual strengths & weaknesses
- Board members who are passive, dominant or lack the capacity for self-development can hinder effective governance
- A Board member who invites feedback, actively listens to & considers others views, is emotionally intelligent and is responsive to change is more likely to be effective

Building good board behaviours

Learning from mistakes

- Seek to identify solutions & learning rather than attribute blame or judgement
- Identify any issues which can be avoided in the future, but focus on what can be done to address any gaps, improve performance, manage (rather than avoid) risk
- Take some external advice & support – gain different perspectives and opinions
- Make proper arrangements to deal cases of continued poor behaviours, or issues of conflicts, ethics or probity

Exercise: Have you dealt with any difficult behaviours on your Board? How did you resolve this? What did you learn?

Five top tips

1. Set out your baseline expectations of behaviours in an accessible format
2. Be mindful of your purpose – & don't be afraid to use this to focus debate & decision making
3. Encourage individual Board members & the collective Board to reflect on effectiveness
4. Learn from mistakes but avoid blame & judgement. Take external advice where appropriate
5. Have a clear & fair process in place to deal with poor conduct and behaviours

Any questions or comments?

Finally, have a look at the good practice developed by Co-operatives UK's, Co-operative Governance Expert Panel:

- The 'Elements of Governance' Wheel: This wheel aims to depict all the areas of governance that should be in place within a thriving co-operative business
- A statement on the Role of the Board: This provides a clear, authoritative and concise statement about the Board's role in a co-operative



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