

Webinar Transcript

Strategic thinking skills for directors

Hi everybody. Welcome to our webinar today titled Strategic Thinking Skills for Directors and we are joined by Stephen Bowman of Conscious Governance. Welcome to you Stephen.

Hi everyone.

My name is Sean McDonald and I shall be your moderator for the next forty odd minutes in the background. And firstly, thank you so much as always for attending today. We really appreciate the effort you make to be here for our live events. It makes all the difference when we have a live webinar.

During the session, and I'm sure you're going to have a lot of questions. So if you do have questions, please try and use the Q and A button or the question button rather than the chat.

It just enables us to keep a track of them all and we'll

answer as many of those as we have time for.

Finally, if you stay through till the end, which of course we hope you will do and as is customary for our webinars, we have a special treat for you. By answering a really short one minute survey at the end of the webinar, you will go into the draw to win one of our beautiful gift hampers worth over four hundred dollars. Now, for those who are not too familiar with BoardPro, we are a board software provider, sometimes called a Board Portal, and we serve just over thirty five thousand users around the world across about thirty four different countries these days.

We enable organisations to prepare for and run their board meetings and committee meetings more efficiently and effectively with less time and deliver more impact and value for the organisation.

And as much as we are a board software provider, part of our wider mission is to make the fundamentals of governance free and easy to implement for all organisations, especially those organisations with resource constraints.

One of the many ways we do this is by providing free access to hundreds of business templates, guides and resources which funnily enough you will find in the Resources section of our website.

These webinars also that we host are a great way of accessing really good governance knowledge without the time commitment and costs associated typically with in person events.

So for the next forty odd five minutes to be precise, just relax, listen and add to the discussion by asking as many questions as you would like.

The full recording of the webinar along with the slide deck and the many other resources mentioned throughout the webinar will be sent to you. It'll be tomorrow now.

Now, let me introduce, in fact, I won't introduce Steven because he's a big boy. He can introduce himself. So, without further delay, Stephen, over to you, sir.

Well, thank you and welcome everyone. Thanks for coming and joining us for the next forty five minutes talking about being strategic. What does strategic look like and demystifying some of the things, some very practical stuff we'll talk about. I've been working with boards. I've either been on boards. I've been CEO or been advising boards for for close on forty five years. So I've seen some of the very best and the very worst.

And so a lot of what we talk about is based on what others have found to be very useful. So not theory so much as these are the things that actually make a difference. So I look forward to sharing with you those tidbits, those ideas, the strategies, the things that other boards have found work really well for them. I hope you pick up some ideas from that. Sean?

Brian, back to you sir, let's move on.

So well, let's let's kick this one off. Please, as we go through, ask questions. Sean's gonna be moderating the questions and and telling us when there's particular questions that are coming up. So intersperse them as we go through this conversation.

The first thing I wanted to do is when we thought when we're talking about being strategic, there are all sorts of definitions, and I wanna get away from the notion of definitions and come back to the very basics of, well, you know, we we wanna be strategic. Yes. We want to think strategically, yes, but why? And it comes back to the very notion of why have we got a board in the first place?

What is the role of the board in all of this? And often you'll get people saying well the role of the board is fiduciary and it's to monitor and it's got a compliance role and it's got a legal role and all those are correct but they totally miss the point of what the true power of the board is.

And I put to you that the true power of the board and the real the real impact that a board has is when it understands that it is there to make the choices, not the decisions, to make the choices that create the future for the communities we serve.

So our role as a board is to make choices. Now what's the difference between a choice and a decision? Well, people think a decision is final because after all we've decided it. It was a decision that we made three years ago.

And so the decision all of a sudden becomes this thing that is fixed.

Not only is it something that is fixed and we shouldn't change, but it seems to go on forever and ever and ever. So that decision that we made, we don't revisit it to see whether it's working or not.

So that when you talk to people about decisions and you unpack what it means to them, it means a, it's something that we have to decide.

We've got to make sure that we get it right because we're going to be stuck with it forever. Now if we make sure that it's going to be right, then we should really spend a lot of time unpacking it. And so we'll have two or three board meetings looking at this decision, and then we'll say, well, maybe we should give it to a subcommittee to look at as well too. And the subcommittee goes away and has a couple of meetings, and then it comes back, and then we revisit it again.

Meanwhile, six months has gone by.

The difference between a decision and a choice is a choice means that we have options and we need to know what the two or three strategically feasible options are and then we need to choose one.

And once we've chosen it, then we monitor whether or not that choice is still working.

We shouldn't be getting reports on how busy the staff are. We should be getting reports on, is this choice working? Is it getting us to where it is that we want it to get to?

And if it's not working, then what do we change? Or let's make another choice.

And when you make another choice, you again look at the two or three strategically feasible options.

So the notion of choice is so much more powerful than the definition of decision. Choice is we choose this from amongst the options, and then we look to see whether that choice is working, and if it's not we choose again.

And this is the whole nature behind strategy. Strategy should never be fixed. It should never be 'here are the three things that we're going to do this year and we're not going to look to see whether they're working or not, we're just going to focus on getting these three things done. There should always be, are these things working? How do we know they're working? If they're not working, what's changed? Are there other choices that we've got that would create even bigger change for us?

So that notion of making the choices that create the future for the communities we serve gets to the heart of why we have a board in the first place.

Sure, next one. So what are some of the things that we can do to help us both understand what the choices are that we've got, monitor whether or not those choices are working, and help us to look to see if and when we need to change anything.

And the first thing that we can do is start to look at the way we're reporting.

We want board reports that are strategic, I. E, they're looking at what are the choices, are they working, what are the options that we've got available to us, Rather than a report on, here are all the things the CEO's done. Here's what the FRAC committee's done. Here's what these others have done. So they become reports of activity rather than reports of the difference that is being made through the work that we're doing.

And there's a couple of very very simple techniques that you can use tomorrow that will totally change the way your board reports are structured. The first one is a heading that says strategic implications for board discussion.

Now some of the very worst reports are the financial reports. Technically they're correct, but informationally they're not providing me with with insight or options going forward because it's just presented as a spreadsheet or it's presented as a yes we're above or we're underneath or whatever it might be. What I want to know is with particularly with my profit and loss report, what are the strategic implications of these changes to variants?

What is it that we need to know that we should be focusing on? What are some of the questions that we should be asking?

And so you have a heading at the bottom of your profit and loss report that says strategic implications for board discussion so that I don't have to go ferreting through the figures trying to figure out what they all mean, it's presented to me saying here are the two implications of this or here's a question that we'd like the board to consider. So instead of providing a financial report that says here's the profit and loss and good luck, here are some explanations of why things are happening, I want to know the next bit which is, well what are the implications of this? What are the strategic questions that we should be asking around this?

So what does this mean to us?

You you see CEO's reports, for example, which are often a description of all the things that have gone on since the last board meeting. Well, quite honestly, as a director, I don't need to know how busy the CEO's been, but I do need to know what they see as the major strategic implications of what they've seen happen in the last month or two months or three months.

What are some of the strategic questions that'd be worthy of the board actually spending time looking at? And then the other thing is the key the key element of a really good CEO's report is to answer the question, where's Wally?

Don't make me go searching through all the board pack to figure out this one big thing that we should be focusing on. Tell me where's Wally in all of this? And bring it right up front so that I can help focus on it.

So board reports that are strategic look at these four key things. They look at what are the strategic implications? Now there may not be any, so have that heading but put underneath that

nil, there aren't any. Because if a director sees the heading 'strategic implications for board discussion' and they see 'nil', they're more likely to say well hang on a second, I think there might be.

But then it's framed in the in the it's given a framework of strategy which is longer term creating the future. What are the strategic questions we should be asking here? So what does this mean for us? And where's this one big thing that we need to look at? So look at your board reports from that perspective.

The second thing that we can do is to start building this notion of strategic awareness both within the board and also our senior executives and staff generally, and there's some interesting points here that I'd ask you to consider.

How many times have you come across people that have such a fixed point of view on something that you know that they're going to bring it up every single meeting? That they're convinced they're right and everyone else is wrong?

And that this point of view gets in the way of us exploring what different options might be.

So one of the things that I always encourage people to do is to practice having no fixed point of view. You can have a point of view, but be willing to change it if it needs to change. It doesn't mean that you're there to prove that you're right and other people are wrong.

When you have no point of view on something it means that you can listen to all the points of view and then from amongst those choose the ones that you believe are going to create the greatest big difference.

The willingness to be the question, the second point. One of the greatest gifts that we bring to any meeting is our sense of curiosity.

And when I'm talking about the willingness to be the question, be that sense of curiosity.

Don't come along to a board meeting with the answers. Come along with the questions. Come along with that innate sense of curiosity that we've all got, many of us spend a lot of time trying to hide.

And this notion of being curious, you'll see in all the research that comes out about, you know, the the skills of high performing bores, curiosity of directors is one of the highest rating elements. So let's be that question. Let's not just ask questions, but be curious about things that are coming up and explore.

The willingness to receive everything without judgment is a is a very interesting one there.

There are different types of judgments. There's the judgment that I'm right and they're wrong, or that they're right and I'm wrong. There's a judgment of good versus bad. These are all

judgments which if we have these judgments then we're not willing to see what the other options, the other choices, the other possibilities are.

So you're receiving information without judging it. You're not judging it as right or wrong or good or bad, you're just receiving it and from there you can make choice. Now does that mean that you don't have some sort of judgment? We all have judgment at times, but just be aware that sometimes people's judgments of whether something's right or wrong or good or bad comes into play and stops a whole lot of conversation.

I had a meeting today with one board and the vice chair was saying look the chair of our frac does not like of our finance risk order committee does not like a deficit budget, we've got a strategic program that is going to call for a deficit budget but he refuses to allow that deficit budget because he says that we're going to be putting ourselves at risk as an organisation.

That fixed point of view is taking up so much time of the board that they're not even willing to look at what a deficit budget looks like, whether or not it's in line with their retained earnings policy, and whether or not the use of our funds to create the future is much better and having a much wider impact in developing our strategic capacity than actually running a balanced budget. So receiving everything without judgment just be aware of when you go into something thinking that it's right or wrong or good or bad just be aware of that.

The willingness to both analyse and listen to your intuition very powerful. If something doesn't quite feel right then you're probably on the track of something. If something feels as if it could create a great possibility in the future, just listen to all that, be aware of it. And then a prosperity mindset over scarcity.

There are three lies of scarcity most boards buy into. The first one is that there's not enough. There's not enough money, there's not enough time, there's not enough people.

The second lie of scarcity is that not only is there not enough, but gee, it's hard. It's really hard to get good people, it's really hard to find money, it's really hard to fundraise these days.

And then the third lie of scarcity makes the other two invisible, which is and that's just the way it is. That's because we're a not for profit, or we're in the NDIS space, or that's the way the contract's written.

These are the lies of scarcity that stop us from being curious. So, just be aware of those. Short.

So, how do we develop this?

Design your meetings. This is really simple but you see it just isn't done. Develop your meetings, your board meetings, your staff meetings to actually facilitate this. Provide the relevant papers papers for discussion, papers for decision that actually highlight these key areas of here are the two or three things that we've really got to focus our time on.

Look at the culture of the board, I mean it's not good enough just to have a strategic plan. We have to have this culture of asking questions, being the question, raising questions. But to me, one of the most important things that is not done well in many boards is the notion of respectful dissent.

How many times have you had people who are arguing against something but they tend to go for the jugular or they tend to try and, to some extent, bully to get their point of view so that others agree with it.

So look at the culture of the board that we want to create, look at your values and live and breathe those as we go through.

Look at high expectations right from the outset, particularly when it comes to behaviour.

The more I'm involved in boards, more I see that the thing that holds boards back more than anything is not lack of strategy, it's not lack of good reporting, it's just damn right bad behaviour. So look to see what we can do to help our people actually provide that curiosity, the questioning, and the respect for others that we need to actually have these communications. Because in the end, the role of our board is to make the choices that create the future. Anything else is a distraction. We need to be really focused on that.

Okay, Sean next.

Now one of the simple ways of doing this is to develop up your agenda, a strategic agenda. Now that strategic agenda really in nutshell says the most important thing should go first, the things that we should be spending our time on that are going to create the future for our stakeholders, for our communities, for the people that we're working with for and on behalf of, they should come up front.

So make every meeting and a a planning meeting because you've got these really big items up front. Now a little hint, and I haven't seen many chairs do this, but if you're the chair of a board or if not you can mention this to the chair, start off each board meeting saying, here are the two big items that we want to spend most of our time on today. And you remind people these are the two big items. What some chairs are starting to do is they're starting to put at the start of their agenda a little heading that says here are the two most important items, so that we get people to focus.

Job is not to get through the agenda, our job is to create the future. The agenda is just a tool to help us get there.

Some other techniques put your vision at the top of the agenda to remind directors that's why we're here. We're not here to go through the agenda. We're here to create this vision, and the agenda is just a tool to help us get there. So remind your directors to use that vision statement to help shape their questions before they open their mouth.

And you as a director could actually say, look, our vision is x y and z, then how is this proposal going to help us get there? Or what have we missed in this proposal that our vision says that we should be focusing on? You can use it to help shape conversations.

Make sure that your staff reports are aligned to the strategy, so they're not just giving you activity reports, they're giving you reports against outcomes based around the strategic plan.

Now BoardPro have a white paper on strategy they've also got a strategic agenda that you can download. Sean is going to provide that as a link for you. Just realise that your agenda should be helping the board to focus, not just going through a whole lot of stuff.

Now if you've got any questions about that, for heaven's sake, put them in the in the chat or in the questions, and we'll, we'll talk with them as we go through.

Sean, next one.

If we've got our reports where they need to be and we've got our agenda where it needs to be, now let's talk about the behaviors. What can we do as individual directors to help develop this strategic awareness with both ourselves and also with the senior staff that are part of the board meeting?

And here are some very simple techniques that we still find many boards do not use. So the first one is to value disagreements, right?

This is where you don't have a fixed point of view no one's right, no one's wrong, they're just different points of view and if you are willing to get yourself into that space you can then listen to someone rather than getting upset by them.

So when you value disagreements you can actually say, and this is a good chair will do this, look one of my favorite phrases is look if we've got eight of us that agree with each other then seven of us aren't being particularly useful. So we need to have the disagreements not because we want to disagree but we want to look at things from different points of view and again there's some techniques in here we can talk about value them rather than seeing them as a pain in the neck. Now how someone voices their disagreements can be annoying at times, and so therefore they may need some coaching or some mentoring. I've got one board where I've suggested that the board itself actually go through a training program that looks at respectful dissent and what that looks like. Because often we don't know how to do that, particularly when you're you're directors, you get two or three new directors each year. Having this as part of our training can be very, very powerful.

Have a cheat sheet. I've seen some boards where they've come up with five or six or seven really good questions that they found very useful over the years, and you have a cheat sheet that you give the directors as part of their induction program.

You know, some of my most powerful questions I found that can totally change conversations.

Things like, well, what hasn't worked with this and what do we need to do about it?

And then another powerful question and probably one of my favorite ones is what have we missed here?

I love that question because what have we missed doesn't mean we have but I'm inviting everyone to reflect so what have we missed here? You might have had a half hour powerful conversation and you've looked at the various options and you've come to one of the options that we're going to choose this option. Doesn't matter if you call it a decision as long as you know that it's a choice.

And the chair looks around and says okay so we agree this is the choice, the best thing the chair could do next is then ask so what are we missing?

And then just leave it open because one of two responses you'll get the first response will be no really great conversation I don't think we're missing anything and people agree with that that's fine or a director might come up say I think we've missed how the stakeholders our community might see this I think we need to explore a little bit about the stakeholder engagement side of this that we need. You can't lose with that question either, no, we've pretty much covered everything or I think we might have missed this very, very, very powerful question.

Another technique organisation sceptic. You know often in boards you have that one person who'll always disagree and the only thing disagreeable about this is they're the only ones who do it.

So maybe at the start of the meeting, particularly with more controversial topics that are open for discussion or you've got some sort of choice to make, is that you actually say, okay. I'd like Mary to take on the organizational skeptic or the black hat under using De Bono's six hat thinking method so that they can come up with and challenge our assumptions behind that.

It's good having organisational skeptics, but it can be annoying at times if it's the same person. So make use of that and actually invite them to take on that role as that organisational skeptic.

Now I'll I'll just take a minute now and welcome Kevin. Hi, Kevin. Welcome along to this one.

Good to see you.

Apologies. I've been having problems from Australia. Carry on.

I'll just go on mute for a moment.

Cool. So the the notion of organization skeptic, please use that. It can be very, very useful.

The other way that you can look at it is ask them to take on different personas. So particularly and you don't do it for everything, but choose wisely when to use this. But, you know, you might have someone take on the role of a community member saying, well, you know, step into their

shoes and ask questions from that point of view. Or you might have someone come in and and and, you know, talk on behalf of the staff?

What would what might they be asking in these areas? So provide a viewpoint, take get them to take on that viewpoint. Don't just expect someone who comes from a particular sector to take that viewpoint on. Sometimes it can be very powerful to say look I know you're a that you come from the community and you you can essentially represent the community but I'm going to ask someone else to provide what they think the community perspective might be because they're going to get your perspective anyway.

Encourage the debate but keep things issues orientated, and again, assist on multiple options. Whenever you've got a discussion paper coming up or a paper for decision, I always want to see what are the two or three strategically feasible options.

There's not any one way of doing it. And if we identify what these two or three strategically feasible options are, you know, one of them might be that we do it ourselves, another one might be that we do it in conjunction with another organisation, or another one might be that we actually refocus down and just focus on one or two things and not expand out. All of those are possible, they're all different, and now we need to choose the one we think is going to have the biggest impact. I don't mind if the staff have here's our preferred option or if the author of the court said here's the preferred option, but it doesn't mean it's the right option.

So we always need to be looking at multiple options as they come through.

John, have we got any questions that we want to have a look at?

We sure do. Let me just grab my queue here.

So the first one is from Caitlin, and she asks, how do you shift that culture of going from going through items because they're on the agenda quarterly to focusing on the items that will help us achieve the vision?

Great question, Caitlin. So a couple of things. If the chair, now and then in brackets, or if the chair is the problem, we'll talk about that separately, but if you're the chair, what you can do is you can alert your directors prior to the board meeting that these are the two items we're going to be spending most of our time on.

Time to meet. And if you want, you can actually allocate the time frame. You can always change it later on.

One of the things that we find that most boards don't understand, and certainly most chairs don't understand, is that at law the chair owns the agenda. The board does not own the agenda, directors do not own the agenda, the chair owns the agenda. They have the right to set the agenda as they see fit.

Now you don't ignore your directors. You ask them if there are other items you want to put on the agenda in brackets that you think are strategically important and worthy of board time, but the directors should let the chair know prior to the board meeting what those items on are.

You should never, at the board meeting, hear someone say, I would like to add this to the agenda. I don't wanna hear that at the board meeting. I wanna hear it before the board meeting, and then you need to convince me as the chair that it's strategically important.

So you can then say from amongst these things, here are the two most strategically important items that we're going to start the meeting off with, And you can actually structure your agenda that way.

The culture of going through all of the items is because the chair allows it, so you've got to be aware that the chair can actually set that tone. Now if the chair is the problem then what you can do as a director is make suggestions to the chair and one of the things that I found very useful is particularly if the chair hasn't got much experience in chairing you can help them by becoming their mentor, not take them to task publicly, but maybe having chats with them before and saying, hey, look, I've got some ideas on on agenda management.

Could I sit down with you and go through it and and could we try it for one or two meetings to see what people think?

And one of the bit one of the the the simplest tools, particularly for for you to use with the chair or the chair to use with the board is to say, hey. Look. We've got a new structured agenda. Let's try it for six months. And if we don't like it, we can always go back to what we did before.

You never go back. I guarantee.

Question from Sanjay. Along similar lines, he asks, normally I've seen the chair and CEO have discussions before the meeting. So how does the chair initiate these behaviours when the Chair and CEO have agreed on the agenda and possibly choices?

Okay, so first of all the idea of the CEO and the Chair meeting before the Board meeting absolutely you've got to do, because in that case you're looking at there there should be no surprises, all right? But the one thing that is very useful is two days before the board meeting allocate a half hour where or any director can actually log in or contact you as the chair with any issues they've got with any of the board papers and seek clarification or seek to have something added onto the agenda.

The thing that should never happen is that the chair and the CEO agree on this is the decision that we're going to make. That's absolutely not appropriate. What should happen is that you should agree on what are the strategically important items, but the directors should have the ability to feed into that prior to the board meeting. And it's what's called a clarification session where two days before, you allocate a half hour, say the CEO and the chair are gonna be online. If you've got any issues of clarification of the board papers, if you want any extra information, this is the time to call in and ask for it because at the board meeting, I not never

wanna hear the two most annoying phrases, which is, number one, what did you mean by that? I want to hear that prior to the board meeting, or I would like more information on this.

Should never hear that at the board meeting. It should always be before the board meeting. Kevin, thoughts?

Yep. Totally totally agree because what we should be doing is we should be actually setting up the whole board meeting for me is about setup.

Yep.

Absolutely about setup.

When you got your setup right, then you actually run through the agenda. And to your point, it just drives me insane when I sit at a board meeting, and I'm an expensive consultant when I was at Pricewaterhouse wearing my suit, and they would go through the minutes. The minutes are are matters arising from the minutes, actions arising from the minutes. It would be an hour in before anything was done.

All of that should have been disposed of and dealt with way before the meeting, then you should be starting with first item to me should be critical matters if it's, say, health and safety, top of the agenda. And the next is what are the strategic questions that we have prepared for? As you said, that should be first item. Matters for decision, followed by matters for discussion.

Cool. Thanks, Kevin.

Roslyn's got a very some some local governments that I know do that very well.

Yeah.

And we beg them for being bureaucratic, but I have seen the papers, and I've sat through local board meetings where they actually follow a very, very good process and very disciplined. I'm not saying they come out with good decisions. I just say they start well.

They start well. Cool. Roslyn's asked a very interesting question. At law, the chairman o c jenna, could you tell us which law and section of that law, please?

I can send to you the law cases it's in common law but you won't find it in any legislative law but all of the recent cases in Australia and New Zealand that have looked at the role of the chair have said the chair owns the agenda and so I can send you Sean if you remind me later on I'll send you a it's just a two pager with the case law that shows very clearly that the chair owns the agenda.

Do we have time for a few more questions?

The questions are the best part. Go for it.

Excellent. So Sarah's asked, If a board member's behavior is not in line with mission or code of conduct, how do you politely bring them back to the culture you want to set?

Well, first of all, the word 'politely', just be aware that sometimes you have to be direct. You can be direct and polite, or you can be warm and fuzzy and not direct, and that doesn't make any difference.

Always have a copy of the code of conduct. The only reason that bad behaviour occurs at a board meeting is because it's allowed to be to occur at a board meeting. And so it you need to come down politely, either at the board meeting, and the best way to do that is for either the chair, hopefully, or another director to say, look, it's not appropriate in this case. Let's go back to why we're having this conversation and be aware of the not and and remind people of the notion of respectful dissent.

Call out bad behavior, as you would with anyone, and don't try and be polite about it. We had, again, someone I was talking with today, said, look. You've got one director in there who's actually being very disruptive to the extent that they could be viewed as bullying. Have a copy of your bullying harassment policy there and just remind people of behaviors that are appropriate and wave it around a little bit. It's amazing how something simple like that can have an effect on someone's behavior.

Kevin?

I have a question in from Hamish Blair.

He says in a school environment, there's usually an agenda item at the school entitled principal's report, which swap out for CEO report, which is a mixture of strategic items, matters for decision, discussion, noting in no particular order. How do you help the chair and principal prepare?

Okay. The the single biggest thing to do here, Hamish, is that if there is a paper that is for decision, pull it out of the principal's report and have it as a separate board paper. It's a paper for decision. If there's a an element in there that you want discussed, pull it out as a separate discussion paper.

So in the principal's report it might have items for discussion, see your gender item XYZ, and it's pulled out separately rather than trying to figure out which are the items for discussion or decision in the actual principal's report. Also there should be some key metrics in there. The whole notion behind a principal's report or a CEO's report is to give you essentially a state of the nation address. How are things going?

What are the emerging issues? And if there's something we need to spend time discussing or making a decision on, there's a separate board paper that highlights that.

One for you, Kevin. What is your view on board directors submitting questions to the CEO or chair in advance? Is this good practice?

And should these questions be answered prior to the meeting or shared and answered at the meeting?

I think it is good practice provided this that is the agreed protocol.

So if the papers come out on time, then if the protocol is agreed that I can I'm a director, I can contact the CEO CFO and get clarification on a matter, if that's okay. Or the protocol might be that everything goes to the chair and the chair does it. So when the papers come out, I expect work done before the meeting. So the people go through the papers, they clarify, and they send in questions, and they get responses.

Yes.

If it's a well managed process, yes. Go back to your school board. I'll be really careful cause they are the most difficult boards anywhere. And that's that's statistically proven of every room I'm in. So whatever the protocol is, they're very clear, cause that's the process, and you send in questions respectfully. You get answers back, and that means you've disposed of a lot of that stuff before the meeting. If there are further questions, then they go in writing, and then c f CFO or CEO, whichever officer is dealing with that or the chair or the CEO, they clear that up, and it may then come up at the meeting.

So my trade in all of this the trick of the trade in all of this is that if someone asks a question, then you respond to that, but you respond to all directors, not just the person asking the question. Yep. So you've got to make sure that it's, here was a question, here was a response coming back to it. Okay, let's move on.

One of the things on that point, Steve, one of the things I absolutely, as chair Ben, is, emails continually running between directors outside of meetings and before meetings.

If you're gonna send an email, you sent through the channels. And I have sat on boards where there's two or three people have been they're just busy emailing each other the whole time before the meeting, and it's all set up.

And so there's two boards there's two boards running. So my view is Yeah. And a one cheering one outfit, and it was charity. I just banned emails between directors because all it led was back just led to bad behavior. The dis it's the same before the discussion is not wasn't head at the table.

Yep.

And the chair has the right to do that because the chair owns the agenda and runs the meeting, and if the board aren't happy with the chair, they should remove the chair and put someone else in that position who is better at it.

You know, we could run a whole session just on cheering. Look, a couple of things in that I wanted to do around this notion of being and thinking strategic. Having a very clear idea of the

three key elements of strategy. There's always these three elements. The first one is your vision. This is the difference that we want to make in ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years. There's only two types of vision statements those that work and those that don't.

So whether it should be short or long is irrelevant. It should be one that we use. If you can't use it, it's not a good vision. But we need to use it in everything, and so therefore should be the first filter behind the reports that we receive, the first filter behind the questions that are being asked, it is the first filter before we open our mouths and that's why on your agenda you should have the vision statement to remind us here's how I should be framing what is we should be talking about.

Then next comes your strat plan. Usually, it's it should be about three or four key things that we've all agreed we've got to get right in the next two to three years, but we review it every year anyway, and we realize always that it's not set in stone. Once we review it, then things will probably have changed, so we need to amend our strategy accordingly. And then there's the operational plan, which the board shouldn't be seeing, but that's the glue that holds the staff together.

We shouldn't be getting reports against the operational plan because that's how the staff manage their time and that's what and that's why we've got them there. Okay, extracting the most value, being the question that's a curiosity. The purpose of a question is never to seek an answer. The purpose of a question should always be to unlock wisdom, both of you, the person asking the question, and those receiving the question.

A question should explore and not seek to prove someone right or wrong. So be very careful about how you use questions because the good question is going to unlock wisdom.

If you listen to how people describe things and maybe reframe how they've described it, if someone is putting something as a point of view and they're very fixed on it, then maybe reframe that yourself into something that opens up this sense of curiosity. You all have this ability so that you can reframe what someone has said so that it's actually more useful to everyone.

The notion of proving versus creating, incredibly powerful. The note if you are coming from the energy of proving, then you are wanting to prove that you're right and someone else is wrong or that they're right and everyone else is wrong. So this notion of proving it feels good, but it's not going get you anywhere. Whereas if you tap into the energy of creating before you open your mouth, they say, okay, now what I'm about to say, if I was coming from the energy of creating, what would that look like? I guarantee it's going to be totally different than if you come from the energy of proving someone's right or wrong.

So the question's powerful, being the question even more powerful, that sense of curiosity.

So what do you do when no one else is willing to be strategic? Well, be it yourself.

Be that grandfather clock in the room that everyone else then attunes themselves to. You can be this yourself, but you can also assist others by who you choose to be as a director in this. Okay, Sean, I think we're pretty much on time.

We are right on time, so let me just put my video back on.

So thanks everybody. We did run over a couple of minutes. My apologies. Please feel free to connect with our presenters on LinkedIn, which is Kevin McCaffrey and Stephen Bowman. I'm sure they will appreciate your connection on LinkedIn.

Tomorrow, you'll receive an email from me which will include a copy of the recording, the video, the transcript, the presentation slides and all of the resources that Stephen mentioned during the webinar. They will be posted to our webinar page on our website funnily enough. So just as you leave the webinar, don't forget to complete our quick one minute survey to go into the draw for our hamper. I'll announce the winner for that tomorrow as well.

I look forward to seeing you all, everybody, at our next webinar. Have a great day.