



Online Board Portals

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Agenda

- What are board portals and why choose a hosted service?
- How are these different from a trustee section on the college or university Website?
- How do you decide?
- How do you implement electronic board books and other changes?
- Questions?

What are board portals?

“A board portal is:

- a secure Web site
- that allows corporate secretaries to post information
- and allows directors online access to board materials. ”

Gregory Radner, Boardroom Briefing, *“The Wired Board,”* Summer 2006, *Directors & Boards.*

“Typically, these solutions contain some or all of the following features:

- A high level of security to protect sensitive material, including secure messaging capability
- A central repository for board-related materials
- Ability to easily access and distribute materials electronically
- A calendar of board and committee meetings
- Online creation and review of board books
- Workspaces for committees to collaborate online
- Online approval of minutes and/or resolutions...”

Gregory Radner, “Boardroom Briefing, The Wired Board,” Summer 2006, *Directors & Boards*.

Why choose a hosted service?

- Improved communication is a good governance practice.
- Trustees want board materials anywhere, anytime.
- Most trustees now use email regularly.
- Allows last-minute changes and updates.
- Printing and shipping are costly, wasteful, inefficient and delay receipt of materials.
- Allows multiple versions, tailored to role.
- Attempts to build a trustee Web site did not work out.
- Better applications; easy to create, search and use content online.
- Secure archive, available in case of disaster.
- Foundation is using one; staff and trustees want it.

How are hosted services different from a trustee section on the college Website?

- Separate from college or university website—reduced risk from hackers, no access by the institution’s IT staff;
- IT staff not required for its creation or ongoing support;
- Secure—encrypted, enhanced password protection;
- Content created by a typical board professional or administrator;
- Trustee and staff training provided by vendor;
- 24/7 technology support for trustees and staff; and
- Well-designed functionality (designed for this purpose, continuously upgraded, ready to go).

Discussion Question

Does your board already have a Website?

- No
- We're thinking about it or beginning the process
- Yes, and it is entirely open to the public
- Yes, and part is protected/limited access
- Yes, and all of it is protected/limited access

How do you decide: Assess readiness of trustees, president, and staff

- Talk to the president and board chair
- Survey trustees
- Talk to the cabinet and committee staff
- Inventory the number of users (\$)
- Anticipate that some trustees will require a printed board book
- Find out who is using this technology and what they recommend.

How do you decide: Consider Alternatives

- Process and participation: Who will be involved? How will the board be engaged? Time frame? Legal advice?
- Schedule vendor demonstrations.
- Plan on two demos—one from the perspective of users (board members) and a second for site administrators (those who create content).
- What features matter most? Learn more about the products you like best.
- Investigate the viability of the company.
- Determine costs.
- Ask for a client list and a client to call; talk to other board professionals.

What do hosted sites look like?

Brief overview of three leading products:

- **Directors Desk**, Jane Epstein, Bryn Mawr College
- **Diligent BoardBooks**, Shari Mikos, The Chicago School
- **BoardVantage**, Aisha Wallace-Wyche

Common Features

- Secure log in
- Home page
- Navigation by menu or hyperlink
- Current and archived board books
- Download, save, or print book
- Calendar (synch w/Outlook)
- Contacts/Roster
- Email (varies)
- Document/Resource Center

Common Features

- Surveys/Scheduling
- Voting (optional)
- Alerts/Announcements
- Control access by document, person or committee
- Support 24/7/365; one-on-one training; ongoing
- Secondary back-up server, auto fail-over
- Compatible with PCs and Macs
- Works with most browsers
- Web-based—no software to update

Features that vary

- Social Networking/Discussion Board (Director's Desk)
- Manage database of potential trustees
- Security—systems vary; all encrypted
- Some have browser limitations (ask)
- Appearance
- Cost (per user; set-up fee)
- Upgrades—ask, there will be changes

Decide what matters most

- What distinctive features stand out?
- In which are you confident about service, corporate survivability, and success?
- What is affordable?

Discussion Question

What are your biggest concerns about making a change?

- Cost
- Trustees who won't use it
- Administrators who won't use it
- Difficulty for administrator(s) of the site
- Other

Implementation

- Training for staff.
- Training for trustees. Include assistants. Who are the early adapters?
- Work with vendor. Troubleshoot early & often.
- Anticipate how this will change board meetings.
- Set date for change to electronic books. Prepare trustees and staff for the change.
- Consider handouts to provide at meetings.
- Evaluate. Ask for feedback. Follow-up with additional training and ongoing for upgrades.

Questions?

Resources

- www.agb.org, Board Professionals pages, *AGB Online, News for Board Professionals, Winter 2009*
- *Trusteeship Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2009, “Electronic Tools for Trustees Gaining Favor.”
- Vendor Demonstrations
- <http://www.greatboards.org/pubs/Board-Portal-Buying-Guide-final.pdf>

Vendor Contacts

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