Insync Boards framework series

From oversight to impact

Applying the **WhatWhoHowDo™ framework** to provide a structured, evidence-based and benchmarked assessment of board effectiveness.

STRENGTHENING BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

Board effectiveness shapes how strategy is overseen, risk is governed and accountability is exercised.

When boards operate with clarity and discipline, this influences leadership, culture and performance. Yet effectiveness is not always clear.

Well-run meetings and comprehensive papers do not guarantee focus on the right issues or meaningful impact. Many organisations sense improvement is needed, but lack clarity on where.

Board effectiveness is often the least explicitly assessed, yet one of the most influential elements of performance.

When board effectiveness comes into focus

Board effectiveness reviews are rarely triggered by a single issue. More often, they begin with uncertainty. Strategy may be well developed, yet the board's role in shaping and overseeing it may not be clear. Risk frameworks may be in place, yet it is not always evident how effectively the board is governing emerging risk.

Meetings may be structured and disciplined, yet discussion may not consistently focus on the issues that matter most. Board composition may appear appropriate, yet capability gaps or renewal needs may not be fully understood. Differences in perspective may exist across directors or between the board and management, but remain untested or unspoken.

At the same time, many organisations regularly assess CEO performance, executive effectiveness and organisational culture. These reviews provide valuable insight into how the organisation is operating, but do not always provide visibility of how effectively the board itself is contributing to direction, oversight and performance.

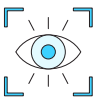
Without a structured view of board effectiveness, there can be limited clarity on how governance is shaping outcomes across the organisation. These conditions do not necessarily indicate weakness. They often reflect growth, complexity and changing expectations.

But they do raise important questions:
Is the board clear on its role and where it adds value?
Is the board structured and operating effectively?
Is the board setting the right tone for effectiveness across the organisation?
Is the board delivering the level of oversight and impact required?

Board effectiveness is a governance discipline

Effective boards do more than meet governance requirements. They bring clarity to their role, maintain focus on what matters most, operate with discipline and deliver meaningful oversight.

Strong boards:



Are clear on their role and boundaries relative to management

Are composed to match the organisation's needs

Operate with disciplined processes and constructive challenge

Focus on the issues that matter most at board level

Translate oversight into meaningful organisational impact

Board effectiveness is defined not just by process, but by how well the board is structured, how it operates and what it delivers.

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Introducing the WhatWhoHowDo™ framework

A WhatWhoHowDo™ Board Effectiveness Review is built on a structured, evidence-based framework that defines what effective boards do in practice.

It assesses board effectiveness across four interrelated dimensions, supported by a comprehensive set of underlying effectiveness categories and survey items.

Together, these dimensions enable a detailed, benchmarked assessment of how well the board is structured, operates and delivers impact.

What

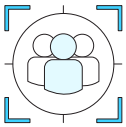
What – Board role and boundaries
Clarity of the board's role and the matters that properly sit at board level.

Includes role clarity, division of responsibilities with management and maintaining appropriate governance focus.

Who

Who – Composition and capability
Alignment of board composition with organisational needs.

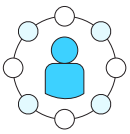
Includes skills, experience, diversity, recruitment, induction, renewal and succession.



How

How – Board processes and dynamics
How effectively the board operates in practice.

Includes leadership, discussion quality, challenge, information, meeting effectiveness, committees and engagement with management.



Do

Do – Oversight and impact
How effectively the board exercises its responsibilities and delivers impact.

Includes oversight of strategy, performance, risk, culture, executive leadership, remuneration and continuous improvement.

Proven, validated and scaled

The WhatWhoHowDo™ framework is supported by many hundreds of board reviews across Australia and internationally, making it one of the largest datasets of its kind.

It has been refined through decades of governance advisory work and formally validated through psychometric and statistical review.

This ensures the assessment is grounded in evidence and proven in practice.

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Benchmarking that matters

Boards are benchmarked against comparable organisations - not generic datasets.

Benchmarking can reflect:

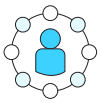
- organisation type and scale
- industry sector
- governance complexity

This provides a clear view of where the board is performing strongly and where improvement will have the greatest impact.

Depth of insight

The review provides insight at multiple levels:

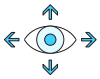
Overall board effectiveness



Performance across framework dimensions

Detailed analysis of effectiveness categories

Identification of highest and lowest rated areas



Visibility of differences in perspective

This enables boards to move beyond general observations to clear, actionable insight.

Highlighting differences in perspective

In many boards, there are differences in how effectiveness is perceived across directors and between the board and management.

The review highlights these differences, providing visibility of where alignment is strong and where perceptions diverge.

These insights often surface issues that are not immediately visible in board discussions, and can be critical to strengthening governance effectiveness.

Industry-specific insight

Board effectiveness varies across sectors. We work across 11 major industries, including listed companies, financial services, health and aged care, education, government, not-for-profit and member-based organisations.

Each review can incorporate industry-specific categories and questions, ensuring relevance to your context. Results are benchmarked against comparable organisations within your industry.

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A structured, independent view of board effectiveness

A WhatWhoHowDo board effectiveness review provides an independent, structured assessment of how effectively a board operates. It examines whether the board is clear on its role, appropriately composed, operates with discipline and constructive dynamics, focuses on the issues that matter most, and delivers meaningful oversight and impact.

Grounded in a research-based framework and informed by comparative data, it goes beyond generic surveys and is not a compliance exercise or a simple perception check.

Our approach combines a benchmarked survey, targeted interviews with directors and executives, and independent analysis. Findings are synthesised into a small number of practical, high-impact recommendations and discussed with the board to support clear, actionable improvement.

Part of the Insync Boards governance architecture

Board effectiveness does not sit in isolation. It is strengthened when governance disciplines are aligned across the board, its committees, the CEO and the executive team.

Insync Boards supports organisations through a structured governance architecture built on proprietary, evidence-based frameworks developed through many hundreds of governance engagements.

These include:

WhatWhoHowDo - Board effectiveness
DRIVE - Director effectiveness
SCOPE - CEO performance
SOLID - Executive effectiveness (individual contribution)
ALIGN - Executive forum effectiveness
THRIVE - Risk governance maturity
SECURE - Board cyber governance
CLEAR - Clinical governance committee effectiveness

Together these frameworks provide disciplined insight across every layer of governance.

Strengthening board effectiveness with confidence

High-performing boards do not leave effectiveness to assumption. They periodically step back to assess whether focus, alignment and decision-making remain fit for purpose.

A structured board effectiveness review provides clarity about how the board is operating, visibility of improvement opportunities and confidence that governance arrangements remain effective.

If your board would value a disciplined, independent perspective on its effectiveness, we would welcome a confidential discussion.

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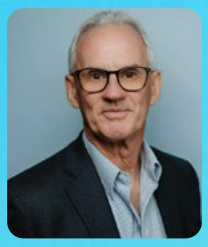
Independent governance reviews and advisory.



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