




Case Study

Brentford FC Community
Sports Trust



Brentford FC Community Sports Trust



Community Sports Trust

Industry

Sports

Headquarters

London, United Kingdom

Board Management Goals

- Reduce time required to prepare board papers
- Give board members more time to prepare for meetings
- Improve security and confidentiality

Results

- Time required to prepare board papers reduced four-fold
- Board members now provided with papers well in advance of meetings
- Document access and security carefully controlled

Brentford Trust saves time and improves security with OnBoard

Brentford FC Community Sports Trust has been doing community work for more than three decades. It works in partnership with Brentford FC to offer programs in education, employability, sports participation, health and community engagement.

Using sport to educate, motivate and inspire people is a noble goal and as a four-time ‘Football League Community Club of the Year’ winner it’s fair to say that Brentford is a leading Community Sports Trust.

Brentford Trust is supported by Brentford FC but is independent of the club and receives funding from many other sources. It’s a complicated picture and a broad remit, and it’s fair to say that good governance is critical to Brentford delivering on its commitments.

Yet sending information such as board papers to stakeholders was a significant challenge. “Everything was a paper mountain,” Operations Director Luke Skelhorn recalls. “Trying to circulate the papers by email and on the night providing papers, it was inefficient and time consuming.

“We realised we needed to streamline our processes and improve how quickly we circulated things to the trustees.”

— Luke Skelhorn, Operations Director, Brentford FC Community Sports Trust

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“We also have about eight subgroups that feed into the main board. Each subgroup is chaired by a trustee and usually, there’s a second trustee on those boards as well.

“We realised we needed to streamline our processes and improve how quickly we circulated things to the trustees, so they’d have time to read all the papers.”

It was a lot to manage and after a conversation with a trustee, Luke realised that a governance software platform would make managing papers, running meetings and following up afterwards faster, simpler and more secure.

And after doing some homework, he realised that OnBoard was the best platform for the Trust.

“I’d say we spend a quarter of the time [preparing board papers] compared to what we used to.”

— Luke Skelhorn, Operations Director,
Brentford FC Community Sports Trust

Early adoption means early success

One of the first things Luke noticed about OnBoard was how easily the trustees took to it, regardless of their personal platform of choice (typically either a PC or a mobile device).

“They embraced it really quickly,” he says, “whether that was through their personal devices, or the devices we provided for them on the night [of a meeting]. They could access everything straightaway; you could see the difference.

“And they appreciated the fact that we weren’t sending emails with 20 documents attached or giving them a mountain of paperwork to read through on the night.”



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Time savings

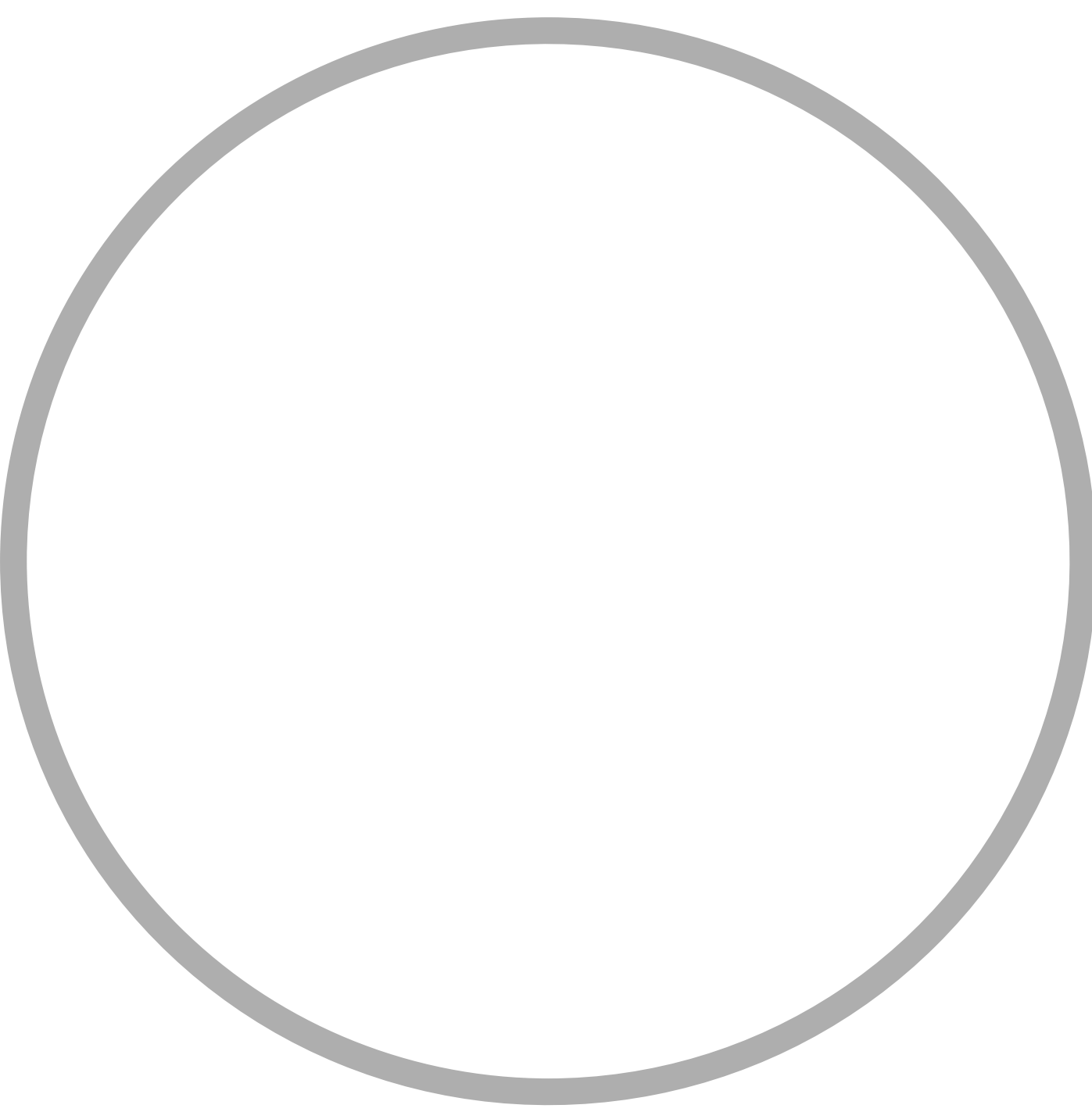
Luke estimates that it now takes much less time with OnBoard than previously to prepare and send board papers.

“I’d say we spend a quarter of the time compared to what we used to spend on it. But we’ve extended it to the rest of our leadership team, and we save even more time, because previously they would send us everything. We’d have to look at it all and load up the relevant information.

“But now we’ve worked out different access levels and protocols to manage the flow of information. Not all the staff can see board meetings, because there’s confidential stuff in there.

“So, they take responsibility now for their subgroups and uploading the relevant papers rather than relying on me or my team to do it for them.”

Another time saver is the ability for board members to sign and approve documents from within the system, saving the time previously taken to ensure every member had received, sighted and signed them as required.



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— Luke Skelhorn, Operations Director,
Brentford FC Community Sports Trust

Security

Security is always a concern when it comes to board papers. OnBoard makes it easy to control access to information, so each system user can only access the documents, communications and other functionality they’re entitled to.

“Unless you’ve got the admin rights to see a particular meeting, then you can’t access it at all,” Luke says. “Confidentiality is paramount, because we might be discussing individual pay rises or safety issues or charity-related issues.

“As a charitable trust working with all ages, safeguarding children, young people and even adults is at the top of our agenda. We have some information that needs to be kept confidential; OnBoard works really well for us in that regard.”

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Better meetings

Luke and the board have also found that OnBoard has improved their meetings. They're quicker, for starters, as are out-of-meeting processes, such as getting minutes approved.

"Things are definitely quicker," Luke says, "whether that's getting approvals on minutes or getting support from trustees when we can't wait for the next board meeting. We can circulate things through the system, which speeds things up."

Another benefit is that being able to prepare papers faster means they can be circulated further in advance, giving board members more time to read and digest the information.

"I'd say it just improved the efficiency of the business. For example, we normally hold our meetings on Thursday," Luke says. "In the old system, we would sometimes get those papers to them on the Wednesday. That was just too late, but we were under pressure to do our day-to-day jobs as well as organising, preparing and running an important meeting. It's not like we can just drop everything.

"But now we make sure they get everything by the Friday before, because we like to give them a full weekend to read the papers.

"The other thing I would say is that the board meetings themselves are shorter, because they all receive the sub-board minutes ahead of the meeting. We get through what is quite a lengthy agenda so much more quickly and so much more efficiently.

"So, in terms of improving the business and its efficiency, OnBoard has definitely worked really well for us."

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