



FIRST EDITION

Governance Snapshot: The State of Technology in Higher Education Boardrooms

Spotlight on How Technology is
Driving Governance Excellence



Foreword

Higher education boards face a unique set of challenges compared to boards in other industries. Trustees, presidents, regents, and chiefs of staff work with a different calendar than most of the rest of the professional world; they oversee the handling of sensitive data of tens of thousands of students, faculty, staff, and alumni; and they are educational, research, and cultural pillars of their respective communities and states.

As higher education evolves and demands of students, faculties, and communities change, boards will need to evolve with those changes. As leaders work to navigate these changes, many board members and stakeholders are — or should be — equally concerned about how internal shortcomings might be holding them back as they try to address these external challenges. According to our Survey, unprepared board members, disengaged/low-participatory board members, and inefficient material distribution were just a few of the concerns respondents listed on their respective boards.

For the first time, OnBoard introduces a survey that shows trends that contribute to higher education boardroom success. By examining factors such as available technology and respondents' concerns for the boards and institutions they serve, our survey analysis aims to demonstrate general themes and challenges for higher education boards.



Paroon Chadha
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer

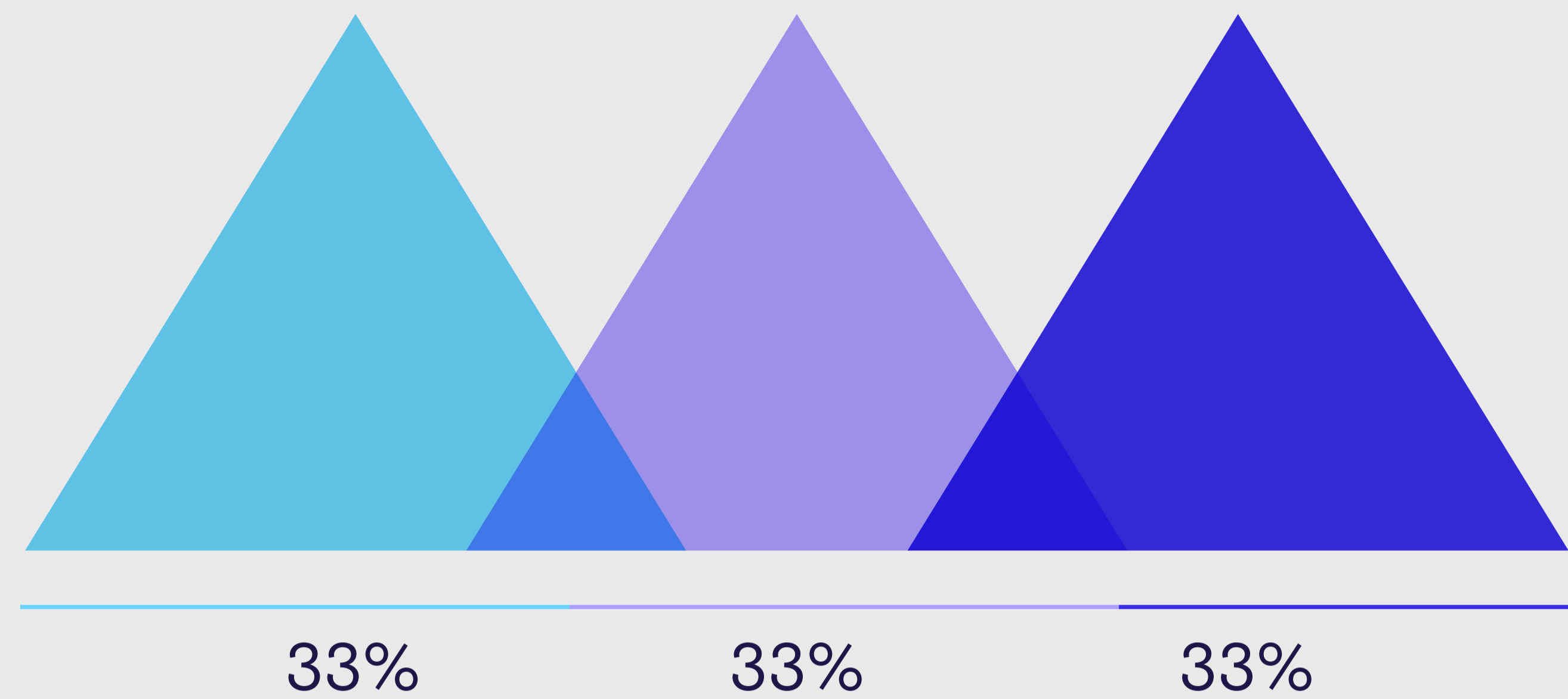
Abstract

As higher ed board members do their work, those who are engaged are most likely to benefit from technology that's built for boards. In fact, many survey respondents said their biggest hurdles to board effectiveness don't come from lack of technology or other similar factors. They come from disengaged board members.

That's even more true among board members who use board technology, such as board management software.

The largest challenges board members see in planning, preparing, and executing meetings stem from time management, effectively engaging board members, and ensuring their trustees and directors are prepared.

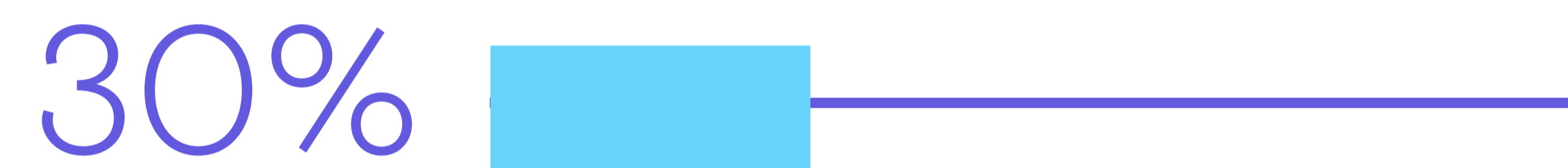
The chances a survey respondent would report “very high” levels of engagement, compared with “very low,” “moderate,” or “high,” rose 33% for those who use board management software.



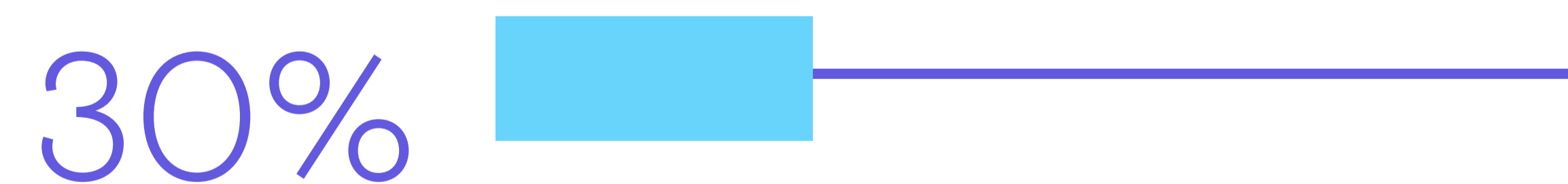
Board Meeting Pain Points



board members don't come fully prepared and/or don't review board materials before meetings



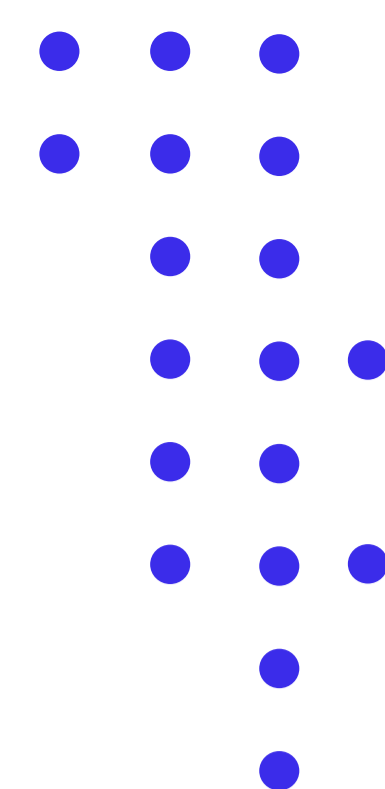
board meetings don't focus on the most important topics or over-focus on unimportant details



materials don't come early enough to properly prepare

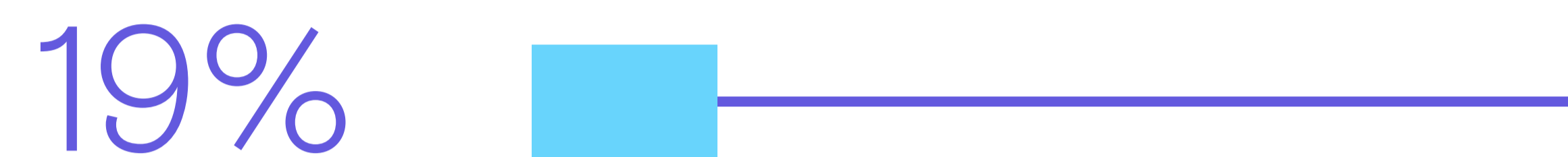


cited lack of engagement or participation from board members



Efficiency, Engagement Improve with Technology

Taking board management software against the second-most-common way respondents handle their board meetings, board management software users are:



19%
more efficient with cybersecurity



19.2%
more efficient with pre-meeting communication



14.7%
better committee communication



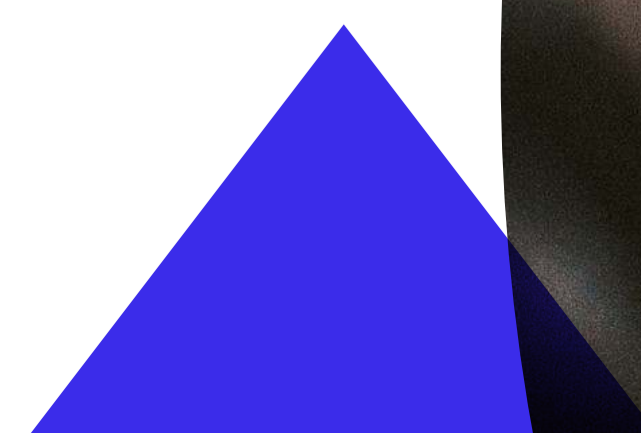
11%
more informed



13.6%
more efficient at onboarding new members

Key Insight

Board management software users were 11% more likely to say their board has “high” or “very high” levels of engagement compared to PDF/mail/email users.



The 3 Biggest Benefits of Board Management Software

Survey respondents identified three clear factors that they noticed by using board management software that improved their board's effectiveness and their individual board work:



Time Savings

Respondents voted this benefit a 9.1 on a scale of 1 to 10, indicating board management software significantly improved this area.



Security

Respondents voted information security as a 9 on a scale of 1 to 10, showing board management software makes them feel secure in knowing their confidential, sensitive board documents and information are secure.



Ease of Access

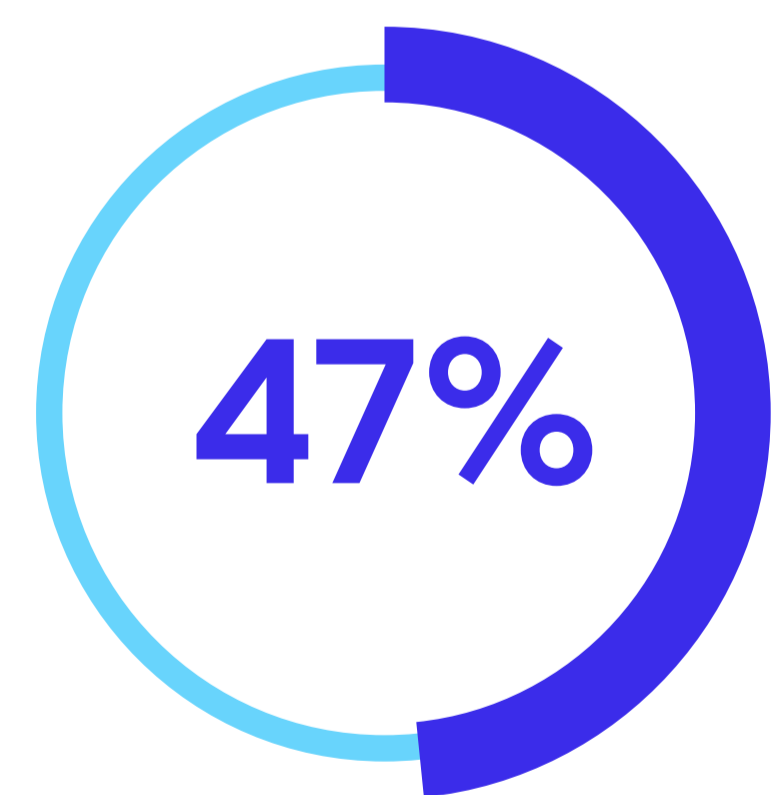
This factor rated an 8.9 on a scale of 1 to 10. Survey respondents believe their board materials are much easier to locate and retrieve, and that information is often at their fingertips anytime, from anywhere, thanks to mobile devices and the software's cloud-based storage.

How Much Time Do They Really Save?

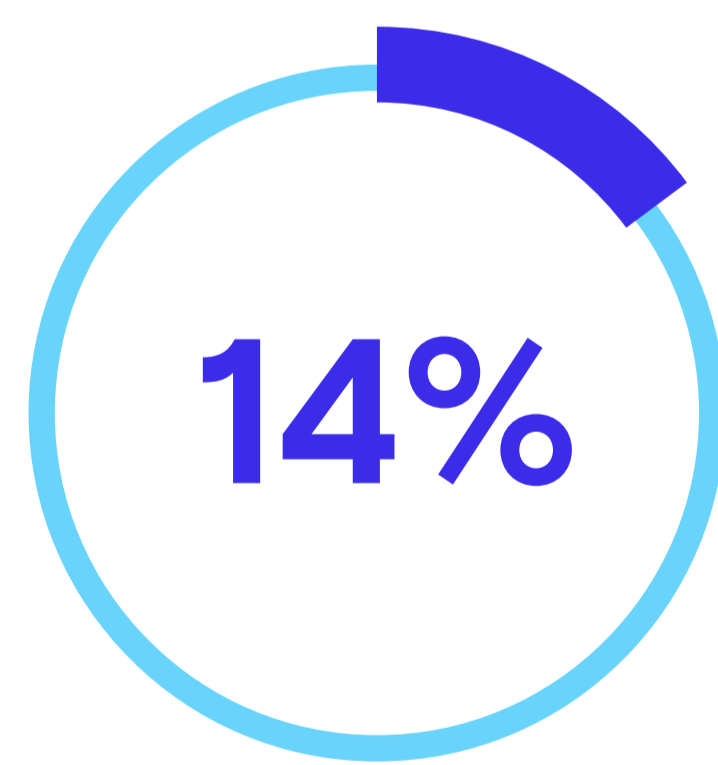
88% of survey respondents who use a board portal rated the time savings gained as 8 of 10 or better. **72% rated the time-saving benefits of a board portal as 9 out of 10 or better.**



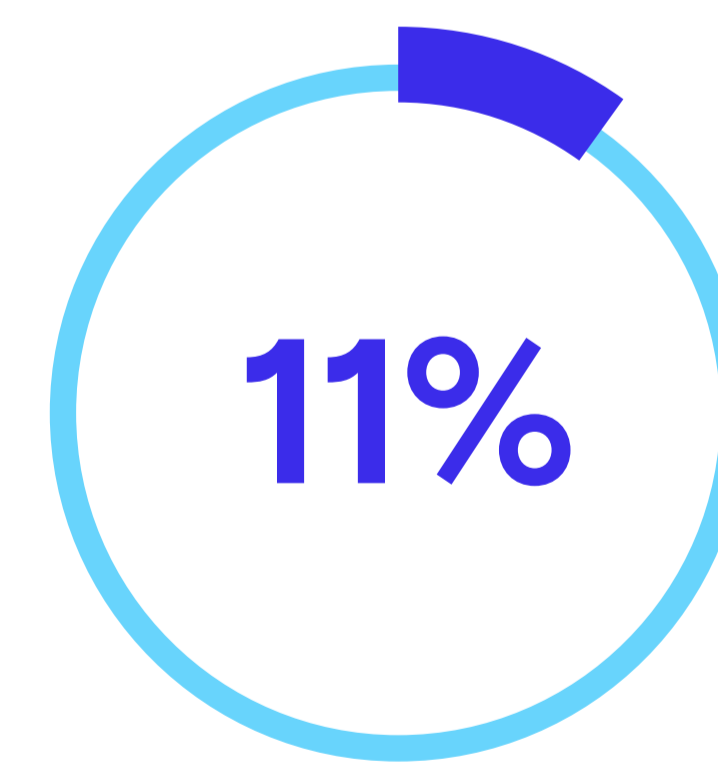
Time Saved with Board Management Software Per Meeting



2+ hours



1-2 hours



31 minutes to
one hour

So Why Do Some Boards Resist Board Management Technology?

Respondents who haven't taken the board management software leap offered myriad reasons why, but one big one might be lack of familiarity with the whole concept. Forty-five percent of survey participants said they were either only "somewhat familiar" with board management solutions, or not at all (10%). By contrast, 35% said they were "very familiar," and 20% said "familiar."

Seasoned board members who aren't as familiar or comfortable with the relatively new technology also play a large role. A whopping 77% of respondents listed some level of concern in this area, including 23% who claimed to be "very concerned."

While "other" was the most common response to the question, "Why hasn't your institution adopted board management software?", "cost" was a close second. Concerns about user adoption/technology came in a distant third, followed by a desire to maintain the status quo.





Conclusions

So, what to make of all this information? Higher education boards have embraced board management solutions to an extent, but resistance remains in some boards, mainly due to cost and resistance to the technology among more seasoned board members.

But the survey shows boards that don't embrace board management software are subjecting themselves to vulnerabilities. PDFs, email, and standard mail lack security, leaving your board's sensitive information open to potential cyber criminals. The time savings boards enjoy when they use board management software gives them more time to govern, and streamlines preparation, which enables them to participate in meetings more effectively and in a more engaged manner.

The cybersecurity concerns go beyond the obvious revenue loss, which averaged \$4.45 million worldwide in 2023, a 15% increase in the last 3 years. The reputation harm to universities that are victimized by data breaches is hard to quantify, but the number of data breaches aren't. 32 million records have been compromised in 2,700 education data breaches in the last two decades, and about 80% of hacked records come from colleges and universities.

About the Survey

A Look at Who Responded

Survey results represent input from 153 higher ed board members, committee members and advisory boards, including public systems and institutions, independent (private) institutions, and institutionally related foundations, among others.

By organization type, independent institutions (48.4%) made up the largest share of respondents. By student enrollment, 48.7% of respondents served institutions with enrollments between 1,000 and 5,000.

The most common board sizes were between 21 and 30 for board members; between 11 and 15 for committees; and between zero and five for advisory boards.

Just over 62% said they use a third-party board management software or board portal, while 15.3% use email/mail/PDF.



Organization Type

48.4%	Independent Institution
26.8%	Public Institution
15.7%	Institutionally Related Foundation
6.5%	Public System
2.6%	Other

Full-Time Student Enrollment of Participating Institutions

17.3%	< 1,000
48.7%	1,001 - 5,000
8.7%	5,001 - 10,000
8.7%	10,001 - 20,000
16.6%	> 20,000

Board Meeting Material Distribution Method

62%	Third-party board management software/board portal
8%	Intranet or Institution-operated repository (e.g., SharePoint)
15%	Email/Mail/PDF
3%	Homegrown solution
12%	Other (please specify)

Number of Board Members

12%	0 - 10
24%	11 - 20
28%	21-30
24%	31-40
11%	41+

Committees

35.3%	0 - 5
54.7%	6 - 10
9.4%	11 - 15
0.7%	21+

Advisory Boards

87.8%	0 - 5
7.9%	6 - 10
2.2%	11 - 15
1.4%	16 - 20
0.7%	21+



onboardmeetings.com