



WHITE PAPER:

Healthcare Boardroom Challenges - and Solutions

Why You Need a Secure Portal

More than in most sectors, what healthcare boards do matters. Their teams and organisations routinely make life-and-death decisions; poor governance, inefficient operations and any other impediments to healthcare teams' work can have potentially fatal implications.

Yet, it's also an industry grounded in hope, compassion and meticulous attention to detail. How can healthcare boards discharge their responsibilities with the utmost care and seriousness?

First, we must understand the challenges they face. These define the sector's regulatory 'landscape' and its unique conditions and responsibilities.

We asked Josh Palmer, OnBoard's Head of Content and Research, about the most significant challenges healthcare boards face, and he didn't hesitate to nominate technology. "Advances in AI, and perhaps most importantly for healthcare organisations, cybersecurity", he said.

"There are plenty of well-known data breaches in Australia, and we know healthcare firms are at high risk from cyber criminals. IBM's 2023 Data Breach Cost study found that cyber-attacks are up 53% from 2020 and cost, on average, nearly USD 4.5 million.

"It's especially concerning considering the industry's stewardship of PII [personally identifiable information] and health information, not to mention the direct impact of a ransomware attack or data breach."



Josh's list of challenges for healthcare boards includes:

Patient care quality and safety

These are any healthcare organisation's raison d'être. Boards must plan, implement, monitor and manage strategies to deliver good patient outcomes while minimising adverse outcomes.

Healthcare access and equity

Every society has disparities in healthcare access and outcomes across different social, economic and cultural groups. Boards must mitigate these by providing access equality and outcome parity.



Population health management

Population health management can reduce the burden of disease and help deliver better health outcomes. Boards must develop strategies to improve community and population health, including preventive care, chronic disease management and managing the social determinants of health (non-medical factors such as income, education, employment, food security and access to healthcare).

Public health emergencies

Pandemics, natural and civil disasters, and even the impacts of climate change can put healthcare providers under immense strain. Every healthcare boardroom is responsible for implementing robust emergency preparedness plans so that organisations can respond effectively during a crisis.



Data privacy and security

Healthcare organisations are prime targets for cybercriminals, as they routinely gather and handle sensitive patient information. Data privacy, cyber security, disaster recovery, regulatory compliance (including with overseas laws and standards, such as the GDPR and HIPAA) and other safeguards are critical.

Regulatory compliance

Healthcare providers operate in an environment of constantly evolving laws, regulations, standards and other requirements. Boardrooms must ensure they understand their requirements and that their organisation is fully compliant.

Workforce management

Worker burnout, high staff turnover and workforce shortages can massively impact any healthcare organisation, especially as our population ages and requires more care. Strategies to attract, develop and retain high-quality team members should be a high priority, along with strategies to address short-term vacancies.

Technological integration

Technology and healthcare have always been closely related. Beyond medical technologies, administrative and security tools are critical to maintaining operations. Boards must stay abreast of technology to provide the best tools to treat patients, manage operations and ensure data security.

Cost management

Managing costs while providing high-quality patient outcomes is always challenging. Factoring in payer reimbursements, government subsidies, private donations, insurance costs, and contributions only adds to the complexity. A financial management solution that gives visibility over costs is a 'must-have'.

Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability ensures continued service provision to the local community, employment for staff and even research into new medical techniques and technologies. Boards must develop sustainable financial strategies, including revenue diversification, adaptation to changing reimbursement and funding models, and financial portfolio risk management.

How do manual board practices impact governance?

With these responsibilities in mind, boards must consider their basic operational practices carefully. Running even a small board 'manually' is fraught with risk and inefficiencies. It also severely hinders the organisation's ability to understand patient data, respond to emerging situations, collaborate with other organisations and communicate with stakeholders.

Josh is adamant that manual practices are inefficient and a significant security risk: "We surveyed boards and found nearly two-thirds [62%] use email and PDFs for meeting preparation and document distribution", he said.

"The danger is that one mistyped email address or inadvertent message forward can land your documents in a non-confidential party's email inbox.

"We also found that 13% of boards still rely on printouts, which can easily end up in the wrong hands and can't be recalled."



Josh says the critical concerns with using manual processes include:

Limited efficiency

Manually processing paper documentation, including collection, data entry and disposal, is inefficient, time-consuming, and a security risk. Knock-on effects include slowing decision-making and reduced responsiveness to rapidly developing situations, such as a health crisis, and broader industry or regulatory changes.

Increased error rates

There is no room for error when treating a critical patient. Manual data entry and paper-based systems are prone to user errors, which can have potentially disastrous consequences for patients. They can also impact risk management, financial control and regulatory compliance.

Difficulty in data analysis

Data-driven insights can help healthcare organisations to unlock hitherto unknown improvements in patient care, resource allocation, strategic planning and more. Manual processes cannot compete with digital automation when generating insights, severely limiting the organisation's ability to improve and optimise operations and outcomes.

Compliance risks

Compliance is the key to success for any healthcare organisation. Manual processes multiply non-compliance risks. Errors, omissions and inconsistencies in documentation can expose your organisation to legal and financial penalties, regulatory liabilities and reputational damage.

Lack of timely information

Manual board practices are slow. Delays accessing critical information can hinder patient care, day-to-day operations and board deliberations. Timely access to accurate information is crucial for addressing emerging issues, identifying trends, and making strategic decisions.



Reduced agility

Situations in healthcare can arise and change rapidly. Yet manual processes hinder organisational agility, making it difficult to respond quickly to crises and opportunities or adapt to industry changes.

Limited collaboration and communication

Relying on manual communication and collaboration practices in an age of secure, instantaneous communications is an unwise strategy. Remote and hybrid working arrangements, virtual meetings and online information-sharing tools can help organisations avoid the barriers manual processes put up to effective communication and decision-making.

“Even among boards using digital solutions, many simply dump documents in a shared drive,” Josh said.

“Sharepoint, Google, Dropbox and other providers all have security features, but there are simply too many opportunities for error.

“The best solution, by far, is to use a dedicated portal that puts all the functionality you need in one place.”

How does a board portal help healthcare boardrooms?

A board portal is a secure software platform built from the ground up to streamline board governance. Key capabilities include facilitating secure communication and collaboration, document management and distribution, and online digital functionality, including minutes, voting and note-taking.

“A robust, security-focused portal will be certified in data and privacy standards,” Josh said, “including SOC 2 Type II, ISO-27001, ISO-27701, HIPAA [the US healthcare privacy standard] and GDPR.

“It will also include biometric and multi-factor authentication, remote device wipe and granular user access controls, so only the relevant people can access sensitive documents.”

Specific features and benefits on offer include:

Centralised information access

Board portals provide centralised, secure, access-controlled document repositories to hold meeting agendas, minutes, subcommittee and other reports, and other essential board-related materials.

Enhanced security and compliance

Board portals have robust security measures ‘baked in’ to their architectures. These include encryption, multi-factor authentication and access controls. Protecting sensitive information against unauthorised access or data breaches is critical for good governance and compliance.

Improved collaboration and communication

Board portals make seamless communication and collaboration among board members, executives, and committees easy. They include discussion forums, messaging tools, and shared document annotation, enabling real-time collaboration, decision-making, and information exchange.

Efficient meeting management

Board portals streamline the meeting process, from preparation to execution and follow-up. Key capabilities include automated agenda creation, scheduling, RSVP and attendance tracking, and action item tracking.

Support for board committees and workflows

Board portals support board committees and provide efficient workflow management tools. They offer dedicated online ‘spaces’ for committees to meet, collaborate, share information and assign tasks.

Analytics and reporting

Board portals include analytics and reporting features that allow healthcare organisations to track board engagement, attendance and participation, and to monitor key performance indicators and compliance metrics. When married to organisational performance data, the board can clearly understand the organisation's performance and how it can drive continuous improvement and accountability.

Mobile accessibility

Many board portals provide secure access via mobile devices. Such access allows members to access documents, engage in discussions, collaborate with colleagues and complete tasks remotely. This flexibility makes it easier for members to remain engaged and connected with their colleagues and participate in ad-hoc meetings regardless of location.

In short, a modern board portal makes board operations more secure, efficient, and transparent, providing a robust, purpose-built platform for collaboration, communication, and decision-making that enhances governance and organisational success.

What can healthcare boards do to find the right board portal for their organisation?

In Josh's view, there are three critical factors to consider when choosing a board portal.

"First," he said, "you want scalability, so the system can include all board and committees across your system or network.

"Second, you want the security features and capabilities we discussed.

"Finally, you want a board portal provider with healthcare-specific experience."



With these guidelines in mind, here are the key steps to take when selecting a portal:

- **Assess organisational needs:** First, assess your existing governance processes, communications needs, and technologies. Identify deficiencies, pain points, inefficiencies and 'wish list' items for improvement.
- **Define requirements and objectives:** Create a list of capability, compatibility, and commercial requirements for implementing your board portal. Key factors include security, compliance, ease of integration, ease of use, mobile capabilities, collaboration tools, document management, workflows and support for board functions such as voting, minutes, board papers and board committees.
- **Research available solutions:** Research the market to identify board portal providers offering healthcare-specific solutions. Also, consider vendor reputation, industry experience, customer testimonials, and case studies.
- **Evaluate features and functionality:** Evaluate each potential solution's features and functionality against your organisation's requirements document and objectives.
- **Consider security and compliance:** Prioritise security and compliance when evaluating different solutions. The healthcare industry's sensitive information holdings make it a frequent cybercrime target.
- **Request demonstrations and trials:** Giving key stakeholders and potential users hands-on experience is the best way to gather real-world feedback and will help ensure alignment with your organisation's requirements.
- **Evaluate vendor support and training:** Look for a vendor that offers implementation assistance, initial user training and ongoing support, and a well-structured service-level agreement, including escalation paths, redundancy and data recovery.

- Consider TCO and ROI: Once you've identified the solutions that you're your needs, evaluate their total cost of ownership (TCO) and return on investment (ROI). Factor in up-front costs, implementation costs, subscription fees, training expenses and all other charges.
- Seek input from peers and references: If possible, speak with your peers about their board platform experiences. Further, request references from your shortlisted vendors and talk with their customers to learn how they have used and experienced the product.

Once you have evaluated these factors, you can decide which platform best meets your needs. Critical to the decision and long-term stakeholder' buy-in' is developing clear plans for implementation, training and ongoing support. The best system in the world has no value if no one uses it.



What are OnBoard's benefits

Naturally, we believe OnBoard is the premium solution for healthcare organisations, meeting all critical requirements and supported by our expert teams:

Accessibility

Board members have busy lives; OnBoard accommodates their schedules by allowing members with internet access to participate remotely, either online with a computer or using the mobile app.

Cost savings

OnBoard can generate substantial cost savings by eliminating travel and accommodation costs associated with bringing the entire board together for routine meetings.

Efficiency

OnBoard streamlines meeting preparation, attendance and follow-up. Automated agenda creation, centralised digital document repositories and distribution, and real-time collaboration features save time, reduce administrative overheads and improve meeting efficiency.

Security and compliance

OnBoard offers mission-critical security and compliance. It's SOC 2, ISO27001 and ISO27701 certified, GDPR and HIPAA compliant and certified under the US Data Privacy Framework Program.

Improved governance

OnBoard's secure, centralised communication, collaboration and documentation platform, with features including secure document storage, accurate version control and secure digital signatures, keeps board materials accurate, up-to-date and accessible.

Enhanced collaboration

OnBoard meetings enable real-time collaboration among board members, executives, and stakeholders. Discussion forums, messaging tools, and shared document annotation foster greater transparency, accountability, and stakeholder alignment.

Analytics and reporting

OnBoard can track attendance, engagement, and participation, and provide detailed analytics and reporting. Monitoring key performance indicators and compliance metrics delivers a suite of reports to assist boards operate better.

Continuity and resilience

OnBoard's virtual meeting platform, accessible from any location with an internet connection, provides business continuity and resilience. This resilience enables healthcare organisations to maintain governance and decision-making protocols with minimal disruption, reducing unforeseen impacts on business-as-usual operations.

Healthcare organisations can use OnBoard to conduct board meetings efficiently and with full access to all the tools and information they need to discharge their duties effectively. These include cost savings, improved accessibility, enhanced collaboration, analytics, efficiency, security, governance, and business continuity – all critical to providing the best possible patient care and outcomes.

