

Making the Case for Digital Board Governance Technology to Your Board

While using technology to work through board materials more efficiently may be second nature for an administrator, for board members it can add a layer of unfamiliarity to an already busy schedule.

To be successful in bringing board governance technology into the district, there must be buy-in from the board members. To help you make this case, we have outlined three core benefits of adopting virtual board technology.

Major change, like adopting a board portal, brings with it challenges and opportunities. To overcome the challenges, we have highlighted some features and opportunities that board portals can provide such as better engagement with your community.

“In the first year, our district saved an estimated \$25,000 in paper costs; the savings last year are believed to be more than \$30,000!”

Sandra Smith
*Clerk of the Board of
Trustees*
Sweetwater Union High
School District, CA

Finding Efficiencies, Along With Time And Cost Savings

- **Cost-Effectiveness.** The phrase is often quoted: School boards deal with the two things that matter most to people — their children and their money. In a tax-averse society, being good stewards of the dollars entrusted to school boards is one of their highest priorities. Using the tools embedded in a board portal creates tremendous efficiencies in the administration of board meetings, ultimately, providing greater value-per dollar to taxpayers.
- **Hybrid Meeting Management.** Many districts have moved to a hybrid work structure, allowing employees to perform administrative tasks from home. A board portal is the natural tool to circulate information and get approvals from remote locations using the workflow processes designed in the system. This allows the work of the board to continue in any setting. In unpredictable times, staff can quickly pivot to virtual meetings with the right tools already in place.
- **Time Savings.** Many board members are sensitive to the amount of work that administrators and administrative assistants do. Highlighting the time savings for staff will often help board members open up to the idea of governance technology. One task that is so timely for administrative staff is compiling meeting minutes. Board portals such as Diligent Community, and BoardDocs Pro, have built in electronic voting, and automatic vote tabulation. In addition to the ability to create minutes before, during and after the meetings
- while linking the electronic minutes to a future agenda for board approval and public release. This cuts
- staff preparation time down by more than 50%
- Staff members give light edits to fit the local community format, and link to the next meeting's agenda, taking a task that took days and sometimes weeks down to a couple of hours.

“Thank you, BoardDocs,
for giving me my
weekends back.”

Administrative Assistant
California school district

Action Items

- ☐ Estimate the labor and material costs associated with board meeting preparation.
- ☐ Catalog the different tools and processes used for meeting management. Also note whether all participants are using the same tools/processes.
- ☐ Document the average time spent preparing for meetings and compiling minutes.

Protecting Sensitive Information

- **Protecting Against Cyber Attacks.** Budget cuts are depriving school districts of the financial resources to invest in cyberdefense. Small IT departments are currently stretched supporting teachers and students in hybrid learning formats. According to a [global survey by Sophos](#), 47% of K-12 education organizations reported an increase in volume of cyberattacks, 50% reported an increase in complexity, and 49% reported an increase in impact. These organizations are considered “low hanging fruit” to hackers. Even if the hacker gets a small ransom, they can add up quickly. Cities and school districts often pay to restore services quickly. Simply put, email and free repositories are not secure formats for what can be sensitive data.
- **Paper Is Not Safer.** Board members that use devices need to be aware that the transmission of sensitive data is open to attack. A south Texas school district recently had to notify all parents of a breach after copiers were sold with student data on them. Conveying information via email or in a document repository like Google Docs may be a slight improvement but is still not secure. With Diligent Community and BoardDocs, all data is stored on encrypted servers, and board members can access relevant information from anywhere through password-protected accounts.
- **Complying with FRPA.** All students are subject to FRPA (Family Rights and Privacy Act) and districts must keep student data secure. This includes everything from disciplinary records to free and reduced lunch applications to the diagnosis of a virus. Staff and board members should never discuss sensitive information in any electronic format that is not secure. Leaving student records at risk could open up the district up to potential legal liability. No district wants to make headlines by accidentally releasing sensitive data.

“It’s all online, it is secure, it is one of the best e-governance systems that I have seen. And I have worked with some others.”

Senior Board Specialist
Florida School District

Action Items

- ☐ Make a list of any personal emails or devices being used to conduct board business.
- ☐ Determine if/how paper documents are still being used and if files are stored in any cloud storage platforms.
- ☐ Document how sensitive data is protected in current processes.

Improving Access and Community Engagement

- **Keeping the Public Informed.** Community access and engagement are more important than ever. Today's parents are tech-savvy and digitally driven. Keeping parents and community members informed and involved is of utmost importance to both the district and the board members. Paperless meeting agendas, articles, meeting details, previous meeting minutes, and other vital information can all be made public with Diligent Community and BoardDocs site for the community to access.
- **Responding to FOIA Requests.** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) guarantees taxpayers access to data, so long as it does not infringe on a student's or staff member's privacy. Because of the potential expense to the district in researching and copying documents, legislators have allowed districts to charge reasonable fees for these searches. The fees often do not make up for the staff time spent. Conversely, there is no fee reasonable enough to make up for the trust that is lost, and the frustration mounted by community members when they are forced to file requests and pay for the information. With Diligent Community and BoardDocs, documents and other materials related to policies, laws, and regulations can be stored in a single place for public access with the Library feature. These materials are all searchable by keyword, which can be extremely helpful for FOIA requests, and even enable 'self-service' for members of the public decreasing the number of FOIA requests.
- **Fostering Trust Among the Community.** Public trust is the foundation of a well-functioning school district. The community wants to look to the school district with confidence. Having a central location to be the definitive source of up to date, accurate information regarding the district's decisions allows parents to see that their children are being taken care of. The automatic email feature notifies subscribers when a meeting is scheduled and any important update is featured.

“I have over 20 years of experience working with customers online and 12 years working and leading the implementation and training teams for Diligent brands focused on Local Government and Education. I have been helping customers streamline processes by maximizing their use of tools to achieve their goals as efficiently as possible.”

Alex Richards

Senior Director of Customer Success, Diligent Public Board Solutions

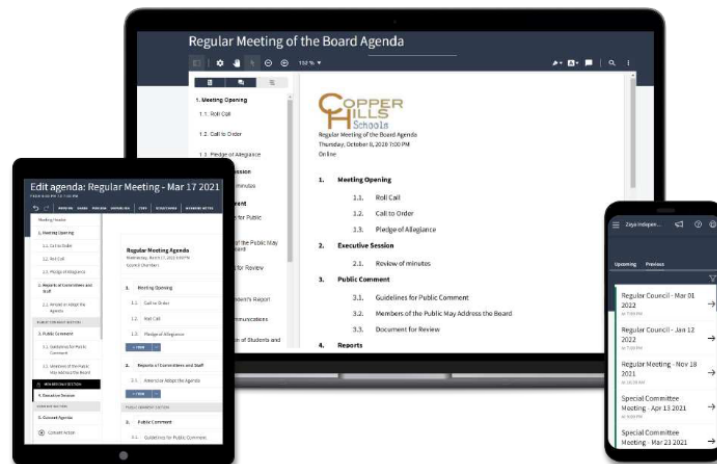
Action Items

- ☐ Determine the average number of FOIA requests received per year and fees collected vs. costs incurred.
- ☐ Calculate the average time spent researching and responding to FOIA requests.
- ☐ Evaluate how information is currently shared with the public and the board, and how access permissions are controlled including the number of different modes used (i.e. text, email, doc) to access and find information.

Online School Board Meeting Management Software Adaptable to Your Needs

At its core, Diligent Community enables state and local governments, special districts, school districts, libraries and community colleges to better serve their communities through more effective governance. Diligent Community:

1. Improves engagement: The Public Request to Speak feature empowers board administrators and leaders to advocate for their mission while addressing critical community issues
2. Increases efficiency: Users can customize workflows for meeting preparation, including adding content for approval, sharing agenda packets via one-click publishing and republishing last-minute agenda items; meeting minutes can be captured in real time, with automatic video time stamping.
3. Expands access and fosters collaboration: The Library Document Center supports sharing documents and marking content for public consumption
4. Promotes inclusivity: Its out-of-the-box solution is ADA and WCAG 2.1 AA compliant and follows Open Meeting Law guidelines, so information is accessible on any device, enabling leaders to connect with their entire community anytime.



Community is the next generation of BoardDocs.

Diligent Community is the next generation of the industry leading solutions, BoardDocs & iCompass, trusted tools used by over 4,000 public governing bodies. The intuitive, easy-to-use paperless meeting software supports public leaders and board members to streamline the way they build agendas, distribute materials to the board, and communicate with constituents and before, during, and after public meetings - whether they are in person or virtual.

To learn more about Diligent Community and BoardDocs contact us today:

Email: community@diligent.com | **Visit:** diligent.com/community