

How to: Become a trusted advisor

Effective time management for governance professionals

In your bid to become a trusted advisor to your board, effective time management is one of the ways you can demonstrate your abilities and build trust with the board. Consider how your planning helps you invest your time more efficiently.

Annual planning

- set the dates for meetings for the full academic year in order to prevent time being taken trying to find suitable meeting times
- know the deadlines for meeting agendas and papers to be sent out, financial returns to be approved, policies to be reviewed etc. and set reminders
- schedule in your annual appraisal with the chair and any training or CPD you need to access
- set reminders and timelines for tasks such as undertaking the board skills audit and self-evaluation, renewing declarations of interests, safeguarding training for the board, etc.
- discuss with the board whether meetings will be in-person, virtual, hybrid or a mixture depending on what type of meeting it is or what time of year it is (some boards hold autumn and spring term meetings virtually and summer term meetings in-person or hold full board meetings in-person and committee meetings virtually)
- allow travel time for in-person meetings

There are NGA resources which will help you manage your time effectively such as:

- [NGA's annual planner](#)
- [NGA's policy review schedule](#)

You can also access [bespoke advice](#) online or on the phone if your board has GOLD membership, which will save you time when needing answers to queries and knowing the relevant legislation or guidance the information is taken from.

Meeting planning

- contact the chair and executive leader to discuss the agenda and confirm what items should be included to ensure all necessary business is included in a timely manner
- consider whether the agenda needs to include suggested time lengths for each item to prevent meetings lasting for more than 2 hours
- prepare the agenda, collate any additional documents and send it to board members at least 7 days prior to the meeting
- consider whether there is a more time effective method of taking minutes: handwriting notes at the meeting, typing notes into a pre-prepared template at the meeting or recording the meeting (with the permission of all present) to use after the meeting to type up the minutes
- schedule enough time to prepare the minutes within 7 days of the meeting and to follow up any actions from the meeting.
- set a reminder to ensure you receive the approved draft minutes from the chair and send the draft minutes to the board within 14 days of the meeting
- use exemplar templates for agendas and minutes to ensure everything is recorded and can be referred back to quickly and easily

How to: Become a trusted advisor

Effective time management for governance professionals

There are model agenda and minutes available to members from the NGA Knowledge Centre: [Agenda setting](#) and [Taking minutes](#). There are also Learning Link modules [How to arrange meetings](#) and [How to minute meetings effectively](#)

CPD planning

- invest time in reading weekly and monthly bulletins from professional governance organisations such as NGA to stay up to date with current governance issues
- allow time for researching governance issues being discussed by the board
- Ensure CPD time includes accessing webinars, reading blogs and networking

General planning

- if you line manage other governance professionals, you may find it helpful to delegate some of the tasks in order to manage your own time effectively
- consider time-saving ways of conducting board business. For example, it may prove more efficient to ask boards to sign off policy reviews by email where there have not been any or many changes
- break up lengthy tasks into smaller chunks and use a to-do list for each work session, prioritising time-sensitive tasks
- keep tidy filing systems by creating folders in your email inbox and relevant folders for storing meeting documents, research information, training records, etc and use search functions to find information quickly
- block out distractions where possible and take regular breaks
- audit your working time and how long you are spending on each task to identify where you can be more efficient and what time of day you are most productive
- sometimes you may need to say 'no' or 'not now' when asked to do something in order to manage your time effectively