



## 3 GREAT TIPS *BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER* BOARD MEETINGS (7/17)

We're always on the prowl for ideas to make board meetings more effective, and I've come across 3 new ones. Give these a try *before* your next board meeting, *during* the meeting, and *afterward*:

■ **Before.** [Alisa Cohn](#) is an executive coach who works with Fortune 50 companies and their teams. One way she helps these hi-pots is by offering advice on how to handle themselves in the boardroom, and a couple of her tips are great ideas on making the board itself run better. First -- so you've sent out your board meeting book, or have it up on the board portal a week or two before the meeting. Good, but how about "having someone give a *quick call to each director to review the materials in advance*." This isn't an in-depth overview, but rather running over highlights and focus items while the board member is also looking at the materials on the other end of the line. This should take maybe 15 minutes for each director, and Cohn finds it a valuable investment of time.

■ **During.** Board meetings can go on for several hours. Yes, you have breaks for coffee and lunch, but there's amazingly little consistency in how often boards hold these breaks. Drag on too long, and board efficiency suffers. "Ninety minutes seems to be the limit of time humans can focus in an intense way," Cohn observes. A smart board chair will *build these breaks into the agenda timeline*, and not just wait until the members start looking burnt out.

■ **After.** By the end of the board meeting, everyone will be a bit wrung out, or need to leave and catch flights. But that's also the moment when everything is still fresh in their minds, and they're still thinking like a board. Try a *roundtable debrief*. Set aside 15 minutes at the end for each board member to tell what aspects of the meeting they found most effective -- and least. What suggestions can they give to make the next meeting better? (Note that this isn't intended to cover leftover board discussions or business items. The focus is on the meeting itself).

**RALPH WARD'S BOARDROOM INSIDER** is published monthly for directors, CEOs, those who work with corporate and nonprofit boards (corporate secretaries, corporate counsel, support staff, and consultants), and those who are board prospects. Ralph D. Ward is author of the books *BOARDROOM Q&A*, *THE NEW BOARDROOM LEADERS*, *SAVING THE CORPORATE BOARD*, *IMPROVING THE CORPORATE BOARD* and *21st CENTURY CORPORATE BOARD*, and a speaker on corporate board issues.

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