



BoardWorks

striving for board excellence

Your Guide to
the BoardWorks
Diagnostic Tool

What is BoardWorks?

BoardWorks is a unique innovative reporting tool. It measures the Psychological Safety and effectiveness of your Board. High Psychological Safety levels in a Board allow you to create the right environment focusing on the key areas for your Boards' effectiveness and dynamics which allow for constructive challenge and strong team working.

On completion of the BoardWorks tool, we provide you with a comprehensive report and present the findings to your Board allowing you to see quickly, areas of strength and opportunities to develop and enhance your Board as a team.

BoardWorks utilises an easy to answer online survey and provides you with a timely analysis and recommendations.

For Boards to work effectively, they need to operate within an environment where they focus on the key strategic and operational risks their organisation faces, they must work collaboratively whilst valuing constructive challenge, and benefit from insights and contributions from a Board, which is appropriately represented.

What Is the Challenge for Boards Today?

Unprecedented levels of uncertainty and change require potentially radical changes in thinking and practice. Most Boards will not have experienced this challenge at pace and scale, in the initial stages of pandemic crisis many Boards will have been dealing with the immediate operational and survival tasks needed, but having a Board which is able to function over the next two to three years, and to grapple with potentially seismic changes will test the Boards capability to work collaboratively and effectively

History of organisational and corporate failure highlights that it is not enough to have bright and skilled individuals in times of change or challenge. It is how the Board works together that distinguishes one Board from another especially under an environment such as the one we now face.

Board works enables you to see whether you have the right Board composition, whether you have the mechanics in place to optimise efficiency and most importantly whether you have a dynamic and constructive climate that values challenge, avoids group think and is both sustainable and resilient.



As Leaders we want the best for our colleagues and the best people working in our Organisation. Drive and leadership have to come from the Board and rightly there is much focus on the personal Wellbeing of employees, the Wellbeing of the Organisation is the responsibility of the Board.

What does BoardWorks Measure and Report?

Effective Boards require 3 components:

1. To have reports that are timely, focusing on the right key issues, with sufficient time for Board members to read reports that lead to effective decisions being made.
2. The Board is comprised of a team of individuals whose varied experience and skillset allows them to contribute to discussions and decisions that are pertinent to their sector.
3. The culture is Psychologically Safe and trusting at the Board, this means that it is safe to hold an alternative view, safe to be in a minority of one and the Board works in a collaborative but constructively challenging way.

The Board is focused on the key strategic and operational risks adapting nimbly in a time of change and challenge.

Actions & Behaviours

Below is an illustration of the types of insights the tool can provide. BoardWorks will generate practical improvements for the Board:

The Boards paper and items on the agenda reflect the key risks and opportunities for your organisation

- ◆ It is safe to challenge the agenda
- ◆ Easy to raise critical issues for discussion
- ◆ Subjects are discussed in a measured and collaborative manner

The Board is appropriately diverse to ensure that the knowledge skills and experience meets the needs of the organisations current and future strategic challenges

- ◆ The Board reflects on its composition
- ◆ Discusses openly the need to include individuals from different backgrounds ensuring that alternative views and perspectives are capitalised upon

In relation to contentious issues, Board contributions reflect a measured engaged approach

- ◆ All contributions are valued
- ◆ Contrary views are welcomed
- ◆ Consistent group thinking raises alarm bells
- ◆ Silence from Board members is seen as an area of concern

Features & Benefits of Boardworks

Features

- ◆ Credible and easy to use
- ◆ Quick to complete
- ◆ Briefing and feedback on results provided by experienced Board Advisors
- ◆ Practical and systematic in approach
- ◆ Easy to understand what is being measured and why
- ◆ Suitable for Boards that are either Executive only or Boards with a combination of Executive and Non-Executive
- ◆ Reflects current best practice
- ◆ Appropriate and relevant in a time of seismic change

Benefits

- ◆ Insightful analysis of your Boards' effectiveness
- ◆ Clear measurement of the Boards level of Psychological Safety
- ◆ Identifies areas of strength and weakness
- ◆ Data directly relevant to your organisation
- ◆ Feedback to the Board on the significance of data arising (virtual or in person)
- ◆ Action plan for the Board to consider implementing
- ◆ Visible demonstration to regulatory bodies where appropriate, of a commitment to good governance
- ◆ Sends a positive, strategic message to stakeholders, of the organisations' commitment to good governance and Psychological Safety
- ◆ Reassures Non-Executives of suitability and effectiveness of the Board
- ◆ Allows you to tackle more sensitive and difficult issues in this time of change

Wellbeing Works

We are specialists in advising Boards, we use data-driven analysis and evidence-based solutions,

To enable Boards to function optimally and meet best governance practice. We assist you in creating work environments that enable the Board and your Teams to Thrive.

Our work is based upon the validated research carried out by Hamish Moore, the founder of Wellbeing Works and creator of our Board Works and Team Works tools. We are a team of established Board and workplace Psychological Safety experts.

Our expert team, work across the public, private and third sector.

We understand that 'one size does not fit all.' The Board is unique, the organisation's success is inherently linked to the capacity of the Board to operate in a Psychologically Safe way and hence Thrive. We provide practical, effective, and easy-to-adopt solutions, specific to your Board's needs.

Psychological Safety

Effective Boards have a culture which is Psychologically Safe. This means that the Board values how it functions and how it values its agenda and composition; trust underpins this.

A Psychologically Safe Board is one where constructive challenge is valued. It is safe to be in a minority of one in a Board decision or discussion. The type of discussion is focused on key strategic and operational issues where all parties recognise the value of being both individually and collectively accountable for the focus of the Boards work and decisions made.

Feedback at the Board is balanced, measured and constructive. It is safe to raise a concern and to highlight risks and failures because the collective approach of the Board is to support and address issues arising.

Silence is seen not as acquiescence or agreement but as a warning sign that some members of the Board are either disengaged from a subject, do not understand the subject, or disagree with the direction of travel.

Psychological Safety makes it possible to admit to areas of knowledge weakness, concern over a matter which generates a high degree of uncertainty, risk or anxiety and hence allows the Board to hear from Board members who might otherwise be reluctant to articulate their views.

There is ample evidence that Psychologically Safe Boards and Teams generate more effective decisions and are significantly less likely to fail or miss critical risks or opportunities.

Where Boards take Psychological Safety seriously, they become the role model throughout the rest of your organisation. In a time of seismic and unprecedented change this is a key feature which every organisation should seriously consider.

For Teams, Psychological Safety is about creating environments where staff can Thrive at work. That is to say, where staff are able to give of their best, exercise good judgement, effective decision making, enjoy their work, feel valued and appreciated, challenged and appropriately stretched.

They are supported by line managers and colleagues, where it is safe to have and express an alternative opinion and it is also safe to ask for help from others, including managers and the Board.

"The best way to cope with this unprecedented crisis is to respond quickly and then keep adapting. What is needed is the ultimate agile response. Agile responses refer, of course, to a kind of highly flexible, collaborative, iterative approach that highly innovative organizations have been developing for years.

No one should make these kinds of decisions alone – they require diverse expertise and extremely high-quality discussion processes, made in an environment that is oriented toward learning and problem solving, to arrive at the best decisions, which in turn must be subject to updating as more is learned."

Professor Amy Edmondson, Harvard University, 2020

Validation

BoardWorks is based upon the original published research in team working and Psychological Safety by Hamish Moore and components are drawn from: Amy Edmondson, Harvard Business review 2002-to date, National leadership Counsel Board Development, Institute of Directors, INSEAD Business School.

Wbi is the outcome of a 5-year research project with Newcastle University developed the questions identifying the components of Thriving, Hiving and Surviving® at work.

The statistical validation of our original research was by Professor John Matthews, an eminent Medical Statistician.

Further validation of this research was provided by peer review (Vendrig and Schaafsma) in the Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation 2018.

Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health 2020

Thriving Boards

Thriving Boards enjoy Board meetings. Boards will generally have a positive outlook. They adopt proactive thinking rather than seeking to blame. They are highly collaborative and productive. Board decisions are of a high quality. Autonomy levels for Board members are clear and appropriate. The make-up of the Board is diverse, bringing a range of opinions and skills which are highly valued. The Boards arrangements such as timeliness of reports and depth of analysis allows for Board members to work effectively. Thriving Boards recognise the value of evaluation and feedback on their performance. Board members pre-empt Psychological Harm to others on the Board and to staff and employees.

Hiving Boards

Boards that display Hiving characteristics are likely to be working very hard but not achieving the full benefits of that effort. Board systems may not be effective. Duplication of effort is common. Board Members are often not valued for their contribution. The Board relationships are not always team based. Some Board members go home tired, disillusioned and exhausted. Decision making is often impaired, and mistakes can occur but are not learnt from.

Surviving Boards

Surviving Boards struggle to function optimally. Board Members may be present but not able to give of their best. Decision making may be impaired because Board members do not contribute in a manner which gives constructive challenge or raises concerns in a way which advances the issues. Often levels of support from Board colleagues may at best be modest. In some cases, Board behaviour is destructive and harmful. Some Board members may be thinking of leaving the Board. There may be poor levels of recognition for contribution either by Board members or the Chair. Erratic attendance levels at the Board may exist.



BoardWorks provides an overall Thriving, Hiving and Surviving® score in relation to:

- ◆ The effectiveness of the administrative functionality of how the Board works and its administrative functionality.
- ◆ The appropriateness of the make-up and diversity of the Board to ensure it is able and skilled to respond to the changing world in which your organisation now exists.
- ◆ The level of Psychological Safety enables or inhibits the Board to function in a Psychologically Safe way and make improvements, wise and insightful decisions.












Further analysis is provided using the Compassionate Mind Model.

This model created by Professor Paul Gilbert allows you to identify the impact of your results in each of the above areas upon Board members. The model explains whether the way in which the balance of the work in the Board is appropriate. It provides you with a risk analysis and allows you to determine which aspects of the Board approach will generate the best returns for you.

Preventing Board Failure

There have been several high-profile organisation failures in the Private, Financial, Retail and Manufacturing sectors, also the Public and Charity sectors, which have resulted in significant financial and reputational damage. Subsequent investigation has demonstrated that the Board were clearly unaware of 'what they didn't know' or were reluctant to acknowledge they were not operating as a truly effective Board.

The best predictor of whether or not a Board will succeed is interestingly not how bright the Board is, not their aggregated level of expertise but fundamentally on whether the Board operates as a team and displays Psychological Safety characteristics and whether the make-up of the Board is diverse.

 Kodak's Board rejected the opportunity to go digital 	 The Board of Mid-Staffordshire's NHS Trust focused on Foundation Trust status to the exclusion of patient care. Patients died as a result. 
 The Board of Kids Company a major children's charity ignored warnings from the National Audit Office and senior civil servants as to its value for money as an operation and were mesmerised by its charismatic leader. The charity collapsed with 35,000 children left unsupported. 	 The Board of Patisserie Valerie failed to spot growth of sales being an equal percentage on every site being reported when statistically and practically this was impossible 
 Nokia's Board failed to look at the marketplace and was overtaken by Apple & Microsoft 	 The Board of Carillion overstretched its dependency on contracts that had the risk of losses. The company went into liquidation. 

Each of these highlights the failure of the Board to have in place efficient working mechanisms, a Board that was diverse and appropriate and a Psychologically Safe culture which would have provided challenge to the ways in which the organisation was working.

Board Works Can Help!

We have a range of options available:

- ◆ We can provide support directly to your Board.
- ◆ We will deliver results with detailed question and answer session.
- ◆ We can help you implement bespoke interventions.



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For further information about BoardWorks or becoming a BoardWorks partner please contact:


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Other tools available from Wellbeing Works:

TeamWorks
Improving Psychological Safety

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Linked  Wellbeing Works