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CREDIT UNION BOARDS:

Getting to the right conversation, for the right decisions

aprio



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Author: Ian Warner, Aprío Inc.

Contributors: Peter Myers, DDJ Myers
& John Dinner, John T. Dinner Board
Governance Services

Introduction

The board of directors for a credit union have an especially complex role. In every decision, board members have an obligation to consider credit union strategy, fiduciary accountability, and the needs of members. In an era of fierce competition and rapid change, how can credit union boards strike the right conversation and access the right information to make the right choices to serve members? And what role does technology play in supporting that conversation?

This white paper will explore best practices when it comes to creating the ideal conditions to get the most value from credit union boards as advisors on evolving member needs, managing risk, and staying true to organizational vision. We consulted with board governance advisors [John Dinner](#) and [Peter Myers](#) of DDJ Myers for their perspective as well as drawing on credit union experiences.

Effective board governance drives overall performance and in the case of credit unions, it delivers better value for members. Among the many modern [challenges](#) of board management, credit union boards are facing increasing pressure to contribute to the performance of the organizations they lead.

“The challenge for credit union board members, and this goes beyond this moment with COVID-19, is to balance fiduciary and compliance duty with member needs and expectations,” explains John Dinner. “Most credit unions have diverse member populations – how do you represent them? At the same time, how do you honour and maintain the member focus while delivering on the board’s fiduciary responsibilities? Credit unions will be feeling the balancing act acutely right now as they evaluate risk versus their financial service responsibility during COVID-19. In the end, members will want to know their needs were well considered.”

5 priorities for strong board decisions

This white paper provides five practical priorities for credit unions to focus on to make the right decisions for members and the longevity of their organizations, right now.



Inclusive board meetings

Open inquiry, exchange of ideas, and free debate will best serve your members



Recruitment for diversity

Consider composition reflective of your membership and plan for innovative recruitment strategies



Strong onboarding and board development

Continuous information flow plus education and programs keep directors engaged



Technology for open communication

Providing information in a timely manner via a secure board portal so directors can prepare is key



Ensure board business continuity

Responsiveness and the ability to make fast decisions at times of disruption will see you through

John Dinner adds that rigorous decision-making is also key. “Board members need to ensure that objective criteria are applied and the risk of uninformed personal opinion is mitigated”. This can be achieved by focusing on key governance outcomes that align with the board’s accountabilities to both members and the best interests of the credit union.

“Board members need to ensure that objective criteria are applied and the risk of uninformed personal opinion is mitigated” JOHN DINNER, DDJ MYERS

AUTHOR

Ian Warner
President & CEO, Aprio Inc.

Ian Warner is President and CEO of Aprio Inc., the creators of board portal software that makes good governance simple and affordable for credit unions large and small. An accomplished executive, Ian has a career of experience both participating in and chairing boards. Prior to Aprio, Ian was Chief Operating Officer of Vancity, Canada’s largest credit union. He also spent five years at Vancity’s subsidiary Citizens Bank of Canada, including four years as CEO and a board member. Ian holds a degree in Finance from the University of British Columbia and certification from Harvard Business School’s Advanced Management Program.

CONTRIBUTING GOVERNANCE ADVISORS

Thank you to experts John Dinner and Peter Myers for their insight:

John Dinner
President, John T. Dinner Board
Governance Services

John Dinner is President of John T. Dinner Board Governance Services, a leading Canadian consulting firm focused on corporate governance and board effectiveness. For more than 25 years, John has been helping boards across sectors and across Canada improve their performance and contribute in tangible ways to the success of the organizations they oversee. Board members and organizational leaders value John’s depth of experience, relevant insights, practical approach and his ability to facilitate needed governance change.

John’s hands-on, board work focuses on helping clients develop and benefit from leading-edge governance practices, including board, committee and director effectiveness evaluations,

director recruitment, board education, meeting effectiveness and best practices, information management and decision-making. He knows and understands the needs of directors and other organizational leaders first-hand. *Find out more at boardgovernance.ca*

Peter Myers, PCC, MSC
Senior Vice President, DDJ Myers, Ltd

Peter Myers facilitates professional development programs for executives and management teams, succession planning processes for boards and CEOs, and strategic planning engagements for credit unions nationwide. Weaving together strategy development, critical thinking, and employee engagement to bridge the talent and execution gap is his specialty. On a daily basis, Peter works with teams and boards to unlock and leverage their organizational, team, and individual potential. Peter also co-leads the CEO readiness and talent development program for credit union executives pursuing their next level of career potential and has been a teacher in the award-winning Emerging Leaders Program since its inception in 2012.

Third generation serving the credit union industry, Peter graduated from Arizona State University with a B.A. in sociology and a minor in Spanish. He holds a master-level certification in somatic leadership coaching from the Strozzi Institute, an internationally recognized coaching school, where he was a part of the teaching staff for eight years. He is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) as recognized by the International Coaching Federation and regularly speaks nationally on leadership, CEO and executive succession planning, employee engagement, board/management relationship building, and strategic planning. *Find out more at ddjmyers.com*