

The 7 Hidden Risks of DIY Board Management (And How to Avoid Them)

Why makeshift solutions are undermining your board –
and what smart leaders are doing instead



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Boardable

Boardable empowers nonprofit organizations to continue driving positive change in the world. Founded by experienced board executives, Boardable's board management solution removes friction so nonprofit organizations can focus on what's important – their purpose and mission. Boardable serves more than 2,000 organizations in over 40 countries worldwide ranging from Charities, Educational Institutions, and Healthcare.

Learn more at www.boardable.com.

The High Cost of Familiar Tools

At first glance, managing your board with familiar tools—email, Google Drive, Dropbox, Zoom, spreadsheets—feels efficient. Comfortable. Maybe even frugal. But when you peel back the layers, this do-it-yourself (DIY) approach to board management comes at a cost—one that sneaks up on you through disorganization, disengagement, and missed opportunities.

If you're an Executive Director or board chair, you've likely felt the friction: documents scattered across inboxes, last-minute scrambles to prepare meetings, board members unsure of what's expected or what's changed. It's not just inconvenient—it's risky. Risks to your governance. To your board's engagement. And yes, even to your fundraising and strategic planning.

This eBook lays out the seven most common (and costly) risks of DIY board management. It's written for you—the nonprofit leader juggling a thousand priorities—so you can understand what's at stake and how to fix it. We'll break down real-world scenarios, highlight where things often go sideways, and show you how other nonprofits are getting it right.



Governance Gaps and Compliance Failures

When governance is scattered across a digital junk drawer—some minutes in email, policies in Dropbox, and votes lost in text threads—things fall through. And not just small things. Big things, like audit trails, conflict-of-interest disclosures, and board-approved resolutions that never got properly recorded.

Imagine a nonprofit with a passionate, hardworking board. Over the years, different admins have stored files in various folders. Meeting minutes are stuck in someone's email archive. Bylaws were updated— but the only version lives in a PDF attachment from 2021. When a new board chair comes on, there's no onboarding folder, no history of key votes, no clean documentation of who approved what. During a grant audit, the team can't locate signed copies of a financial policy. Cue panic and actions.

Why It Matters

▶ Legal Compliance

Nonprofits are required to maintain records and follow procedures. Missing or incomplete board minutes can become a compliance risk.

▶ Loss of Institutional Memory

Leadership transitions become chaotic without clear documentation.

▶ Transparency Challenges

If decisions aren't centralized, it's nearly impossible for new members to get up to speed.

How to Fix It

Centralize your governance infrastructure. Whether it's a shared folder with strict permissions or a full board portal like Boardable, the key is having a single, secure source of truth. All board documents—from bylaws to meeting agendas and votes—should live in an organized, accessible space.

★ Boardable Tip

Use built in e-signatures and voting logs to track approvals and timestamps for every major board action.

Poor Board Engagement and Meeting Prep

Even the most committed board members will disengage if they're left unprepared. When pre-meeting materials arrive late or live across fragmented platforms, your board walks into meetings confused and checked out.

Let's say the agenda goes out 48 hours before the meeting, the financial reports are in Dropbox, and the strategy doc is buried in an email thread. Board members get overwhelmed. They either skim or show up cold. Discussion stalls. Questions don't go deep. Decisions drag.

Why It Matters

- ▶ **Unproductive Meetings**
You spend time repeating content rather than making decisions.
- ▶ **Lower Engagement**
Unprepared members don't feel confident participating.
- ▶ **Strategic Stagnation**
You never quite reach the meaningful conversations your board should be having.

How to Fix It

Send pre-reads early and consistently. Use one centralized platform to distribute materials and allow annotations or comments in advance. That way, your meetings focus on decision-making – not document review.

★ Boardable Tip

Let board members access packets and comment on agenda items directly in the app, even from their phone.

Fragmented Communication Channels

Group texts. One-off emails. Slack DMs. When communication about board work happens everywhere, it's hard to track anything. Worse, it creates gaps in understanding and unequal access to information.

Picture this: A decision is discussed on email. A few clarifications happen via text. Someone chimes in with a question on Slack, which the ED answers in a 1:1 call. What's the actual decision? Who's informed? Who isn't? No one really knows.

Why It Matters

- › **Confusion & Misalignment**
Important updates get missed or misunderstood.
- › **Lost Institutional Memory**
There's no searchable, documented conversation history.
- › **Inequity**
Not all board members are part of every conversation. That leads to resentment and poor participation.

How to Fix It

Choose a single board communication channel and stick to it. Use a system that logs conversations by topic, stores documents in context, and notifies members without overwhelming them.

★ Boardable Tip

Use topic-specific discussions to consolidate board input and avoid long, messy email chains.

Inefficient Decision-Making and Follow-Up

Boards exist to make decisions—and to make sure those decisions turn into action. But without a clear system for capturing motions, votes, and next steps, momentum dies between meetings

Imagine this: In the meeting, everyone agrees to launch a board-led donor campaign. Assignments are given verbally. Then...nothing. No one tracks progress. At the next meeting, the group realizes it never got off the ground.

Why It Matters

- ▶ **Wasted Energy**
Ideas get discussed but never executed.
- ▶ **Inconsistent Accountability**
Tasks get forgotten or duplicated.
- ▶ **Decision Fatigue**
The board keeps rehashing issues instead of progressing.

How to Fix It

Adopt a system where tasks can be assigned in real time and tracked with clear deadlines. Meeting follow-ups should be documented in a central location, accessible to everyone.

★ Boardable Tip

Use integrated task management to assign, remind, and follow through—without switching roles

Frustrated Staff and Wasted Time

Staff support is essential to running a great board – but it shouldn't feel like a full-time second job. When board materials are managed manually across disjointed tools, administrative work balloons.

Let's say your executive assistant spends 10+ hours per month compiling board packets, chasing RSVPs, copying agendas into Word, pasting them into email, and helping members troubleshoot Zoom.

Why It Matters

› Inefficiency

Time spent chasing files and feedback drains productivity.

› Burnout Risk

Admin fatigue leads to turnover.

› Error-Prone Systems

Human error increases when tasks are manual and redundant.

How to Fix It

Streamline routine tasks. Automate meeting scheduling, file sharing, reminders, and agenda templates so staff can focus on high-impact work.

★ Boardable Tip

Build agendas with drag-and-drop tools, send them out automatically, and centralize RSVP tracking all in one dashboard.

Subpar Board Member Experience and Retention

Your board members are volunteers. Their time is valuable—and their perception of your organization matters. If board service feels clunky, unclear, or unimpactful, they'll disengage. Or leave.

Imagine a board member who can't find last quarter's financials, gets looped into endless reply-all threads, and joins Zoom meetings that start late. They don't feel informed. Or useful. By the time their term ends, they're ready to move on.

Why It Matters

- ▶ **Low Morale**
Board members want to feel effective, not frustrated.
- ▶ **Retention Issues**
Recruiting a great board is hard. Keeping one is harder.
- ▶ **Lost Influence**
Experienced board members are your best advocates and donors.

How to Fix It

Design a positive board experience. Offer a clean, consistent digital space where members can find what they need, when they need it. Make it easy for them to show up prepared and participate meaningfully.

★ Boardable Tip

Give every board member a personalized dashboard with meetings, tasks, files, and notes—right in their pocket.

Undermined Fundraising and Strategic Planning

Disorganized boards don't just lose time – they lose traction. When admin fires consume every meeting, there's little room left for fundraising strategy or long-term planning.

Imagine your board spends 45 minutes reviewing last month's financials because several members missed the email with the packet. By the time you get to the development update, the room is drained. Strategic conversations get cut short – or skipped.

Why It Matters

› Weaker Donor Engagement

Board members can't advocate if they're uninformed.

› Slow Strategic Growth

Big-picture thinking suffers when basic operations dominate.

› Lower ROI on Board Time

You're paying with missed opportunities.

How to Fix It

Use board time wisely. Free up mental bandwidth by simplifying the logistics. Then, dedicate agenda time to forward-looking work and equip board members with the tools to contribute between meetings.

★ Boardable Tip

Use discussion threads and polls to advance strategy work asynchronously, so live meetings can focus on decisions.

Duct Tape Doesn't Scale

The DIY approach to board management – stringing together free tools and hoping for the best – might work for a while. But eventually, the cracks show. Governance gets sloppy. Board engagement slips. Staff time disappears. Fundraising suffers.

The good news? You can fix this. By shifting from scattered tools to a central, purpose-built platform, you unlock:

- › **Faster decisions**
- › **Stronger compliance**
- › **Better-prepared meetings**
- › **Higher board engagement**
- › **More time for strategy and fundraising**

See how other nonprofits are making board work feel like real progress. Visit pages.boardable.com/request-a-demo to **book a demo** and take the first step toward smoother governance.

Schedule your free demo

This isn't about technology for its own sake. It's about giving your board the foundation it needs to lead well – and giving your team back the time to focus on mission, not mechanics.

Whether you use Boardable or another solution, don't underestimate the power of organization. When the boardroom runs smoothly, the entire organization moves forward.

