

The Board Pre-Read Specification

A practical standard for a forward-looking board pack.

The operating principle

- The meeting starts where the pre-read ends. Reporting travels in writing; live time is reserved for judgment, challenge, and decisions.
- Target one to three consequential questions per meeting. Put routine approvals into a clearly labeled consent block.

Paper architecture

- Page 1: decision required, named owner, recommendation, and requested board action.
- Pages 2 to 3: material facts, options considered, and the explicit trade-off.
- Pages 4 to 5: financial, customer, people, legal, and risk implications.
- Final page: three discussion questions and the decision or guidance needed.
- Appendices: supporting evidence only. Do not hide the decision inside them.

Length and format

- Maximum five core pages per decision paper, excluding appendices.
- One idea per chart. Label the implication, not only the metric.
- Use accessible PDF text, descriptive file names, page numbers, and a contents page for longer packs.
- State source, period, currency, and whether each figure is actual, forecast, or scenario.

Cadence and ownership

- T minus 14 days: CEO and chair agree the decision agenda.
- T minus 10 days: paper owners submit first drafts.
- T minus 8 days: finance, legal, and CoS complete cross-pack review.
- T minus 7 days: final pack distributed through the board portal.
- Questions are answered in-document before the meeting; material changes are versioned, never silently replaced.

Distribution controls

- Use the approved board portal, not personal email or messaging apps.
- Mark confidentiality and material non-public information where relevant.
- Keep a controlled recipient list and an official archive.
- Gate sensitive appendices and confirm onward-sharing rules with counsel.

Release checklist

- The decision is visible on page one.
- Numbers reconcile across papers.
- Every acronym is defined.
- The chair has approved the running order.
- Directors can identify what to read, what to decide, and what may be taken on consent.

