

# Board Paper Brilliance.

## The Big 6.

1.

### USE YOUR TEMPLATE

#### Consistency builds trust

- Don't repurpose old papers. Refer to the template every time.
- A good template helps the board analyse a large volume of detailed papers faster. It ensures important items are consistently included.
- Strong templates keep writers on track and shorten review cycles.

### BE OBJECTIVE

#### Tell the plain truth

- To make the best decisions, the board needs the unvarnished truth. Avoid 'spin'.
- Avoid vague generalities; quantify for cred. Not, 'It's a *significant* problem', but *how* big a problem is it? e.g. 'We risk losing X% of Y if we don't do Z.'
- When the risks are harder to foresee, give examples from your or others' businesses.

2.

3.

### DO THE WORK FOR YOUR READER

#### Easy reading is hard writing

- Start early: Engage stakeholders; clarify their pain points. Test and challenge views.
- Get clear up-front on your 'WHAT?' (issue), '**SO WHAT?**' (implication) and '**NOW WHAT?**' (action). Ensure you address them.
- Stand in their shoes: Anticipate their reactions, questions and concerns.
- Complexity kills trust. Write simply.

### CUT TO THE CHASE

#### Big news first

- Front-load your main points. If more detail is needed, show where to find it.
- Know your audience (the board) and what's **MOST** interesting to them, e.g. link to strategy.
- Consider the context, e.g. business priorities, past papers, company values, changing economic and regulatory environments, competitors, etc.

4.

5.

### WRITE TIGHT

#### Be clear & concise

- Edit with your audience in mind. **Keep** what will help them think through the decision. **Delete** or reference what they already know (unless needed for context).
- Use clear headings, key-point lists, summaries and bullets to keep it lean.
- After writing, edit **with fresh eyes** (the full paper, each paragraph, each sentence).

### PROOFREAD CAREFULLY

#### Give no reason to doubt you

- Typos and poor grammar can be red flags for other errors or omissions.
- Check your facts, numbers, logic and argument, as well as your writing, before you send a first draft to anyone.

6.