



## AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA BOARDEFFECT HELPS EARLY ADOPTERS STAY CURRENT AND CONFIDENT

### THE CHALLENGE

American Public Media, the nation's largest owner and operator of public radio stations and producer and distributor of premier national programming, recognized the need for an electronic option for conducting business with its Board of Trustees in 2012, even before board portals achieved widespread popularity. "Like many organizations, we were killing too many trees as we produced huge amounts of board meeting materials," explains JoAnn Cragoe, Executive Assistant to the President. "The distribution process was extraordinarily time-consuming." Not only did meeting prep drain internal resources (paper and staff time), but also significant resources on the receiving end, as costly FedEx and local courier services delivered materials to board members in advance of meetings.

At the time, whatever version of the meeting materials that got distributed was considered final, even if changes were necessary. Board members were unable to receive updates or revisions until a separate email was sent or they arrived at the meetings.

### THE SOLUTION

Having vetted four or five other platforms, American Public Media chose BoardEffect, but not just because it provided tremendous flexibility for delivering and receiving materials. As JoAnn explains, "we are a nonprofit



company and we liked that BoardEffect understands the needs of nonprofit organizations. That, and the fact that BoardEffect is fairly priced, really appealed to us."

Now, board members use BoardEffect on their PCs or via the dedicated iPad app to access materials before meetings with—as JoAnn emphasizes—"ease and gratitude that they don't have to deal with a hard copy and have the materials available at all times, wherever they are. Delivery of board materials is immediate and easy."

### THE BENEFITS

Using BoardEffect has made a big difference. As JoAnn explains, "I didn't realize how much of an impact the easy delivery of board materials would have." Board members are prepared and find the system user-friendly and dependable. When the organization implemented BoardEffect in 2012, most board members were content



## AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA

with a paper version of materials, explains JoAnn. Now they can easily make hard copies if they chose, “though I can’t think of any reason we would ever move away from an electronic portal, we are permanent converts!” She continues, “we might be a little slow to consistently use other functions BoardEffect makes available to its users, but we recently conducted a board self-evaluation survey on BoardEffect, and it was easy to use. The function enabled us to develop quickly a professional looking report on results that included the details we needed. With the acceptance of technology that newer board members bring and expect, we hope to soon be using all the other tools BoardEffect provides.”

Even after BoardEffect’s recent platform upgrade, JoAnn “was surprised by how few questions there were from board members about access.” She also was surprised by how many now use multiple BoardEffect apps for other boards they serve—“that wasn’t true in the beginning.”

JoAnn acknowledges the upgrade required her to spend some time figuring things out because her understanding of technology tends to be the result of effort and management of a learning curve, rather than intuitive. “But not everyone is like that,” she offers, “and I’m here to tell you that even those of us who have been around awhile can become BoardEffect experts and find using it to be FUN!”

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

To use BoardEffect most effectively, JoAnn advises that organizations:

- **Leverage the knowledge center in the platform.** As someone who still prefers paper to video (in part because watching a video requires a commitment of uninterrupted time), she initially printed instructions for creating a meeting book and the board survey. She eventually took time to watch the BoardEffect videos and webinars and found them very useful.
- **Expand the team of administrators.** Initially JoAnn was the sole administrator for the board and its committees. Since then, other staff have been trained to manage specific areas within the platform so they can distribute meeting materials and handle other functions.
- **Ask for help.** JoAnn has seen the impact of BoardEffect’s investment in helpdesk personnel over the years APM has been a client. “It’s fantastic to get service right away from a live person when I have questions, and the helpdesk staff is helpful, knowledgeable and totally client-friendly.”

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