

Accelerating a New Chair's Impact

STARTING POINT

In early 2023, the Global Board of a worldwide professional membership association decided to use FitBoard's app. With its unique governance set up, the organization's board design includes a high rotation of board members. Chairs are appointed for a one-year mandate after which they leave the Board altogether.

As part of their sophisticated onboarding process, which includes 4 months of observation at board meetings without voting rights, new board members attend the [High Performance Boards Programme at IMD](#).



At the outset, the Chair asked us:

"How can I accelerate my learning about performing my role well, and do the most with the 6 months that I have left as a Chair?"



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WHY

The association's Global Board was a wonderful Proof of Value to learn from, for us. Why?



we aspire to developing a non-Eurocentric solution, and this is a truly diverse, global board



we now understand that the greatest value, for the board members of the association, lies in being able to track their learning *after* the IMD programme, in their day-to-day board practice



we appreciate that despite sharing the same IMD lexicon, harmonizing what it means to do better every day requires clarity on: are we using FitBoard to assess, or to develop ourselves?

WHAT

We started out with a rudimentary subset of our features to capture sentiment. When the Global Board began using FitBoard during their February board meeting in Tokyo, the FitBoard team had no context nor familiarization with the organization.

This is how we described our app to the Global Board in our pitch, presented by their own governance & nomination committee, to facilitate the decision to embark on the experience:

FitBoard have built a solution to keep the finger on the pulse of a board - in a safe and anonymous way - all year long.

So that it can become a truly agile board, picking up signals and responding in real time to what is happening in and around it.

HOW

We set up The Global Board's account in our app, enabling one of our survey functions, called "pulse check". Between Early February and End of June, board members could:

- respond to 10 targeted questions, with ratings
- notes to self to challenge oneself to do even better next time

We pulse checked each board director:

- following each virtual board meeting
- at the end of each day of their biannual 4-day face to face board retreats

Our reports included all scores, consolidated anonymously, as well as all notes to self, which the Global Board authorized us to publish, also without attribution.

The Chair used the reports for his reflection, and progressively challenged us to make our recommendations ever more useful to his situation. This led to us providing him with a tracker of the level of *psychological safety* experienced by his board colleagues throughout the Global Board's time with FitBoard.



OUR TAKEAWAYS

The greatest AHA? That in our globalized world, one of the biggest challenges remains: to communicate effectively across cultures. Some national, industry and company cultures favour:



high context speak, a meandering, relational, detail-rich and engaging style of voicing one's points, whilst others prefer



low context talk, a style that gets straight to the point, is task focussed, brief and structured in presentation

When this dimension of our verbal preferences is not clarified, it leads to all manner of trouble with pacing, alignment, potentially even causing entirely avoidable misunderstandings, offense and outright conflict.

We're there to help before anything festers! FitBoard brings up red flags early and can assess if there is real alignment in a board.



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