The 5-Point 'Look More Pro' Board Meeting Checklist for CEOs

1 - It All Starts With The Board Materials and the Pre-Read. They Have to Be Focused, Organized, and Engaging.

- [ ] Clearly separate read-ahead materials for calibration from your topics for actual discussion.
- [ ] Everything reads like a narrative. Structure your content like a conversation, including 'What You Need to Know', 'Highlights', 'Lowlights', and 'What's Keeping Me Up at Night?'
- [ ] Supporting documents and reports are in their rightful place in the materials (appendix). This keeps you out of the weeds and reduces the number of 'just to make me look smart' questions.
- [ ] There is clear focus on the topics that truly, truly matter. Two Truly's. Be sure to include the baseline...Has the market changed? Has the team grown? What are the financials like? What are the key takeaways?

2 - The Value of Pre-Meeting Communication Cannot Be Understated.

- [ ] Get the board materials out early to give the board members time to prepare. A good rule of thumb is to give to board members 1 day of review per 8 pages of materials.
- [ ] Provide a way for your board to ask questions or comment in advance of your board meeting. This gets the easy questions out of the way and out of the live meeting.
- [ ] Based on the pre-read interaction, write down a list of questions you think you're likely to get asked in the board meeting.
- [ ] Make your best guess about which board members will come unprepared to the meeting. Reach out to them and give them a reminder to read the narrative before the meeting.

3 - Set the Stage to be Collaborative and Productive.

- [ ] Don't present. Sit at the table and don't stand. Don't get bogged down by presenting all your content live. Ask if there are questions about anything in the read-ahead and then move on directly to the important discussions.
- [ ] Don't wander far from the agreed-upon agenda. Time spent talking off-agenda could be valuable, but more often, those discussions are rabbit holes that take important time away from the decisions that impact the business.
- [ ] Assign tasks to board members. While scary at first, this establishes the group as a team working for a common goal. Again, your board should want to help you.
- [ ] Get as much admin done ahead of the meeting as possible. Starting a board meeting with the admin can kill your ability to 'set-the-stage' for strategic discussions. It often bogs down the in-person meeting.

4 - Always Include at Least One ‘Deep Dive’ and Be Honest About Where You Need Help.

- Carve out at least 45 minutes for discussion per Deep Dive.
- Post the questions that you'd like to have answered by the end of the Deep Dive session in your board materials.
- Focus your Deep Dive discussion to areas where your board members can be doing the most to help you, such as complex agreements or deal structures, sourcing talent, and messy legal issues.
- Ask your board for help when you get to the Deep Dives. That’s what they’re there for. Just be sure to be clear about what you need help with. It’s okay to say you don’t know the best way to approach a problem.

5 - Loop Your Operating Team About the Board Meeting and the Board’s Feedback.

- Remove only stock option info or sensitive HR issues from the board materials so that you can share as much of the content as possible with the team.
- Find a way to communicate to your team that the board is aware of them and the work they’re doing for the company.
- Make sure the team understands that the board is alignment with the goals of the company.