



The Tech 28 for Boards

Strategic technology conversations for nonprofit Boards

A COMPANION RESOURCE TO THE NTEEN EQUITY GUIDE FOR NONPROFIT TECHNOLOGY

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What's inside

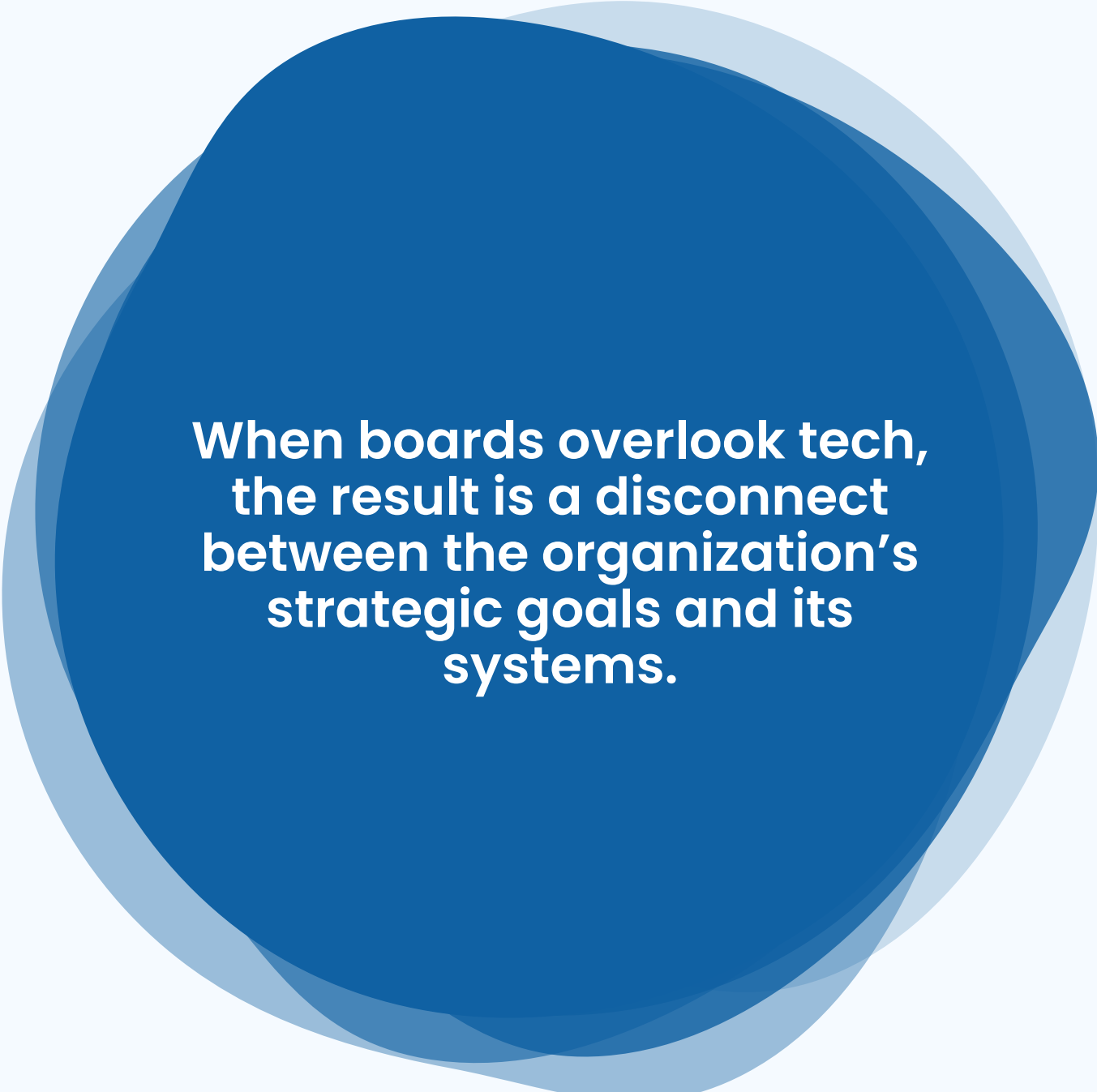
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Why every Board should talk about tech



When boards overlook tech, the result is a disconnect between the organization's strategic goals and its systems.

If board members and staff can't speak to the value of technology—how it supports programs, amplifies mission, and powers day-to-day operations—it's no surprise that tech gets treated as a cost center instead of a strategic asset.

Every nonprofit is required to have a Board of Directors—but how those boards are structured, run, and engaged varies widely. Board agendas, committee structures, and strategic planning processes all look different depending on the organization.

Still, all boards share some core responsibilities. BoardSource, a leading resource on nonprofit governance, groups them into [four key areas](#): setting direction and strategy, ensuring resources, providing oversight, and managing board operations.

Boards often bring these responsibilities to life when discussing fundraising, governance, or impact. But technology? That conversation is frequently missing. We all know that technology is a critical part of how every organization functions, communicates, collaborates, and operates every day. So when boards overlook tech, the result is a disconnect between the organization's strategic goals and its systems.

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surprise that tech gets treated as a cost center instead of a strategic asset.

We want to change that.

This resource offers **28 questions to help your board engage in meaningful conversations about technology**.

Use them to spark discussion, uncover gaps in capacity or understanding, and guide strategic planning. Your board should not implement technology at your organization—but it does need to help set direction, serve as a strategic thought partner with you and your staff, establish principles and guardrails, and assess risks related to tech and data for your organization, your mission, and your community.

This isn't a checklist, because there are no "right" answers. Every organization's needs will differ—and that's the point. Use these questions selectively, to shape board discussions; include them as part of regular processes like board self-assessments or tech surveys; and revisit them regularly. Adapt them to your work or add more questions as needed. Technology evolves, and your board's thinking should too.

The Tech 28

28 questions to help your board engage in meaningful conversations about technology.

Set direction and strategy

1. What tech tools do we need to deliver our programs and operations?
2. In what ways can tech serve as an enabler or amplifier for our strategy?
3. Can tech reduce costs, increase capacity, or support the well-being of our team and community?
4. How might we use technology and data to better inform our strategic decisions?
5. How does our current use of technology create or expose us to risk?
6. How might upcoming technology trends or changes impact our strategy, and how are we preparing?

Ensure the necessary resources

7. How do we make sure our board, staff, and volunteers are equipped and trained on our key tech tools?
8. What are the top tech-related tradeoffs we're facing as we pursue our strategy?
9. Which of our core fundraising pitches are tech-related, and how do they connect to our strategy?
10. What build vs. buy decisions might we evaluate, and have we considered long-term costs and sustainability?
11. Where are our data and tech skill gaps as a board, and what is our plan for addressing them?
12. Are there cultural, accessibility, or systemic barriers for tech-related skill-building or learning for our board we need to address?



Provide oversight

13. Are we following best practices and complying with regulations related to data and technology in our field (for example, health, education, or human resources)?
14. How are we protecting stakeholder data from breaches, surveillance, or misuse?
15. Are we using tech tools that access, reuse, or expose sensitive data, and have we evaluated those risks?
16. If our tech or data infrastructure were compromised, do we have a recovery plan in place?
17. What data are we collecting, and how are we safeguarding it across collection, management, and disposal?
18. Have we calculated the true cost of technology in our organization, including maintenance, upgrades, training, and support? Do we know the total cost of ownership for key tools?
19. How are our tech costs allocated between overhead and program work, and does that allocation align with our strategy?
20. What metrics are we using to evaluate whether we're investing in technology equitably and strategically?

21. Do we have budgeted contingencies for issues like breaches, policy shifts, or system failures?

22. Are there unmet needs or opportunities where additional investment in tech could increase our impact?

Board operations

23. Does the Executive Director's role description reflect the level of tech and data leadership we expect?
24. How are we supporting the ED's capacity to lead on tech and data through skill-building, peer connections, and resources?
25. Are we regularly evaluating the ED's performance on tech, and our support of their tech leadership, as part of our board's performance reviews or ED check-ins?
26. How are we committing to leadership development on tech and data at the board level, and for the organization's staff?
27. Does our board and committee structure reflect the diversity of expertise needed to govern tech well?
28. Should we consider a dedicated board committee or community advisory group focused on technology and data?

Who we are

The Nonprofit Tech Governance Congress is a coalition of CEOs, CTOs, CIOs, and other tech leaders from the nonprofit, philanthropic, and tech sectors dedicated to advancing nonprofit technical governance. They define essential knowledge for board members to support technology use; share board-level standards in data ethics, privacy, and digital transformation; and foster collaboration across sectors to drive nonprofit tech advancement.

Members

Alvina Antar, *CIO*, **Okta**

Amy Sample Ward, *CEO*, **NTEN**

Anil Dash, *VP Dev. Experience*, **Fastly**

Chantal Foster, *AI Strategy*, **Annenberg Foundation**

Darian Rodriguez-Hayman, *CEO*, **Helping People Help**

Edima Elinewinga, *VP, CTO*, **Association of Corporate Counsel**

Erik Arnold, *Fmr. GM, CTO*, **Microsoft Philanthropies**

Erran Berger, *VP, Product Engineering*, **LinkedIn**

Georgia Bullen, *Executive Director*, **Superbloom**

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John Mohr, *CIO*, **MacArthur Foundation**

Kristen Swanson, *VP, Design & Research*, **Okta**

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Nate Wong, *Partner*, **Bridgespan Group**

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Satwik Seshasai, *CTO*, **Atria Health**

Tara Huffman, *Chief Program and Strategy Officer*,
BoardSource

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Board.Dev exists to ensure every nonprofit board has the tech leadership it needs to thrive. We're building a future where every nonprofit includes technology governance at the board level—because tech is no longer optional, it's mission-critical.

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NTEN is a community of nonprofit professionals who want to make the world a better place through the skillful and equitable use of technology. By connecting, upskilling, and enabling nonprofit organizations and professionals to use technology for social change, NTEN strengthens the transformative power of missions and movements.

Find the latest version of the Equity Guide
for Nonprofit Technology, along with
companion resources and templates.



nten.link/equity-guide