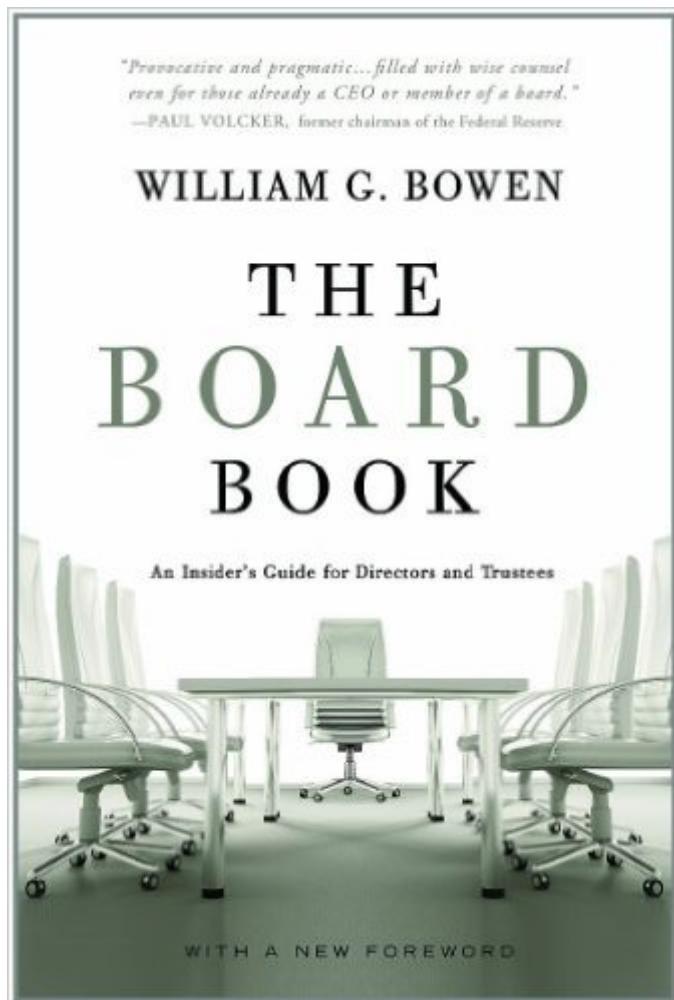


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The Board Book: An Insider's Guide For Directors And Trustees



Synopsis

"By far the best book on corporate and institutional governance." •Nicholas Katzenbach, former attorney general of the United States In his new foreword to The Board Book, former Mellon Foundation and Princeton University president William G. Bowen brings his immense experience to bear on the most pressing questions facing boards of directors and trustees today: seeking collaborative relationships and placing a renewed emphasis on sustainable initiatives. The strategies Bowen relates throughout the book foster the collegiality and sense of purpose•more important in todayâ™s turbulent times than ever before•that are integral to any effective board.

Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 1 edition (April 9, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393342891

ISBN-13: 978-0393342895

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (17 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #83,273 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 inÂ Books > Business & Money > Management & Leadership > Corporate Governance #67 inÂ Books > Business & Money > Small Business & Entrepreneurship > Nonprofit Organizations & Charities #132 inÂ Books > Business & Money > Management & Leadership > Project Management

Customer Reviews

This is a remarkable and valuable book. Remarkable in the depth and intensity of its coverage of the subject, and valuable as a road map for directors and potential directors, not to mention CEOs who may be confounded by their relationship with their boards. Bowen was a Professor of Economics who became President of Princeton University, then of the Mellon Foundation, and later Ithaca Harbors. He has been on both sides--management and director--and has broad experience in both the non-profit and the for-profit worlds. His service on the boards of several pre-eminent U.S. companies, a few of which have gone through periods of challenge and adversity, has given him unique background and experience. We are fortunate that someone with his credentials has decided to tackle with such passion and insight the thorny and difficult issues that boards have to deal with. The approach is not that of an academic describing the structures and responsibilities of boards;

rather Bowen comes with strong points of view on many of the most controversial issues. Readers (including this reviewer) are certain to disagree with some of his positions, but will have to give him high marks for fairly presenting the other side of most issues. CEOs who want the title of Chairman may not be happy, nor aging board members, not long serving board members, nor the retired CEO who just became Chairman. But each of these players will find the materials provocative and enlightening. What is also remarkable about this book is its underscoring how much has changed in the past 14 years in board matters. Bowen had previously authored a book on the same subject entitled "Inside the Board Room." The landscape today is barely recognizable from that of 1994.

This is a very good book, and it is with a certain sense of reluctance that I rate it with only four stars instead of five. Mr. Bowen, a distinguished and highly experienced professional who has served on many for-profit and not-for-profit boards, does a commendable job of sharing his wisdom, insights, and recommendations in this thoughtful and important book. The one frustration that I found with the book is the manner in which it jumps back and forth between issues involving for-profit boards and not-for-profit boards. In jumping back and forth, I felt a bit like my train of thought was continually interrupted. Perhaps a good analogy to explain my sentiments might be the following: You enroll in a foreign language studies program with the hope of learning both French and Spanish only to find that both languages are being taught in the same class at the same time; an astute student will learn a great deal, perhaps, but it might be easier and more enjoyable to separate the lessons a bit more. That being said, let me share some observations as to why this book is so good (in spite of the shortcomings mentioned above):* The depth of Mr. Bowen's experience shines through on every page. This is a man who really knows what he is talking about, and he does an excellent job of sharing his valuable knowledge in a way that readers can easily understand and readily absorb.* His advice is not just scholarly or "ivory tower", but rather very practical. One can put down this book, head straight for the boardroom, and apply its lessons immediately.* Mr. Bowen captures the heart of many cultural, political, and related issues that impact the duties and responsibilities of those who serve as directors and trustees.

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