PRIVATE SECTOR EDITION

Board

Checklist

Twenty-four questions a board and audit committee can use to review its own practice on a major technology program.

J. Lynne & Co.

The patience to see it. The drive to move it.

HOW TO USE THIS

A board does not run a technology program. It decides whether the program should continue, and answers for the outcome either way. Those are different jobs and they need different information.

This checklist is about the board's own practice rather than the project: what it receives, what it asks, what it settled in advance, and what its record holds.

Mark each statement Yes, No, or Not sure, answering for the board as a body. Many boards find it useful to have the board chair, the audit committee chair, and the chief executive complete it separately and compare.

About the three columns

A No marks something known and not yet done. A Not sure marks something believed but not tested.

They lead to different next steps. A No can be assigned to someone. A Not sure usually needs someone to go and check first.

01 INFORMATION

What we receive

STATEMENT	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Our reports show when the project team first knew about a problem, not only when we were told.			
We receive a written update far enough ahead of the meeting to read it properly.			
Reports name specific risks and decisions, not only a color or a percentage complete.			
We are told what changed since the last report, and why it changed.			
We see spending against the amount we originally approved, not only against the latest revised figure.			
At least once, we have heard about this program from someone who does not report to it.			

02 ENQUIRY

What we ask

STATEMENT	YES	NO	NOT SURE
We ask what would have to happen for this program to be reported as behind.			
We ask who on our own staff is able to tell the vendor that something is not acceptable.			
We ask the team what worries them most, and expect an answer rather than a reassurance.			
We ask what has been dropped from the plan in order to protect the date.			
We ask what the first week after go-live will be like for customers and for front-line staff.			
We ask who owns the results once the vendor’s team has gone.			

03 DECISIONS

What we settled in advance

STATEMENT	YES	NO	NOT SURE
We agreed what this program must deliver before we approved the money.			
We agreed what would cause us to pause it, and who has the authority to call that.			
We agreed which decisions belong to the board and which belong to management.			
We agreed how large a change has to be before it returns to us for approval.			
We agreed what we would tell customers, and when.			
We agreed how long we will keep measuring results after go-live, and who reports them.			

04 THE RECORD

What our minutes hold

STATEMENT	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Our minutes record the decision, the options considered, and the risk we accepted.			
Our minutes record the questions the board asked and the answers it received.			
We can show why this vendor was chosen and who else was considered.			
We can show who approved each change to scope, budget, or date.			
Our vendor review file is kept current rather than completed once at signing.			
Someone could follow our reasoning a year from now without asking us — an auditor, a diligence team, or a future board.			

READING YOUR ANSWERS

Count the No and Not sure answers together, out of 24.

OPEN ITEMS	WHAT THAT USUALLY MEANS
0–3	**Few open items** Most of what this covers is settled. The remaining items are specific enough to assign individually.
4–8	**A common range** Most boards completing this land here. These are usually habits rather than gaps, and habits tend to change quickly once named.
9–14	**A wide spread** Enough is open that the items interact. Sections 01 and 02 are where most boards start, since the rest depends on what information arrives.

OPEN ITEMS	WHAT THAT USUALLY MEANS
15+	**Most items open** The majority has not been settled. This is common where a program was underway before the board's role was defined, and the list works as a starting agenda.

Where the answers cluster

Section 01 concerns what the board can see. Section 02 concerns what it asks. Section 03 concerns what was settled while there was time. Section 04 concerns what remains afterward.

Each has a different remedy, and section 03 is usually the least expensive place to begin.

ABOUT J. LYNNE & CO.

J. Lynne & Co. is an independent governance advisory firm working with organizations to lead major transformations with confidence. We take no vendor commissions and hold no reseller agreements.

We publish reference material of this kind for executives, boards, and program sponsors. If it is useful, you are welcome to adapt it for your own organization.

If you would like to talk

We are happy to answer questions about anything on this list, or to look at a program you have underway.

Website: jlynne.co

Book a conversation: jlynne.co/contact

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