



## Board Portal Buying Guide

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**The top 10 things  
to assess.**

aprio



## Why is everyone shifting to a board portal?

Years back paper board binders being heavy to lug and costly to produce and courier was a major motivator for companies to go paperless. Today, there are more modern drivers making boards adopt board portals: security and efficiency.

*"The use of purpose-built content sharing and distribution portals has become a common practice for sharing sensitive documents with corporate directors in preparation for board meetings."*

**Gartner, September 2014**

Emailing board documents or sharing with free editions of software like Dropbox or Google Drive poses real security risks. On the efficiency front, many boards are seeking to best engage high-contributing directors, which means offering online convenience. And for organizational efficiency, corporate secretaries and administrators are seeking automation tools to perform their work in less time as governance demands grow.

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# What is a board portal?

In case you haven't already used board portal software, it's like a web application that executives and directors log into to perform their role for an organization's Board of Directors.

A board portal offers confidential access to board materials, past and present, and provides tools that make it easier for administrators to prepare for board meetings and conduct committee activities. Board portals also improve information flow to and between busy board members even as they travel.

## TOP RANKED BENEFITS OF BOARD PORTALS



**Instant, same-time delivery** of sensitive updates and document revisions to boards at any time, regardless of location.



**Centralized access** to meeting materials, communications, policies, bylaws, and archives within a highly reliable, secure portal.



**Secure online note-taking** and collaborating for Directors, with the option of a clean swipe of all communication once the Board makes a decision.



**Increased efficiency** to produce & distribute board packages and other documents.



**Increased efficiency** to schedule and reschedule meetings.



**Increased security**, including protection for confidential documents, and built-in safeguards to prevent accidental email transmissions.

# Evaluating a Board Portal

There are many different board portals available on the market. How do you choose one that is the right fit for your organization?

As Gartner reported in their Market Guide for Board Portals, "The majority of boards have very similar processes, and board portals have very similar feature sets." With most board portal software performing similar functions, it's very important to look at service, pricing and track record serving organizations like yours.

## TOP 10 THINGS TO ASSESS WHEN BUYING A BOARD PORTAL

When evaluating board portals here are some key things to assess to find a tool that's right for you.

### 1 Board Administration & Management

Explore how a board portal eases the process for administrators to prepare for board meetings and provide updates to directors when dates or documents change. Consider the routine effort you take today and enquire about what you can automate.

### 2 Director Access & Collaboration

A principle function of board portals is to provide timely, transparent access to board information. Learn about the different products approach and user interface to making information access easy. What will be intuitive for your board?

IS IT EASY TO USE?

### 3 Mobility & Engagement Convenience

Travel is a routine part of daily life for many directors and executives. Both for recruiting high-contributing board members, and for keeping them engaged, technology matters. Explore the conveniences you can offer mobile directors from tablet apps, to on and offline access and support for remote approvals.

### 4 Security

Safeguarding the confidentiality of board documents and communications is a key driver of shift toward board portals. Consider both the security of board information in a portal and making access secure but simple for directors.

### 5 Getting Started & Adoption Ease

Software has no impact on efficiency or security unless it is adopted by your whole board. Understand the help a vendor offers to take your board information and schedules online and engage support users with training and communication.

### 6 Technology Innovation

How can you ensure the tool you select today will evolve along with governance best practices and the needs of your organization. Ask about future product updates and your voice as a customer in product development.

### 7 Reputation & Service

Next to product ease and reliability, service is the biggest deciding factor on whether customers are happy with a software vendor, or quickly move on. Talk with peers using the product. Ask about their service experiences, and how issues are resolved.

### 8 Support

Because a board portal is used by some of the most influential and time-starved people in your organization, it is paramount that help is highly professional and useful. Consider calling a vendor's support line to test the support you'll receive.

### 9 Affordability

While functionality of board portals may be comparable, there is variation in pricing. In particular, some vendors have extra costs for additional committees, training or for amounts of data storage. Ensure you ask about starter fees and all possible add-ons.

### 10 Best Fit Overall

Going through a software assessment process you are exposed to a vendor's people, marketing, experience their response to questions and witness their interaction with your team. Consider which vendor gives you the sense of a best fit?



Not sure how to make the right decision? Try our Board Portal Assessment Checklist



IPAD, ANDROID, MICROSOFT APPS?

GET REFERENCES

## BOARD PORTAL ASSESSMENT – TOP 10 CRITERIA CHECKLIST

Conduct a smart, efficient board portal product comparison with this simple checklist.

### Scoring

- 1 = does not meet requirements
- 2 = meets requirements
- 3 = exceeds requirements in a useful way

	Vendor A	Vendor B	Vendor C
<b>BOARD ADMINISTRATION &amp; MANAGEMENT</b>			
Document management – how do administrators set up board packages and update them after the initial draft?			
Director alerts – how are directors notified when new information is available?			
Meeting scheduling – What steps does it take to schedule and reschedule a board meeting?			
Contacts – What steps does it take to add a director?			
Groups & committees – Can I easily assign different individuals to different committees? Are there any restrictions on the number of groups I can create?			
Individual access – Can I limit document access to certain groups or individuals such as a committee?			
<b>DIRECTOR ACCESS &amp; COLLABORATION</b>			
Document management – How do directors and executives access the board calendar, current and past board materials?			
Search – How can directors and administrators search for information – by date, keyword, committee name?			
Annotation – Can directors add notes and highlight documents privately?			
Annotation sharing – Can annotated documents be shared?			
Multiple languages – are all the languages we need supported?			
<b>MOBILITY &amp; ENGAGEMENT CONVENIENCE</b>			
Offline access – how can directors and executives access information without wifi?			
Devices – In addition to a desktop edition, what type of tablet editions exist (e.g. iPhone, Android, etc)?			
eSignatures – can Directors sign documents remotely?			
Multiple boards/centralized access – if directors belong to multiple boards can access be centralized with single sign on?			
Surveys – can the board portal support annual board self-assessment surveys or support voting on consensus-style decisions?			
Expenses – Can directors submit and track expense payment through the software?			

**SECURITY**

Data security – how is data protected from loss or hack?

Data residency – Does the vendor have data centers? Do customer have a choice of location for data residency?

Sign in – What are the sign-in requirements? How is security balanced with director ease of access?

Remote data deletion – if a director's device is lost or stolen can communication be wiped remotely?

Has the software undergone a formal third-party security evaluation such as ISO 27001 or SOC 2?

**GETTING STARTED & ADOPTION EASE**

How does the vendor help ensure ease and adoption at the start of using a board portal?

Is there support for the first board meeting?

Is there help with uploading archival documents or setting up filing structures to get started?

How will your corporate secretary/administration team get trained?

How will executive and directors get trained and supported in adopting the board portal?

What about new features or new directors who join – is training continuous?

**TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION**

How often do you release new features?

How are customer requests incorporated in your product development?

**REPUTATION AND SERVICE**

How many years have you been in the governance and technology space?

What is your customer loyalty record?

What other customers do you serve in my industry / of my type (e.g. non-profit, government, public)?

Can you provide reference contacts?

**SUPPORT**

How does the vendor stay in touch with customers, personally, over time?

Is there a dedicated support rep per client?

Has a recent customer satisfaction survey been conducted and what were results?

What are support hours and support response times?

How can users submit a support request? (email, phone, chat, etc.)

Where is your call centre?

Vendor A    Vendor B    Vendor C

AFFORDABILITY			
What is the cost of implementation?			
What is the software license cost for a board (how many members)?			
Is there additional cost for committee groups or other sub groups?			
Is there additional cost for offline use or for tablet applications?			
Are there any other add on costs?			
Is training included for getting started?			
What about ongoing training for new directors or new features?			
If applicable – Is there special pricing for not-for-profit clients?			

OVERALL BEST FIT			
What is the total score for each vendor?			
Looking at how you've scored each vendor so far, which vendor do you believe is the best fit? (1 = not confident of fit, 2 = reasonably confident of fit, 3 = most confident of fit)			
Best fit – considering your experiences with each vendor's people, marketing and communications, which feels the best fit (bonus 3 points).			
TOTALS			

**Best of luck with your selection.**

Consider the Aprio Boardroom – we have a 99% customer loyalty record.

**aprio.net**

## ABOUT APRIO

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Aprío makes good governance simple and affordable for organizations of any size. Our board portal, Aprío Boardroom™ is chosen by financial institutions, crown corporations, non-profits and public companies to achieve transparent communication, efficient decisions and well-run board meetings. With all board information, scheduling, collaboration and decision tracking in Aprío Boardroom, the work of organizing meetings, and engaging and keeping directors up to date becomes easier, and far more secure. Founded in 2003, Aprío is proud of our reputation for the best customer experience in our industry.

## GET IN TOUCH

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