

Your quick guide to:

PREPARING BOARD PAPERS

As a PA, preparing board papers won't necessarily be your favourite part of the job. But to prevent it from becoming the bane of your working life, you need to ensure you're able to do it as efficiently as possible. This guide provides some helpful tips.

Managing lots of contributors

What makes preparing board papers so tricky is the amount of people you have to rely on.

Managing the supporting papers you'll receive from a variety of people is challenging, and to keep on top of it, you'll need to do the following:

- Request papers as early as possible, and provide strict deadlines for submission
- Check carefully for correct and complete information as soon as you've received it
- Check the dates to ensure you've received the right versions
- Check that no pages are missing
- Identify people who regularly submit papers late and give them earlier warnings

Unfair as it may seem, if someone submits incomplete papers and it goes unnoticed, you'll still take at least some of the responsibility.

Printing, saving and sending

As soon as you receive supplementary papers from board members, print them – it makes more sense to slowly put them together as you receive them rather than at the last minute.

Once the pack is ready, scan and save it securely as a pdf file for future reference. Then send a copy of the pack to each of the board members.

And make sure you print a few extra copies of the complete papers, because someone will always forget theirs.

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Other handy tips

- Ideally, the board pack should be bound. If this isn't possible, put all the papers in a clear plastic wallet to make sure they stay neat and ordered
- Make sure each supporting paper is formatted in a clear and consistent way. Above all, everything needs to be easy to read, and small or constantly changing fonts will not be helpful
- If you're missing a few supporting papers shortly before the meeting, send the pack anyway, and then send the additional content separately. Your priority should be giving all members as much opportunity as possible to prepare
- The agenda, list of actions and previous minutes should always be at the front of the pack
- Place a numbered divider between each supporting paper, and then add each number to the agenda at the front of the pack

It's often a thankless task, but learning to prepare board papers diligently and punctually will greatly increase your chances of progressing in your career as a PA. Board meetings at big businesses are enormously important, and if you can support their smooth running, you'll be held in high regard.

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