

The Invisible Power of Agenda Design



How Boards Decide What Matters Before the Meeting Even Begins



with Mark A. Pfister

 Webinar Start Countdown



WEBINAR REMINDERS

a few points to mention

- **Purpose**: Exhibit how **strong governance does not begin with discussion, it begins with design – and this can start with a proper agenda.**
- **Questions**: Write your questions in the Q&A section. Our goal is to answer all questions at the close of the presentation. Otherwise, we will follow-up with you via email afterwards.
- **Materials**: Yes, this entire webinar is being recorded, and you will receive a link via email shortly. This link will also include the ability to view & download the presentation deck in its own separate file.
- **International Board Director Competency Designation**: IBDC.D certification holders will receive 1 CPE credit by attending (be sure to follow proper CPE credit submission guidelines).



YOUR SPEAKER & HOST



Mark A. Pfister

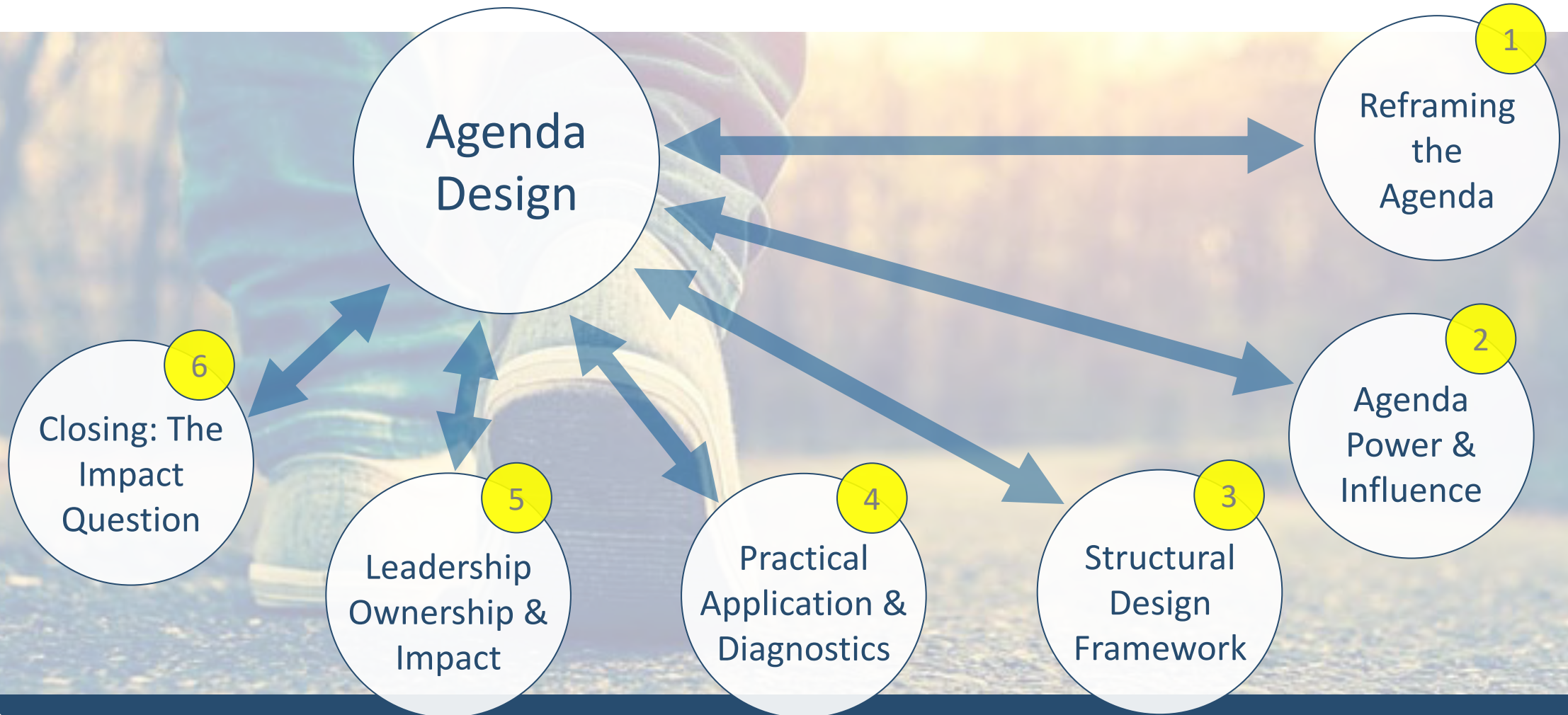
Non-Executive Director, CEO,
& Chief Board Consultant

M. A. Pfister Strategy Group /
International Board Director Competency Designation (IBDC.D)

- Governance & Strategy expert, Non-Executive Director, & Chief Board Consultant having consulted & advised hundreds of public, private, PE, and nonprofit Boards.
- He is known as “*The Board Architect*” for his work in defining the structural components of effective Boards.
- His book, ‘*Across The Board: The Modern Architecture Behind an Effective Board of Directors*,’ is a bestseller with circulation in over 70 countries.
- He is the creator of the *International Board Director Competency Designation (IBDC.D)*, a globally-recognized Board and Board Director education & certification.

GOALS

what to walk away with from today's discussion...



— INTRODUCTION —

keep in mind

For our discussion today, I ask that you think about how these concepts are applied to not just the boardroom, but to all meetings you may host or attend...





1

Reframing The Agenda



main concept

Agenda design is not a logistical task - it is a leadership function that shapes Board outcomes before discussion begins.

REFRAMING THE AGENDA

the background

1) Most Boards believe decisions happen during the meeting

2) In reality, many decisions are shaped before the meeting begins

3) The agenda determines what is seen, discussed, and decided

Boardroom Insight



“What a Board discusses is not accidental - it is pre-determined by what is placed in front of it..”

REFRAMING THE AGENDA

reframing focus

1) The agenda is not administrative

2) It defines attention, priority, and outcomes

3) It is governance architecture

Boardroom Insight



“Structure drives behavior, and behavior drives decisions. Agenda design sits at the start of that chain.”

driving the desired outcome

Shifting from administrative thinking to governance architecture

Before improving agendas, Boards must first rethink what agendas
actually do...

2

Agenda Power & Influence

agenda as a control mechanism

1) Determines
what reaches the
Board

2) Signals what
matters most

3) Allocates time,
and therefore
importance

Boardroom Insight



“In governance, inclusion and omission carry equal weight. What is not discussed is just as consequential.”

the strategic gatekeeper

1) The agenda is a strategic filter

2) It shapes the Board's field of vision

3) It influences outcomes before discussion begins

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“The agenda is the Board’s lens - narrow it, and decisions narrow with it.”

The agenda is the first decision point!

hidden biases in agenda design

1) Recency bias

2) Management framing bias

3) Time compression bias

4) Legacy carryover bias

Boardroom Insight



“Most agenda flaws are not intentional - they are embedded biases that quietly shape governance over time.”

what this means for governance

1) Governance issues can often originate in agenda design

2) Poor agendas constrain decision quality

3) Better agendas create better thinking

Boardroom Insight



“Boards rarely fail at decision-making. They fail at defining the decision environment.”

driving the desired outcome

Agenda design shapes outcomes before discussion begins

Understanding influence is the first step toward intentional design...

3

Structural Design Framework

anatomy of a high-impact agenda

1) Strategic

2) Oversight

3) Decision

4) Exploratory

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“High-performing Boards do not cover more, they structure discussion differently.”

strategic layer

1) Long-term
positioning

2) Competitive
dynamics

3) Transformation
initiatives

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“If strategy is not deliberately prioritized, it will be consistently deprioritized.”

oversight layer

1) Financial performance

2) Risk and compliance

3) Operational tracking

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“Oversight is essential, but when it dominates, it crowds out forward-looking governance.”

decision layer

1) Clear decision points

2) Defined outcomes

3) Accountability for action

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“Ambiguity in agenda design leads directly to ambiguity in accountability.”

exploratory layer

1) Emerging risks

2) Market shifts

3) Unstructured strategic thinking

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“Boards that do not explore emerging issues eventually react to them.”

critical insight

If everything is “*for discussion,*” nothing is truly for decision!

Clarity of intent is what separates productive meetings from performative ones...

driving the desired outcome

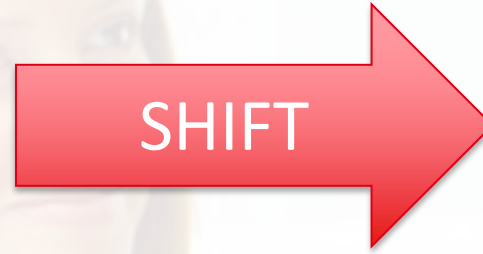
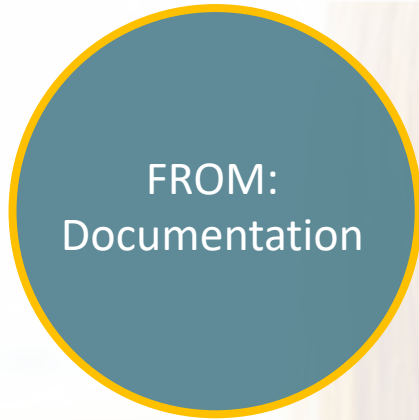
Effective agendas are intentionally constructed

Without structure, even experienced Boards default to inefficiency...

4

Practical Application & Diagnostics

from passive to intentional design



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“The difference between average and high-performing Boards is rarely knowledge, it is intentional design.”

practical upgrades

1) Label: Decision
/ Discussion /
Information

2) Assign time
based on impact

3) Define intended
outcomes

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“Small structural changes in agendas create disproportionate improvements in meeting effectiveness.”

time allocation = strategic signaling

1) Time reflects
priority

2) Priority drives
focus

3) Focus drives
outcomes

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“Boards communicate priorities less through words and more through how they allocate time.”

agenda red flags

1) Strategy placed last

2) Repetitive reporting

3) No defined decisions

4) Static agenda structure

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“Consistent agenda patterns often reveal deeper governance habits that go unchallenged.”

key observation

If your agenda looks the same every meeting, your governance likely does, too!

Static agendas signal static thinking, and static thinking limits strategic adaptability...

driving the desired outcome

The goal is to turn insight into immediate governance improvement

Insight without execution does not change governance outcomes...

5

Leadership Ownership & Impact

role of the chair

1) Curator of attention

2) Protector of time

3) Challenger of framing

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“The quality of the agenda is a direct reflection of the strength of Board leadership.”

ownership matters

Strong agendas
are designed

Weak agendas
are typically
inherited

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*“Intentional governance requires ownership.
Without it, process defaults take over.”*

6

Closing: The Impact Question

- Before **discussion**
- Before **debate**
- Before **decisions**

The agenda may have already shaped the outcome

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“By the time a meeting begins, much of the decision pathway has already been set.”

final takeaway

Governance excellence begins before the meeting starts

Preparation, structure, and intent (not discussion alone) drive effective governance...

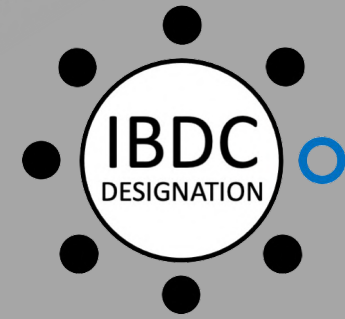
call to action



What decisions has your Board (or team) already made, without realizing it, simply by how the agenda was designed?

- ✓ Re-evaluate your future agendas
- ✓ Identify hidden biases
- ✓ Redesign with intention

The next agenda you design is an opportunity to reshape how your Board (or team) thinks and decides.



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1:1

Group

On-Demand

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— THE INVISIBLE POWER OF AGENDA DESIGN —

are you prepared?

Q&A

Design
with
purpose

Shape
discussions

Drive
decisioning

Contact Mark at mark@pfisterstrategy.com

Board Director Education + Certification details <https://www.pfisterstrategy.com/exceptionalboarddirector>



MARK A. PFISTER

Non-Executive Director, CEO, and Chief Board Consultant

Biography

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With a strong focus in Strategy, Governance, and Technology / Cybersecurity, Mark A. Pfister is CEO & Chief Board Consultant of M. A. Pfister Strategy Group, an executive advisory firm that serves as a strategic advisory council for executives and Boards in the public, private, nonprofit, and private equity (PE) sectors. He is also Founder & CEO of the International Board Director Competency Designation (IBDC.D) education and certification program, a Board Director certification course recognized globally, and was previously Chairman & CEO of Integral Board Group, a specialized Board services and consulting company. Mr. Pfister is a *'Board Macro-Influencer'* and his success has been repeated across a wide range of business situations and environments. He prides himself on being a coach and mentor to senior executives and Directors. In Board Director circles, Mr. Pfister has earned the nickname *'The Board Architect.'*

The overarching theme throughout his career has been his aptitude in leadership positions, passionate focus on people, unique governance models, and ability to create value for shareholders and stakeholders through innovative business strategies and operational excellence. Michael Lorelli, Executive Chairman of Rita's Franchise Company, has said, *"Mark's unusual combination of excelling at a macro and micro grasp of business, genuine interest in Governance, and ability to coach and mentor a Management Team make him a terrific Independent Director."*

Mr. Pfister is a certified project management professional and frequently serves as an expert Project Executive, consulting on global programs/projects in their initiation and operational phases, as well as programs requiring remedial focus to bring them back on track. He has deep knowledge and experience in Board design & operations, strategic planning, business transformation, technology implementations, decisioning processes, certification & continuing education programs, executive coaching, and governance models.

Mr. Pfister was CEO of Pro4ia, Inc., an international consulting and professional services company specializing in a wide range of technology solutions utilizing formal Project Management as a proven and repeatable delivery method. With a Fortune 50 client list, Pro4ia was Citibank's Nominee for *Crain's Magazine 'Entrepreneurship of the Year'* Award in 2005. He simultaneously served as CEO of Onit, Inc., a national sourcing company specializing in placements for all levels of technology skill sets. Mr. Pfister was also the Regional Program Office Leader for American Express leading some of the largest technology transformation initiatives in the company's history. He served as a Licensed Engineering Officer in the U.S. Merchant Marine, holds a B.S. from the State University of New York Maritime College in Facilities Engineering, and completed Harvard Business School's Executive Education Program for Board Directors.

Mr. Pfister is the creator of the *'Board as a Service'* (BaaS) engagement model, an industry he is credited with inventing. He is a Master Speaker and conducts international speaking tours, lectures, and seminars focused on effective leadership, strategy, Board architecture, becoming an exceptional Board Director candidate, professional project/program management, and entrepreneurship.

His popular book, *'Across The Board: The Modern Architecture Behind an Effective Board of Directors,'* an Amazon best-seller with circulation in over 70 countries, has influenced an entire new generation of Board Directors.

Mr. Pfister is a proficient Board Director and CEO with experience across multiple industry verticals. He is typically the Chair, or a member of the Strategic Planning Committee, Governance Committee, Technology & Cybersecurity Committee, and has deep Nominating Committee experience. Mr. Pfister's experience as an internationally renowned Board Consultant, having guided and coached hundreds of Boards, Board Committees, and Board Members across public, private, nonprofit, and private equity (PE) verticals, additionally offers up unique and informed viewpoints to the companies he serves.

He holds an *International Board Director Competency Designation* (IBDC.D) through M. A. Pfister Strategy Group, is a certified *Project Management Professional* (PMP) through the Project Management Institute, earned a *Global ESG Board Certification* (GCB.D) through Competent Boards, holds a *Certified Cyber Intelligence Professional* Board Certification (CCIP) through the McAfee Institute, and previously held an *Executive Masters Professional Board Certification* through the American College of Corporate Directors (ACCD).

