

Modernising Governance Increases Board Diversity and Enhances Performance

Volleyball WA

Case Study Snapshot

1 Gender Diversity Challenge:
Creating a high-performing and gender-balanced Volleyball WA Board

2 The Response:
Reviewing governance processes, and organisational culture and behaviour

3 Key Outcomes:
Creating a gender-balanced Board which has delivered growth in participation, membership and revenue

Gender Diversity Challenge

- Volleyball is a popular sport in WA, with 81,000 participants and a good **gender balance** in the sport.
- However, this **gender balance was not reflected in the Volleyball WA Board** which tended to include only one female Board member.
- Board members were typically recruited through the existing networks of current Board members, and resulted in candidates with similar backgrounds and perspectives to current Board members, **limiting the diversity of thought** on the Board.
- In addition to missing out on different perspectives, informal ways of working had developed, often resulting in **poor processes, inconsistency and a lack of structure** as well as **poor communications and negative language**.
- The Board realised this, and identified the importance of improving the nomination processes and other Board governance processes to better support the needs of the organisation.
- The Board also recognised the importance of **building a Board that was more reflective of who Volleyball WA was** – improving gender balance and also including the voices of other important stakeholders, such as **parents, teachers and coaches to provide new perspectives**.
- Further, Volleyball WA had a strong focus on performance at a **competitive level rather than a recreational** approach for the sport.

Volleyball WA's Response

- Volleyball WA started by **undertaking a Board evaluation**, facilitated by DLGSC, to identify areas where the Board was performing well and areas for improvement. The evaluation identified that Board members lacked knowledge of governance processes which meant that many policies and practices were insufficient, especially in terms of the role of the Board and risk management.
- Volleyball WA conducted a **review of its current Board and staff structure** and **developed a skills matrix** in order to identify the key skills it required.
- The skills matrix identified particular skillsets were needed including governance and marketing. Volleyball WA also determined they needed to place more of an emphasis on **soft skills** and recruiting Board members **beyond Volleyball** to bring increased diversity of thought.
- **Volleyball WA also reviewed and updated their Board nominations process**, including by publically advertising and promoting vacancies, targeting particular groups (e.g. parents, regional backgrounds) and proactively encouraging people who met the requirements to nominate.
- Volleyball WA also focused on ways to **create a more inclusive environment** in Board meetings, such as by actively seeking participation from all Board members.
- In addition, Volleyball WA focused **on building governance skills and capability** amongst all Board members by participating in Australian Institute of Company Directors courses provided hosted by DLGSC.



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Outcomes, Benefits and Next Steps



- The Volleyball WA Board is gender-balanced, currently comprising of three men and three women.



- Volleyball WA has created a Board which is “more reflective of who we are as an organisation.” Board members set the culture of the organisation and **role model values of inclusion and respect**.



- Volleyball WA has reflected that changes to the Board composition and governance processes have created a different Board dynamic, which **better utilises the skills of Board members**, has **created a more transparent culture** (e.g. all board minutes are now available on the website) and **enhanced communications** with Volleyball WA’s stakeholders.



- The reconstituted Board has focused on increasing participation in the sport. Volleyball WA recently launched a new campaign, “Discover Volleyball” to encourage **wider community participation in Volleyball, broadening the previous focus on the sport** at a competitive level and bringing its vision “to make volleyball the game for all” to life.

- Volleyball WA has **consequently increased participation in the sport, as well as membership and revenue**.

- Volleyball WA attributes the **overall improvements in organisational performance** to professional skill sets at Board level, increased diversity of thought and a more strategic focus on organisational priorities due to enhanced governance skills and capabilities.



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