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SA Heart shared their journey of change in governance and operating structure at a Hood Sweeney event

Good governance helps owners with differing opinions to trust that their voice is being heard and decisions are being made in a fair and transparent manner. This helps to build a culture of trust and respect.

Insufficient governance exposes your practice to risk; too much governance and your business tends to atrophy.

An effective board requires continuity and direction. It should focus on the business strategy and not be bogged down by clinical or operational matters.

Size does matter when it comes to an effective board. Having too many board members complicates decision-making and diffuses responsibility for outcomes.

Clinicians and business managers are often wary of each other and a "happy marriage" in running a practice requires mutual respect and understanding.

Lean management structures are often not the right priority for medical practices; a balance between efficiency and patient-focused medicine is the key.

Just because clinicians' do not have formal training in business management, doesn't mean they don't have expertise in the business aspects of running a health practice. Similarly just because business managers don't have a clinical background, doesn't mean they can't add great value and insight into running a practice.

To build an effective management team in a practice of sole traders in an associateship, you must first build trust.

Governance structures to document decision-making rules and effective internal communications are critical to obtaining a mandate to manage; transparent rules are vital.

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Keeping owners informed about board matters can involve opportunities for face-to-face briefings as well as access to abbreviated minutes.

When building a governance structure, it's useful to ensure all practice owners have a say in a non-threatening forum.

Having a non-clinical independent director on the board who chairs the meeting can help to keep meetings on track and create a sense of impartiality.

Where there is fundamental disagreement about strategy it is difficult for the business to achieve its goals.

Governance must address issues such as diversity on the board, succession, rules around how to become a business owner, how to position new associates within the practice and how to manage diverging views.

Healthy scepticism is valuable but at the end of the day you need agree about strategic direction and getting the balance right is vital.

The Consulting & Performance Coaching team at Hood Sweeney specialises in improving business performance:

- strategic planning
- organisational change management
- collaboration and stakeholder engagement frameworks
- strategic project support
- business coaching
- leadership coaching and development
- corporate governance and board development



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