



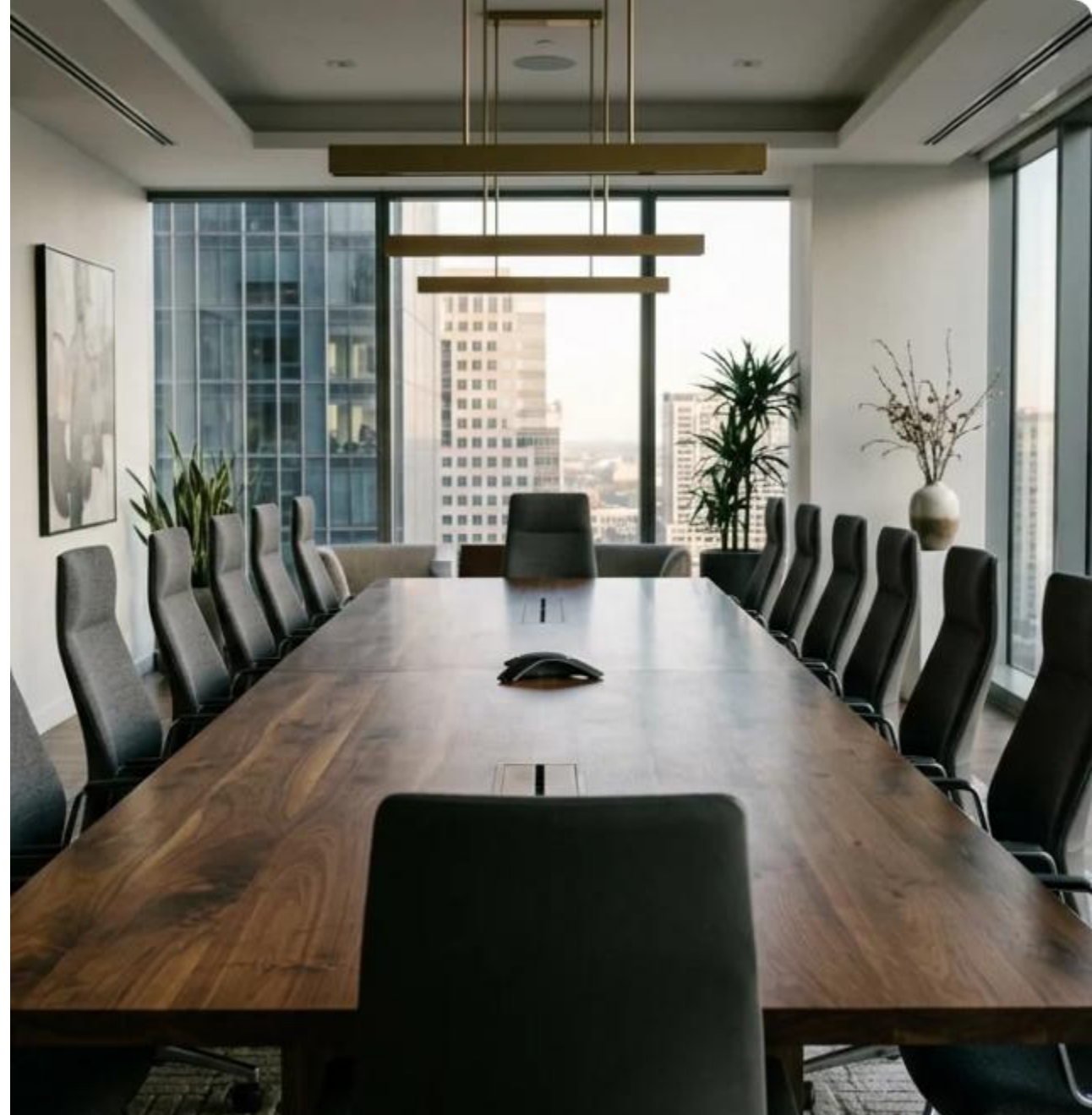
5TH ANNUAL PENSION GOVERNANCE CONFERENCE

# EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING: UNDERSTANDING BOARD DYNAMICS AND BEHAVIOURS

18th – 22nd May 2026 | Pride Inn Paradise, Mombasa  
TUESDAY 19TH MAY 2026

## CORE PRINCIPLE

*"Good governance is not just about structures and policies. It is about the quality of conversations, behaviours, relationships, and thinking inside the boardroom."*



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session, you should:

01

## Board Dynamics

Understand how board dynamics influence decisions.

02

## Identify Behaviours

Recognize unhealthy board behaviours.

03

## Decision Traps

Identify hidden decision-making traps.

04

## Decision Frameworks

Learn frameworks for effective governance decisions.

05

## Accountability

Improve collaboration and accountability.

06

## Strategic Thinking

Strengthen strategic thinking in governance.

# BOARD SCENARIO CASE STUDY

"A pension board is discussing a high-risk investment opportunity. One trustee strongly disagrees but remains silent because the Chair appears emotionally attached to the proposal. Months later the investment collapses."

The Chair?

The silent trustee?

The governance framework?

Or the board culture?

Who failed?

PART I

# WHAT REALLY AFFECTS DECISION MAKING IN BOARDS?

## WHAT REALLY AFFECTS BOARD DECISIONS?



Ego



Politics



Fear



Dominance



Silence



Bias



Relationships



Lack of preparation



Power struggles



Groupthink



Emotions



Hidden agendas

PART II

# UNDERSTANDING BOARD DYNAMICS

## DEFINING BOARD DYNAMICS

"The patterns of interaction, influence, communication, power, behaviour, and relationships that shape how boards think, engage, and make decisions."

Communication Patterns

Power Distribution

Interpersonal Behavior

## A CRITICAL PARADOX

A board can have **brilliant professionals**  
strong compliance structures...

*"...yet still make poor decisions because of dysfunctional dynamics."*

VISUALIZATION

# THE ICEBERG OF BOARD DECISIONS

VISIBLE.  
HIDDEN DRIVERS.



## THE DECISION ICEBERG: VISIBLE

### Visible Structure

The formal elements of governance that are documented, recorded, and audited. These are easily monitored but tell only part of the story.

 Policies

 Minutes

 Reports

 Voting

 Governance structures

## THE DECISION ICEBERG: HIDDEN

### Hidden Drivers

The invisible human factors that dictate boardroom conversations, block challenges, and shape actual decision outcomes.

Ego

Fear

Influence

Personal interests

Biases

Trust levels

Relationships

Politics

Emotional intelligence

Power distance



THE CORE REALITY

*"The truth is Most board failures begin **below the surface**"*

PART III

# THE 7 BOARDROOM BEHAVIOURS THAT DESTROY DECISION MAKING

THE INVISIBLE THREAT

## THE 7 BOARDROOM BEHAVIOURS THAT DESTROY DECISION MAKING

I call them, “The invisible enemies  
of effective board decisions.”



## THE SEVEN DESTROYERS

### THE 7 BOARDROOM BEHAVIOURS THAT DESTROY DECISION MAKING:

1 Groupthink

2 Dominance syndrome

3 Silent expertise

4 Emotional decision making

5 Conflict avoidance

6 Confirmation bias

7 Relationship capture

## INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

### The boardroom mirror exercise..

**In groups discuss:**

If left unmanaged, which of these behaviours could most easily damage governance, trust, and accountability within your pension scheme?

- “ Reflect deeply on actual board experiences and patterns.
- “ Identify historical decisions that were influenced by relationship ties or silent skepticism.

## A REALITY CHECK

*"Have you ever sat in a meeting where **everyone agreed** but nobody truly believed in the decision?"*

# 1. GROUPTHINK

## The Trap of Consensus

WHEN EVERYONE AGREES TOO QUICKLY TO AVOID CONFLICT.

Drives harmony over quality.

### LEADING TO...

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- ✔ WEAK SCRUTINY
- ✔ BLIND SPOTS
- ✔ POOR OVERSIGHT

## 2. DOMINANCE SYNDROME

### When one voice controls the room.

The centralization of influence around a single powerful individual, effectively shutting down diverse perspectives.

Usually:

- Chairperson, • founder, • sponsor, • strongest personality.

#### RESULT:

- ✓ intimidation
- ✓ silence
- ✓ dependency culture

A CRITICAL PARADOX OF SILENCE

*"How many governance failures happen because the  
**right people** stayed quiet?"*

### 3. SILENT EXPERTISE

**The smartest people sometimes say nothing.**

When valuable technical expertise or historical memory sits unvoiced in meetings due to social or environmental pressures.

#### WHY?

- ✓ fear
- ✓ politics
- ✓ culture
- ✓ intimidation

## BOARDROOM ENVIRONMENT

### DISCUSSION POINT

"Discuss: Boards are emotional spaces disguised as professional spaces...."

## 4. EMOTIONAL DECISION MAKING

### The Hijack of Logic

Decisions driven by internal human feelings rather than cold strategic data and asset protection principles.

#### **THIS IS WHEN:**

Fear, pride, loyalty, anger, ego affect judgment.

## 5. CONFLICT AVOIDANCE

### The Illusory Peace

Trading long-term strategic integrity to avoid short-term awkward social dynamics.

"• Boards that fear healthy disagreement become **dangerous**."

## 6. CONFIRMATION BIAS

### The Selective Echo Chamber

The tendency to process information by searching for and interpreting data that matches existing premises.

People only supporting information that validates their beliefs.

This is very dangerous in investments and strategy.

## 7. RELATIONSHIP CAPTURE

### The Compromise of Friendship

Social closeness that clouds professional distance, leading to systemic blindspots.

When friendships weaken accountability.

#### EXAMPLE:

- ✔ protecting a CEO
- ✔ avoiding tough questions
- ✔ defending poor decisions



PART IV

# THE SCIENCE OF EFFECTIVE BOARD DECISION MAKING.

## 6 PRINCIPLES OF DECISIONS

### THE 6 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE BOARD DECISIONS (Part 1):

1

#### Clarity of Purpose

What is in the best interest of members/stakeholders?

2

#### Psychological Safety

Every decision maker needs to feel safe to disagree.

3

#### Diversity of thought

Effective board understand the value of; different perspectives, expertise and most importantly, constructive tension.

# 6 PRINCIPLES OF DECISIONS

## THE 6 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE BOARD DECISIONS (Part 2):

4

### Data + wisdom

Great decisions require; evidence, insights experience and ethical judgement.

5

### Structured debate

Disagreement is not disrespect.

6

### Accountability structure

Every board member owns decisions collectively.

## INTERACTIVE SIMULATION

### SIMULATION.....

**A pension scheme is considering a risky infrastructure investment promising very high returns.**

- ▶ Roleplay the decision dynamic.
- ▶ Appoint critical roles: dominant chair, silent expert, and conformist trustees.

## SIMULATION DEBRIEF

# Debrief

Let us dissect the behaviors that naturally manifested during the simulation process.

**What dynamics emerged?**  
Who dominated? Who stayed silent?

**What biases appeared?**  
Was confirmation or conformity driving opinions?

**Was the decision process healthy?**  
Did we secure true consensus?

## IN CONCLUSION

The quality of a board is **not measured** by how intelligent its members are.

*"It is measured by the quality of conversations they are willing to have, the courage with which they challenge one another, and the wisdom with which they make decisions on behalf of people who trust them."*

## | CULTURE REFLECTION

A PARTING QUERY

"What kind of board culture are we **building**?"

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS IN THE BOARDROOM summary:

#### 1. Conversational Integrity

Governance failures begin as conversation failures.

#### 2. The Decision of Silence

Silence is not neutral, it is a decision.

#### 3. Emotional Capability

Emotional intelligence is a governance capability.

#### 4. Power & Influence

Power changes conversations.

#### 5. Relationship Boundaries

Relationships should support governance, not replace it.

#### 6. Process over Output

The quality of decisions depends on the quality of the process.



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