

# Starfish Family Services improves efficiency, security, and collaboration with BoardEffect

## Starfish Family Services Case Study

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### Organization overview

Founded in Inkster, Michigan, in 1963, Starfish Family Services is a social service agency that works to strengthen families and create brighter futures for children. The organization has now grown to a \$51 million agency and offers many free services to over 3,000 children and their families, providing them with food, diapers and other support.

Starfish Family Services has 21 serving board members, with Susan Bovair, Executive Assistant to the CEO and Board Liaison, handling everything related to board business.

**Organization:** Starfish Family Services

**Industry:** Social Service Agency

**Location:** Inkster, Michigan

### The challenge: managing board activities with scattered resources

Without a centralized platform for board business, Starfish found it difficult to efficiently prepare for board meetings and coordinate meeting logistics.

Board books, usually between 130-300 pages, had to be compiled by hand. Susan recalls the many hours it took to manually print and collate thousands of documents, making sure pages were in order before inserting them into binders.

In addition, board participation was difficult to track and there was no centralized resource library where board members could easily find past documents. Hard copies of archived records were stored in an offsite facility, which would take hours to search for manually when requested. Starfish also participates in federally funded programs, which have strict compliance obligations. This made reporting and tracking governance a time-consuming and onerous task.

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"Having everything in one place is extremely beneficial. I have a lot of requests for items from previous years. Now I click some boxes and here you go, it looks like I'm a magical worker! BoardEffect has saved me hours of searching for different information."

**Susan Bovair**

Executive Assistant to the CEO and Board Liaison, Starfish Family Services

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## The solution: centralized board management

Starfish Family Services evaluated three agenda and meeting management solutions before deciding BoardEffect as it was the easiest one to use and a perfect fit for their board. They have now expanded its use across the organization to include nine workrooms, usage of multiple features, and have started to use it for their executive leadership team meetings.

Susan and the Executive Assistant team uses BoardEffect to manage all meeting materials, including agendas and communications. The agenda builder allows them to:

- Create board books and agendas directly online
- Set agendas and change them as needed without having to print hundreds of pages, even when items come in at the last minute
- Attach reports and supporting documents so board members have everything at their fingertips.

The Microsoft 365 integration also helps Susan simplify document management and make last minute changes. Staff, board and committee members can easily access, share and edit documents within the platform, and Susan can highlight items that require extra board attention.

Susan assigns each meeting to one of their nine workrooms. Workrooms serve as collaborative spaces where members can access, share documents and collaborate with the rest of the group. The ability to transfer documents seamlessly helps each group stay organized and has improved the efficiency of each committee's workflow.

The survey tools allow Susan to collect conflict-of-interest forms and conduct annual board surveys. The results are used to fulfill mandatory training requirements from external parties and ensure nonprofit legal compliance.

The reporting feature helps track board members' activity and attendance within the platform, highlight each board member's engagement level, and ensure accountability for participation. With BoardEffect, Susan can allow access to the right documents at the right time when board members need them.

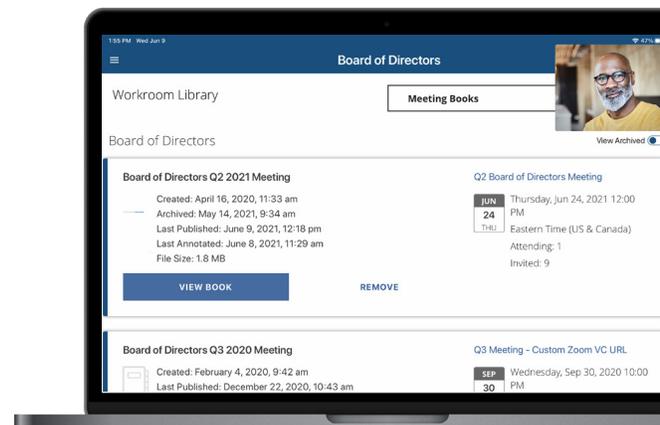
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"I was so excited to use the Microsoft Integration, I saw a mistake on something I put in there and I was able to fix it in BoardEffect, I was so happy! And I didn't care that it didn't match the original on my files, I don't even look at that folder now that I can complete it in BoardEffect."

**Susan Bovair**

Executive Assistant to the CEO and Board Liaison, Starfish Family Services

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BoardEffect now serves as a central platform for all of Starfish's board management needs. The Document Library makes it easy for all users to easily access resources and documents themselves when they need them. Susan teaches all board members how to use the resource library when they join.

Confidentiality is ultra-important at certain levels of the organization, such as the executive leadership team. The granular permissions feature allows Susan to lock documents that others shouldn't see.

## The results: better efficiency, security and collaboration

By leveraging BoardEffect's efficiency features and using it as a central location to store everything in one place, Susan saves hours of time each day.

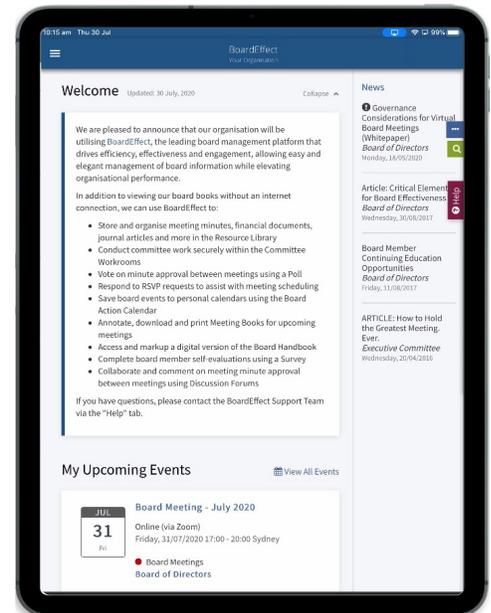
Board meetings are now running efficiently and staying on schedule while the online Document Library provides quick access to essential documents that answer board members' questions as they prepare for meetings.

Moving everything old and new online means the information is easily accessible and saves hours of time locating older documents and the enhanced security features of BoardEffect ensure that sensitive information doesn't get into the wrong hands, while the document-locking feature limits access to only those who need it.

Timely access to essential information has also meant more informed decision-making by the Board and Executive Leadership team.

Using BoardEffect has also led to increased board engagement. The software's meeting features and easy access materials have assisted them in facilitating hybrid meetings, as Susan confirms, "Attendance has been through the roof since we introduced hybrid".

In addition, board members regularly communicate through the platform, not only eliminating external email exchanges, but also aiding in accountability. Susan points out that board members feel a greater sense of urgency when they receive an email through the BoardEffect platform, rather than from her work email address.



The ability to create reports and track governance requirements is a critical asset to Starfish's their Head Start program; as a federally funded program, it has strict compliance obligations the organization must adhere to, which they can now do easily.

Starfish Family Services have been very impressed with the ongoing support and training they have received with BoardEffect. Susan stated that she always receives a quick response from the support team and the online training videos have been extremely helpful in onboarding new board members. In addition, she meets with the Executive Assistant team regularly for training on new features so that they can keep processes consistent across the organization.

Susan's final thoughts: "BoardEffect is so much better than having to open this drawer full of papers and meeting books. I use BoardEffect every day because there's always something going on with our board and it allows us to keep our board members engaged because they don't have to wait for the material they need."

- ✓ **More efficient and timely board meetings**
- ✓ **Hours of time saved locating documents**
- ✓ **Enhanced security with designated access controls**
- ✓ **Ability to track projects easily for compliance**

## About BoardEffect

**We're passionate about the work of boards, which drives how we develop the BoardEffect solution.**

Boards operate in a series of overlapping cycles: a regularly scheduled meeting cycle, an annual operating cycle, and the cycle of longer-term board development and engagement. BoardEffect's solution supports a modern approach to governance, powering boards' interdependent responsibilities across these ongoing cycles.

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