

**Excerpt from the forth-coming book:**

*Lessons from the Boardroom*, by Dan Busby and John Pearson

- Section 2: Boardroom Tools, Templates and Typos
- ECFAPress (July 2017) – © Copyright, 2017. ECFA. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

**LESSONS FROM THE BOARDROOM**  
Dan Busby & John Pearson

**Lesson 9: Eliminate Hallway Whining with the CEO's 5/15 Monthly Report to the Board**

*It Takes Just 15 Minutes to Write—and 5 Minutes to Read*

"... individuals with written goals were 39.5 percent more likely to succeed. But there's more to the story. Individuals who wrote their goals and sent progress reports to friends were 76.7 percent more likely to achieve them."  
*The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results*  
by Gary Keller with Jay Papasan

Over 20 years ago, a board chair suggested a simple—and fast—board reporting tool that changed my life—and blessed the board. And today, hundreds of CEOs and boards are using this “5/15” report template.

Just days before writing this chapter, yet another CEO emailed his appreciation:

“The 5/15 reports have been a homerun. Thank you. We are now in full implementation mode on your recommendations.”

But before we tell you about the “5/15” report, here’s a pop quiz for boards members and CEOs:

**CHECK: TRUE OR FALSE?**

T	F	BOARD MEMBERS:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Informative reports to the board from our CEO are received regularly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	As a board member, I’m sometimes the last to hear both good and bad news.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I receive way too many emails from our CEO—and I can’t discern what’s really important and what’s really just an “FYI.”
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I faithfully respond to every email or phone call from our CEO within 24 hours.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our Board Policies Manual establishes the type and frequency of CEO reports.

T	F	CEOs:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel guilty that I’m not reporting adequately to the board—in between meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	To be honest, I used to send more reports to the board, but no one ever read them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I wish I felt more supported by the board. This is hard work. I don’t think board members pray for me.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have to keep the main thing the main thing—raising money. If I take time to write board reports that no one reads, it’s a lose/lose.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our Board Policies Manual establishes the type and frequency of CEO reports.

In the hallways of boardrooms, perhaps the most constant whine is, “We don’t hear anything from our CEO in between board meetings. How can I steward this ministry, if I’m not in the loop?”

CEOs also whine. “My board runs the continuum: the micro-managers want a weekly report. Others don’t want email. They just call when they have a question. Frankly, I don’t really bless anyone.”

I was blessed one day when Pat Clements, my board chair at Christian Management Association (now CLA), introduced me to a simple, time-saving template. Like clockwork, on the fifteenth of every month, Clements, CEO at Church Extension Plan, sent his 5/15 Report to his national board. So I took his brilliant idea and customized it for the board of CMA and sent it out—like clockwork—on the fifteenth of every month. *The hallway whining stopped.*

**CEO’s 5/15 MONTHLY REPORT TO THE BOARD**  
**5 Minutes to Read and 15 Minutes to Write**  
*emailed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month*

**THE BIG IDEA.** CEOs can write this report in just 15 minutes each month and board members should be able to read it in just five minutes—and have a regular diet of both the good news, the new news, and the bad news. The content and frequency can be memorialized in the Board Policies Manual, by board action, so there is 100 percent board agreement on a report that serves the board’s needs and expectations.

**THE CONTENT.** Customize the report so it meets your needs, but it will likely be five or less pages, easy to read, with a standard template. The content might include (in this order):

- Date/To/From/Subject
- Next Board Meeting (date, location, special details)
- CEO’s Monthly Dashboard Report on 3-5 Board-Approved Annual “SMART” Goals (Peter Drucker: “If you have more than five goals, you have none.”)
- Committee Highlights (bullet points only—and only if there is new information)
- Board Nominating Committee “Pipeline Report” (the running list of confidential prospect names under consideration)
- Monthly Financial Report Summary (YTD vs. Budget for revenue and expense)
- Major Program Notes (bullet points)
- Ministry Events Calendar & CEO’s Travel Schedule (12 to 24 months)
- A Brief Ministry Story—for the Board’s Encouragement (maximum of one-half page)
- Prayer Requests
- Personal Note from the CEO (one brief paragraph)
- Board Meeting Schedule (12 to 24 months: dates/locations/times and 2-4 key agenda items for each meeting: audit, CEO annual review, budget approval, annual board self-assessment, etc.)

After you have created and tested the first draft, with feedback from the board and the senior team, it’s ready to systematize and delegate to the executive assistant or another team member.

**CEO’s 5/15 MONTHLY REPORT TO THE BOARD - SCHEDULE**

<b>Point Person</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Done Date</b>
Executive Assistant	Begin Draft #1: request reports from others	7th	
Senior Staff and Committee Chairs	Submit updates for report	10th	
CFO	Submit Monthly Financial Report Summary	12th	
Executive Assistant	Draft #2: All reports compiled	13th	
CEO	Dictate or approve “Ministry Story” and personal note; approve final draft	14th	
Executive Assistant	Email PDF of report to all board members (cc: senior team). Plus: quarterly or occasionally, also email to selected former board members)	15th	

**REMINDER #1: READERS OR LISTENERS?** Not all board members are readers. Listening is the preferred learning style for some people. If possible, accommodate both styles. So for your listeners, record the information, and email the recording—but keep it to five minutes or less.

**REMINDER #2: THE FOUR SOCIAL STYLES.** It’s important for CEOs to communicate effectively for all four social styles:

- **The Analytical Style** appreciates communication that is clear and concise.
- **The Driving Style** prefers a “just stick to the facts” report.
- **The Amiable Style** says “get to know me”—and content is often a lower priority.
- **The Expressive Style** wants you to listen to their opinions—so in your report ask for feedback and input.<sup>1</sup>

Not sure if the 5/15 Report will work for your board? Test it for 90 days and then ask for feedback. We predict it will be a homerun!

**“CEOs can write this report in just 15 minutes each month and board members should be able to read it in just five minutes—and have a regular diet of both the good news, the new news, and the bad news.”**

<b>BOARDROOM LESSON</b>	<b>Eliminate Hallway Whining With the CEO’s 5/15 Monthly Report to the Board.</b> When the board chair recommends a board policy on the content and frequency of CEO reports—in between board meetings—the whining stops and the engagement soars. A best practice for every board member—respond to every 5/15 Monthly Report with an encouraging email, note or voicemail message within 24 hours Your CEO’s engagement will also soar—as will accountability for achieving board-approved goals.
-------------------------	---

<sup>1</sup> For more on social styles, visit [www.socialstyle.com](http://www.socialstyle.com)

**BOARD ACTION STEPS:**

- 1. **Decide:** Assess the current status of between-meeting reports to the board and discern if a “CEO’s 5/15 Monthly Report to the Board” is worthy of a 90-day test period.
- 2. **Delegate:** Inspire your CEO to delegate the gathering of information to the executive assistant or another staff person.
- 3. **Respond:** Ask board members to respond to every monthly report—with a quick email thanks, a note, or a voicemail message.

**PRAYER:** “Lord, thank you for our CEO. Give our leader wisdom to know what to include in board reports. Give me discipline to read and respond on a timely basis. Amen.”

**SAMPLE ONLY**

(not prescriptive for your organization)

## **CEO's Monthly "5/15" Report to the Board**

---



### **"5 Minutes to Read and 15 Minutes to Write"**

- **CEOs:** Use this monthly report template and delegate the "starter" to a team member. Then you finish it with your unique style. Email it on the same date each month.
- **Board Members:** Feedback is the breakfast of champions. Email a quick "Thanks—I got it!"

**Note:** This template was originally presented by John Pearson for a CLA Tele-Seminar, "6 Best Practices for More Effective Boards," on March 27, 2009, hosted by Christian Leadership Alliance.

© Copyright, 2009. John Pearson Associates, Inc. – All rights reserved.

[www.ManagementBuckets.com](http://www.ManagementBuckets.com)

Permission granted to download this template for internal use only.

## 3J GLOBAL MINISTRIES “5/15 REPORT” “5 MINUTES TO READ—AND 15 MINUTES TO WRITE”

### President’s Monthly Report to the Board of Directors

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ ▪ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

John@3JGlobalMinistries.org ▪ www.3JGlobalMinistries.org

---

#### **SAMPLE ONLY**

**DATE:** May 1, 2016  
**TO:** 3J Global Ministries Board of Directors  
cc: Bob Brown and Brenda Smith  
**FROM:** John W. Doe  
**RE:** President’s Monthly Report

**Greetings.** This is the first of what will now be monthly board reports to you, generally emailed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. I’m calling this the “5/15 Report” – because it will take you just five minutes to read and it will take me just 15 minutes to write (with Bob’s help).

*This new report format will be especially helpful to show to board prospects as we brief them on the work and ministry of 3J Global Ministries.*

#### ◆ **Board Governance**

---

**Board Meeting Schedule: Draft #1.** As we confirm dates for future board meetings (calls and in-person meetings), we’ll fill in the meeting grid (see attached).

**Next Board Meeting.** Our next board telephone conference call is scheduled for:

<b>Date</b>	July 21, 2016
<b>Day</b>	Thursday
<b>Time</b>	10:00 a.m. PDT
<b>Call in</b>	Please call in to this number: _____
	Passcode: _____

**President’s Standards of Performance.** Attached is the Monthly Dashboard Report and update on my 2016 CEO S.M.A.R.T. Goals.

**Board Documents.** I am working with Sam Jones, and the team, to create drafts for your consideration on the following board documents:

- Board Member Annual Affirmation Statement (& Conflict of Interest Statement)
- Board Nominating and Election Policies (tied to our bylaws and/or proposed bylaw changes)
- Board Chair and Officers Position Description (roles and responsibilities) and “Prime Responsibility Chart”
- Board Policies Manual
- Board Member Orientation Notebook
- ECFA Membership ([www.ecfa.org](http://www.ecfa.org))

**Board of Director Prospects.** Here’s an update on the board prospects we’re interviewing...

**◆ Financial Reports**

---

As of April 30, 2016, we are \$\_\_\_\_\_ ahead/behind of our proposed four-month budget forecast.

<b>Proposed Budget</b>	<b>FY2016 12- Month Budget</b> 1/1/16 - 12/31/16	<b>FY2016 4-Month Budget</b> 1/1/16 – 4/30/16	<b>FY2016 4-Month Actual</b> 1/1/16 – 4/30/16	<b>FY2016 4-Month Variation</b>
Revenue	\$	\$	\$	\$
Expense	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Net Income</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$

The full four-month financial reports will be sent to you by U.S. mail.

**◆ 2016 Major Program Notes**

---

**(List misc. notes here with program highlights.)**

- 3J Global Ministries Forums
- Web Development
- Mission Agency Partners
- Local Church Partners
- Care Coaches
- MissionFuture
- Etc.

**◆ 2016 – 2017 Calendar**

Here’s the first draft of our key calendar dates, our travel, speaking engagements, etc. This is listed for board members both as an “FYI” and as a prayer reminder.

Date	Event	Venue City, State	Sponsored by:
<b>YEAR 2016</b>			
<b>YEAR 2017</b>			

**◆ A 3J Global Ministries Story—For Your Encouragement!**

*Here’s a portion of an email we received from an enthusiastic volunteer!*

**“Headline...”**

Insert copy here...

**Thank you, Board Members!**

Thank you for investing your time and resources in 3J Global Ministries!

(Add more here...)

Gratefully,

*John*

P.S. Please note the board meeting schedules on the attached pages.



**2016 Board Meeting Schedule (Draft 1 as of Jan. 15, 2016)**

<b>Year 2016</b>	<b>Day/Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
Feb 12	Thursday 10:00 a.m. PST	Telephone Conference Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review FY2015 financial reports</li> <li>• Quarterly Update Call</li> </ul>
May 21	Thursday 4:00 p.m. to Friday 4:00 p.m.	Annual Board Retreat ABC Conference Center, Phoenix, AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2017-2019 Strategic Plan brainstorming</li> <li>• Board Governance update</li> <li>• Nominating Committee Report</li> <li>• Financial Reports (4 months)</li> <li>• President's Standards of Performance – Review</li> <li>• Board Meeting Schedule approval</li> </ul>
August 20	Thursday 10:00 a.m. PST	Telephone Conference Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review 7-month financial reports</li> <li>• Quarterly Update Call</li> </ul>
Nov. 12	Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  Optional Dinner with spouses at 6:00 p.m.	Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome to New Board Members</li> <li>• Financial Reports (10 months)</li> <li>• 2017 Annual Plan, Calendar, Leading Indicators and President's 2017 S.M.A.R.T. Goals</li> <li>• 2017 Budget</li> <li>• Plans for President's Performance Review (based on 2016 S.M.A.R.T. Goals)</li> <li>• Board Governance Committee Report</li> <li>• Appointment of Auditor</li> </ul>

**2017 Board Meeting Schedule (Draft 1 as of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016)**

<b>Year 2017</b>	<b>Day/Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Agenda</b>

**Note to CEOs:**

Some CEOs also attach their **Monthly Dashboard Report** (see “Tools & Templates” binder) to the 5/15 Report, or include it as a separate file or document by mail or email.

**NOTES:**

---