Engaged governance is an extension of the business sponsor's power base. An executive steering committee that is actively involved in program decision making is much more effective than one that passively receives unread status reports on a periodic basis. The best governance teams have project roles for each member that require the investment of time outside of official steering committee meetings. If you want active engagement then you have to give the members work to do.

Governance meetings should be structured as working sessions, not status reports. Meetings must have an agenda, strong facilitation, notes, and, most importantly, documented action items with clear accountabilities. One model is to task governance members with oversight of different aspects of the program so that they become advisors to individual team leaders.

I have also seen split program governance employed effectively. In a split governance model the executive steering committee is accountable for oversight of program strategy, scope, schedule, budget, resources, and business case. A separate governance team that is closer to the user base is tasked with overseeing solution design and development. This avoids the problem of executive steering committee members being too far removed from the work to be of much use in the resolution of detailed design issues. Split governance appropriately places accountability at the right level of the organization.

An engaged governance team at work is a beautiful thing. Lively debates and animated discussion lead to better decisions. No one wants to attend a status meeting unless they are planning to clean out their email inbox. Demand active engagement from those on your governing committees.

More Reading

PLM Power – Critical Success Factors
PLM Power #1 – Solution Simplicity
PLM Power #2 – Speed of Execution
PLM Power #3 – Program Management
PLM Power #4 – Business Sponsorship
PLM Power #5 – Engaged Governance
PLM Power #6 – Value Orientation
PLM Power #7 – Transformation Leadership
What's your view? Add your question or comment
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For the past 30 years, Bill has helped executives in technology-driven industries transform their competencies to deliver results. He is a highly regarded consultant, speaker, and writer on the topics of innovation strategy, product development, portfolio management, technology commercialization, and the software systems that enable innovation. Keep up with Bill's latest research and thoughts on innovation and the rising role of the Chief Innovation Officer at www.TheChiefInnovationOfficer.com.