

Magenta

Service: Database Development with OnBoard

Case Study

Building Streamlined Infrastructure for Clearer Insights

The credibility and value of any report depend on the accuracy and timeliness of its findings. For organizations building a data-driven case for funding, the evidence supporting their mission must be reliable, consistent, and current.

Outdated database infrastructure creates significant institutional risk by burdening staff with manual work, limiting access to timely insights, and concentrating critical knowledge among the few individuals who understand the database's idiosyncrasies — all while placing unnecessary pressure on reporting timelines.

Magenta helped OnBoard replace those constraints with an automated, continuously updating database that strengthens accuracy, accelerates analysis, and frees up staff capacity to turn findings into meaningful insight.

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Point of Departure

Since 1993, OnBoard has published an **Annual Study** benchmarking women's representation on the boards of Georgia public companies. The Study is OnBoard's most important piece of intellectual property, providing a record of progress toward gender parity in the state's corporate boardrooms over time.

Each year, OnBoard researchers review SEC filings for every public company headquartered in Georgia, tracking dozens of data points across thousands of corporate directors and executive officers. OnBoard uses the data to calculate the share of board seats held by women and women of color; the number of companies that have achieved gender parity, appointed three or more women directors, or have no women directors; and year-over-year changes in seats gained and lost by women.

As the Study grew into a respected source of insight on gender representation in corporate leadership, **the infrastructure supporting the research no longer matched its scale and complexity, limiting collaboration, automation, and continuity.**

Compounding the challenge, much of the Study's methodology depended on the institutional knowledge of a small research team. Only a handful of people understood how to navigate the database and interpret nuanced data consistently, making the process cumbersome to transfer.



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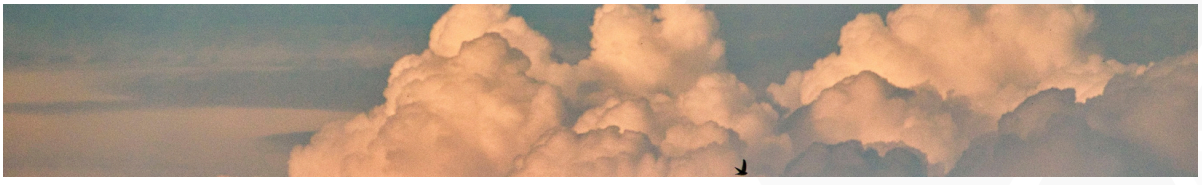
Flight Plan

Originally retained to write and design the Annual Study publication through our **Impact Report** offering, Magenta expanded our partnership with OnBoard to rebuild the Study's research infrastructure through our **Database Development** service.

Magenta began by outlining the bottlenecks within the existing system:

- **Limited collaboration:**
  OnBoard's Access database was stored on a shared server rather than in a cloud-based platform, making simultaneous updates cumbersome. The system was also unfamiliar to newer researchers, requiring specialized knowledge to locate and update information.
- **Disconnected and duplicative data:**
  The database did not consistently connect related information across companies and individuals. A person serving on multiple boards would appear as multiple separate records, requiring duplicative entry and manual reconciliation.
- **Time-consuming analysis:**
  To calculate Study findings, researchers exported data from Access, transferred it into Excel, and manually entered formulas. Each export represented a static snapshot, requiring everyone to wait until data was completely finalized before beginning analysis. If the team uncovered a data-entry error or incorporated a last-minute board change, they had to update the source data, rerun calculations, and check the results again.
- **Undocumented methodology:**
  Field definitions and research calculations were not fully documented, making it more difficult for new researchers to interpret reports consistently.
- **Opportunities for error:**
  The entire process introduced numerous points of entry for broken formulas, version-control issues, and human error.

Magenta recommended developing a relational database in Airtable: a cloud-based, browser-accessible platform that combines data storage and reporting capabilities. Its intuitive interface made it more accessible to researchers without technical expertise in databases.



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Liftoff

With OnBoard's sign-off, Magenta transferred existing data into a series of interconnected tables designed around the Study's specific research and analysis requirements. The final deliverable included a centralized Airtable database, live analysis reports, and a simplified, proven research process that future Study leaders can more easily learn and manage.

Purpose-built data architecture:

The new system enabled multiple team members to conduct research and update records simultaneously. Its interconnected tables also allowed researchers to connect multiple roles to a static individual. The structure reduced duplicative entry and **enabled OnBoard to recognize relationships among companies, directors, and officers,** including counting women who hold multiple board seats — a key calculation previously performed manually.

Live analysis:

Magenta translated OnBoard's established Excel calculations into automated formulas and summary reports housed within the database. The database now **continuously updates the Study analysis** as researchers revise underlying records. Magenta also developed a detailed data dictionary defining report calculations and classifications, which preserves the methodology behind the Study and gives future researchers a clear guide to understanding how each result is produced.

Validated methodology:

Because the Study's credibility depends on the accuracy of its findings, OnBoard needed confidence that the rebuilt system would reliably reproduce its established analysis. Throughout implementation, **Magenta validated the new database against OnBoard's existing process,** reconciling results at each stage. Maintaining both processes during the transition gave OnBoard confidence in the new system and positioned the organization to fully realize its time-saving benefits the following year.

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Point of Arrival

OnBoard's new Annual Study database transformed a week-long, manual analysis process into **an automated, continuously updating system.** Study findings now populate as research is completed, eliminating the need to complete all research before observing data trends or rebuild calculations to correct data entry errors.

Automated analysis streamlined the Study's workflow, enhancing the quality of analysis while relieving pressure on the timeline and team:

More timely research:

OnBoard strives to finalize research as close as possible to the Study's unveiling so the publication reflects the most current board information available. The new system allows OnBoard to accept later updates without restarting the analysis, helping the organization publish more timely findings.

Earlier visibility into trends:

Preliminary trends are now visible throughout the research period. OnBoard can begin shaping the narrative before the data is completely finalized, which creates more time for thoughtful analysis and interpretation.

Better use of staff time:

Time previously devoted to calculating results can now be spent interpreting them: identifying factors influencing board appointments, exploring hypotheses driving year-over-year changes, and developing stronger messages about the state of women's representation in corporate leadership.

Just as importantly, the database reduced the Study's dependence on specific individuals. Clearer fields, connected records, documented calculations, and automated reports make the process significantly easier to transfer if a new researcher or project leader needs to step in.

OnBoard's experience demonstrates how organizations can maximize their databases to reduce administrative burden while protecting and expanding their most important intellectual property. Similar models can support any organization that conducts recurring data entry and reporting, from tracking constituents to monitoring program outcomes over time.

Better database infrastructure redirects administrative burden into meaningful insight.

Book a discovery call with Magenta.

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