Acumen *Insights*

IDEAS FOR LEADERS BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT

Is Your Board Built for Yesterday or Tomorrow?

Why financial institutions need to rethink board composition as a strategic asset—not just a governance obligation.

5-MINUTE READ | ISSUE 001 | CONNECT@ACUMENFA.COM

acumenfa.com

THE QUESTION

There's a question many CU CEOs and CFOs are quietly asking:

Does our board have the skills we need for what's next?

According to new research from Heidrick & Struggles, nearly two-thirds of organizations report a mismatch between their board's current strengths and what the business now requires.

Too many boards are governing the organization they built—not the one they're trying to become.

For credit unions and other mission-driven financial institutions, that's more than a governance issue. **It's a strategic risk.**

34%

of boards say they are effective at foresight and renewal—the very capabilities most needed in a period of rapid disruption

83%	34%
Traditional Governance	Foresight & Renewal

Source: Heidrick & Struggles, Board Monitor US 2026

THE EVIDENCE

Boards continue to excel at traditional governance and relationship- building.

Where confidence often drops is in the capabilities required to anticipate disruption and guide long-term transformation.

Many directors joined before AI, post-pandemic workforce shifts, and today's rapidly changing competitive landscape. For some institutions, continuity has quietly become a barrier to renewal.

WHY IT MATTERS

Healthy boards don't avoid difficult conversations—they encourage them.

- Yet only **23%** of organizations say they evaluate leadership quality with the same rigor they apply to financial performance and risk.
- Only **25%** believe leadership pipeline strength is becoming a material measure of organizational value.

Future-ready governance requires productive tension, honest self-assessment, and the courage to act before circumstances force change.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Organizations where boards, CEOs, and executive teams are aligned around strategy, succession, and leadership consistently outperform their peers.

Alignment drives:

- Better financial performance
- Stronger decision-making
- Greater leadership readiness

Boards have always been responsible for setting direction.

What's changed is the speed of change itself.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR NEXT LEADERSHIP MEETING

01 Does your board have the skills your strategy actually requires?

Not the skills that mattered when today's directors joined—but the capabilities your institution will need over the next three to five years.

02 Is board renewal a real process—or simply a courtesy?

Healthy succession balances continuity with deliberate renewal and regularly evaluates whether the board's collective capabilities still fit the organization's strategy.

03 Are your board, CEO, and executive team truly aligned?

If leaders independently described your institution's top priorities, would they give the same answer? If not, alignment—not communication—may be the real challenge.