



Practical guide: Build a board-level dashboard

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What a board dashboard is for

A report describes what happened last month. A dashboard exists to change what the business does next month. The difference shows up in what each one contains.

A board reads the marketing page in about four minutes, between two other items, with a decision to make at the end of it. Forty numbers make that harder. Eight to twelve make it possible.

Impressions, clicks, reach and campaign summaries belong in the marketing team's own reporting. On a board page they fill the space where a decision should be.

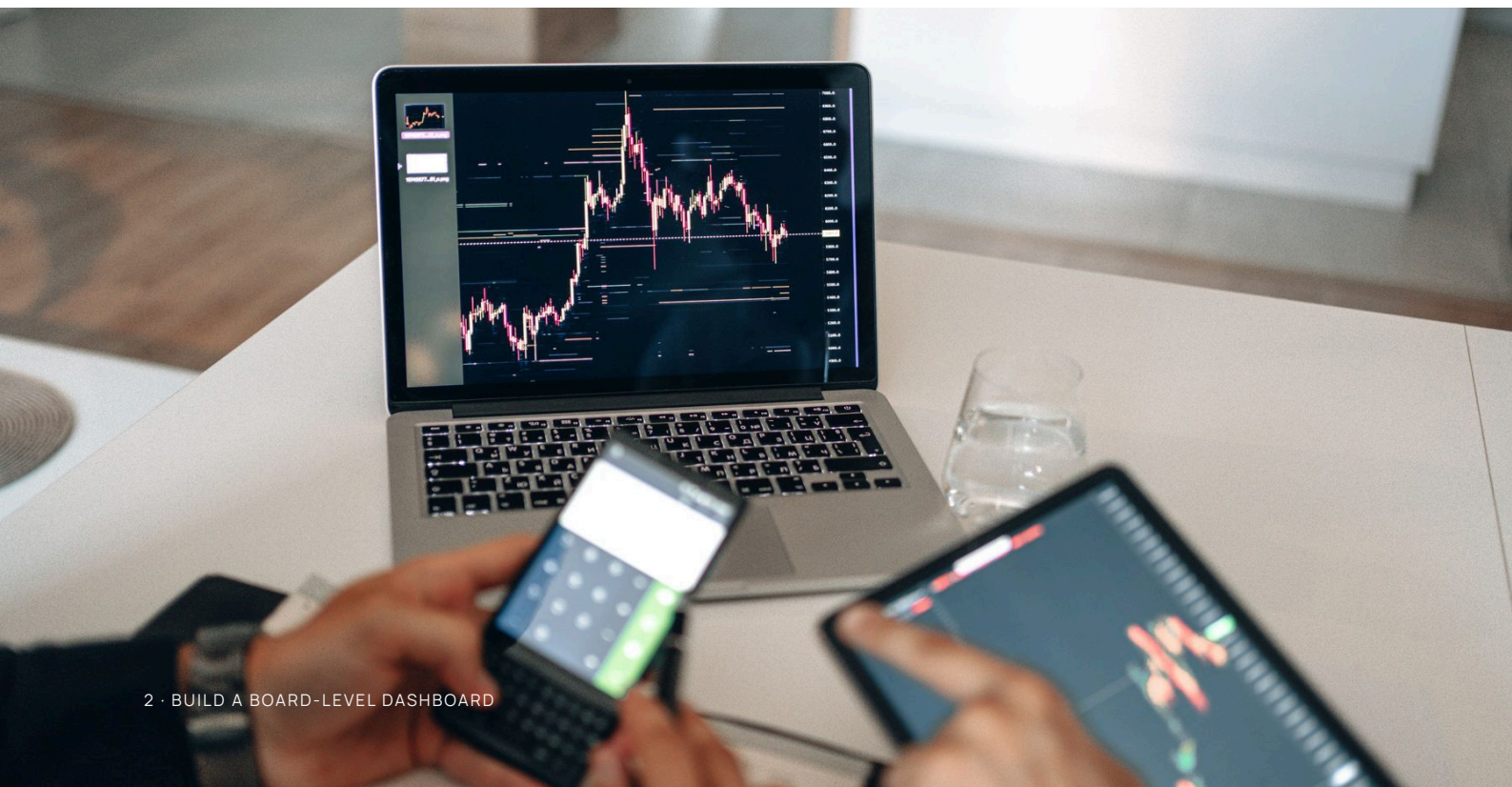
The language problem

Boards allocate capital in revenue, margin, cost to acquire and payback. Marketing frequently reports in reach, engagement and leads. Both sets of numbers are real. Only one of them is used to decide where money goes.

What this guide covers

The six questions a board page has to answer, the twelve numbers that answer them, the thresholds that turn each one amber, and who owns it when it does.

The tools come last. Every part of this works in a spreadsheet before it works in software.



What goes wrong with the monthly report

Four failures, in the order they usually appear. The first one explains most of the others.

The two sides measure different things

McKinsey's study *The CMO's comeback*, published in December 2025, found that 70% of chief executives named year-on-year revenue or margin as a top metric they hold marketing accountable for. Only 35% of the chief marketing officers at those same companies had those metrics on their own list.

Two people looking at the same business, keeping two different scorecards.

Activity reads as progress

A rising number of campaigns, posts and impressions looks like momentum on a page. It answers no question a board is asking.

Half the journey is invisible

A UAE enquiry commonly starts on search, converts on a form, continues on WhatsApp and closes with a person on the phone. Where the last two steps are untracked, the report shows the wrong source for the sale.

Platform numbers overstate the audience

DataReportal recorded 12.5 million social media identities in the UAE in October 2025, equal to 110% of the population, and 23.0 million mobile connections, equal to 202%. Duplication is normal here, so reach figures on a board page mislead unless someone explains them.

Two people looking at the same business, keeping two different scorecards.



Six questions the page has to answer

01 · Is qualified demand growing

Volume of enquiries that meet the agreed definition, against last month and against target.

02 · Is it converting efficiently

What each stage costs, and whether that cost is moving in the right direction.

03 · Is pipeline and revenue moving

Value created and value closed, with the lag between them stated.

04 · What does a customer cost, by channel

One agreed definition, applied the same way every month, shown next to what a customer is worth.

05 · Where is the bottleneck now

The one stage where the drop-off is worst this month, named rather than implied.

06 · What should change this month

One recommendation, with the money attached to it and the person who will do it.

Agree these first

Book 45 minutes with the chief executive, the finance lead and the head of sales, and settle the six questions before anybody opens a reporting tool.

Dashboards built from the tool outwards show whatever the tool measures well. Dashboards built from these six show whether the business is growing.



Twelve numbers, and what turns them amber

Three numbers in each of four groups. Set your own thresholds in the last column, and put a name against every line.

GROUP	NUMBER	REVIEWED	TURNS AMBER WHEN
Demand	Qualified enquiries	Weekly	Below target two weeks running
	Cost per qualified enquiry	Weekly	Above threshold two weeks running
	Share from owned channels	Monthly	Falling three months running
Quality	Qualified to accepted rate	Weekly	Down 5 points on the quarter
	Appointment or viewing show rate	Weekly	Below the floor in any branch
	Average deal or order value	Monthly	Down while volume rises
Efficiency	Cost to acquire a customer	Monthly	Rising two months running
	Payback period in months	Monthly	Longer than cash flow allows
	Marketing spend as a share of revenue	Quarterly	Outside the agreed band
Outcome	Pipeline value created	Monthly	Below the coverage target
	Revenue closed from marketing	Monthly	Flat while pipeline rises
	Return on marketing spend	Quarterly	Below the agreed figure

Four rules to agree in advance

Cost per qualified enquiry above threshold for two weeks: review targeting and the landing page.

Appointments up while the show rate falls: the problem sits in scheduling and reminders.

Accepted rate falling by source: audit the qualification rules with sales.

Pipeline up while revenue is flat: check the sales cycle length before cutting any spend.

*A board would rather have
three numbers it believes than
thirty it doubts.*



Actions to build the page

01

Agree the six questions with the people who read it

Forty-five minutes with the chief executive, the finance lead and the head of sales. Write the six questions down and circulate them.

Starting with software rather than with the reader is why most dashboards are abandoned inside a year.

02

Write one definition for every stage

Enquiry, qualified enquiry, accepted by sales, appointment booked, attended, customer won. One sentence each, agreed by marketing and sales together.

Where these three words mean different things in two departments, every number built on them is an argument waiting to happen.

03

Track the routes nobody is tracking

Call tracking, WhatsApp click events, walk-in capture, and a compulsory source field in the CRM. Two weeks of work.

Until this is done the dashboard is confidently wrong, and the channels that carry the phone conversations look like the ones to cut.

04

Build one funnel from spend to revenue

Spend, enquiries, qualified, accepted, booked, attended, won, revenue. One view, by source, on one page.

A page of separate channel reports asks the reader to do the joining up. Very few boards will.

Actions to build the page

05

Pair a cost with an outcome, every time

Cost per qualified enquiry next to the accepted rate. Pipeline created next to revenue closed. Never one without the other.

Volume without cost looks like success. Cost without value looks like waste. Together they describe the business.

06

Mark the calendar on the chart

Ramadan, Eid, the summer months, school terms, DSF and the major exhibitions in your sector, drawn on the timeline.

A flat month-on-month comparison in this market compares two different trading conditions and calls the difference performance.

07

Set thresholds and name owners

Red, amber and green bands on every one of the twelve numbers, with a person against each line who acts when it turns.

A dashboard that describes a problem and triggers nothing is a report with better formatting.

08

Put the decision at the top

Three lines before any chart: what changed, what it means, and the one thing being asked of the board this month.

If the board reads only the top of the page, it should still leave the meeting able to decide.

A worked example

A made-up Dubai and Abu Dhabi clinic group. Four branches, marketing spend of AED 110,000 a month, monthly board pack. The figures are invented and used to show the method.

Where the reporting was

A 14-page monthly deck. Impressions, reach, follower growth, campaign screenshots and a cost per lead of AED 96, which the board had praised for two years.

Bookings were rising. Revenue was flat, and nobody on the page could explain why.

What the definitions found

Marketing counted a booking as a booking. Finance counted an attended appointment. The two figures differed by 31%.

Branch level show rates ranged from 62% to 89%, and the pack had only ever shown the group average of 74%.

What changed

Fourteen pages became one. Twelve numbers, four groups, a decision box at the top.

Show rate went on the board page by branch rather than as a group average, with a named owner for each branch.

The bottleneck was named. The worst branch had a two-day reminder gap and no confirmation message. That is an operations fix, and marketing spend was not the problem.

Cost moved to the honest figure. Cost per attended appointment, at AED 310, replaced cost per lead at AED 96 on the board page.

The result after one quarter. Show rate at 84% across the group on the same spend, and the first board meeting in two years that ended with a marketing decision rather than a discussion.



The one-page board layout

Fill this in with the chief executive and the finance lead present. Once agreed, the definitions do not change for twelve months.

DECISION BOX · WHAT CHANGED · WHAT IT MEANS · WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF THE BOARD

GROUP	NUMBER	THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	TARGET	RAG	OWNER
Demand						
Quality						
Efficiency						
Outcome						

STAGE DEFINITIONS AGREED ON · BY WHOM · REVIEW DATE

THE BOTTLENECK THIS MONTH · THE STAGE · THE BRANCH OR SEGMENT

CALENDAR MARKED ON THE CHART · RAMADAN · EID · SUMMER · EVENTS

UNTRACKED ROUTES STILL TO FIX · OWNER · DATE

THE ONE CHANGE REQUESTED THIS MONTH · COST · OWNER · WHAT IT SHOULD MOVE

Mistakes to avoid and where to check

Six mistakes I see most often

- ☐ Choosing the reporting tool before agreeing what the board needs to decide.
- ☐ Letting lead, qualified lead and accepted lead mean different things in two departments.
- ☐ Showing a group average that hides a branch or segment doing badly.
- ☐ Reporting cost per lead when the business is paid for attended appointments.
- ☐ Comparing months without marking Ramadan, Eid, summer or a major event.
- ☐ Changing a definition mid-year, which destroys every comparison behind it.

On attribution

Perfect attribution is not available to a business of this size, and waiting for it delays every decision. Agreed definitions, clean stage progression and a small number of decision rules produce better management than a more sophisticated model applied to data nobody trusts. Fix the definitions first and the attribution question gets smaller.

Sources

Metric alignment between chief executives and marketing from McKinsey, *The CMO's comeback: aligning the C-suite to drive customer-centric growth*, by Robert Tas and Kelsey Robinson, December 2025. It found 70% of chief executives naming year-on-year revenue or margin as a top accountability metric for marketing, against 35% of the chief marketing officers at the same companies. UAE digital figures from DataReportal, *Digital 2026: The United Arab Emirates*, published 5 November 2025 on data to October 2025. Population 11.4 million, internet users 11.3 million at 99.0% penetration, mobile connections 23.0 million at 202% of population, social media identities 12.5 million at 110%. DataReportal publishes those last two as recorded and notes that duplication and multiple accounts explain figures above 100%. All checked 22 August 2026.

Where to check

DataReportal, datareportal.com, publishes the UAE country report each year without charge. McKinsey publishes its marketing research at mckinsey.com. Your own figures should reconcile to the CRM and to finance before they reach a board page.

Related reading

On ataylorcmo.com, under Insights: building a marketing performance dashboard for your C-suite. Related guides in this series: Set a marketing budget, Measure your marketing, and Choose between an agency, a freelancer and a fractional CMO, at ataylorcmo.com/guides.



Conclusion

Agree the six questions with the people who read the page, write one definition for every stage, and track the routes an enquiry actually arrives by before building anything.

Then put twelve numbers on one page in four groups, pair every cost with an outcome, mark the calendar on the chart, and set a threshold and an owner on every line.

Next step

I offer a 30 minute discovery call at no charge, on the few numbers that connect your marketing to pipeline and revenue.

Book at ataylorcmo.com, or write to adam@ataylorcmo.com.



Adam Taylor

MSc, FCIM, CDMP. A marketing leader with more than 20 years of international experience driving growth, market expansion and competitive positioning across luxury retail, real estate, free zones, automotive and mega-events.

I work as a fractional chief marketing officer for owners, executives and boards in the UAE, the UK and internationally. My career includes Group Head of Marketing at Emaar, Director of Events and Entertainment at Expo 2020 Dubai, and marketing leadership of a UAE free zone, with more than 5,000 events and activations delivered for premium brands.

Credentials

MSc Marketing. Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. Certified Digital Marketing Professional.

Experience

More than 20 years across the UAE, the wider Middle East, the UK and global markets.

Specialisms

Marketing strategy, brand positioning, UAE market entry, growth and marketing return on investment, events and experiential, and board governance.

Brands and organisations

Emaar · Expo 2020 Dubai · The Dubai Mall · IFZA · Al Tayar Motors · Ferrari · Gucci · Harvey Nichols · Bloomingdale's · Dolce and Gabbana

Contact

If you have a question about this guide, or want a second opinion on the numbers your board should be seeing, write or call. I reply within one working day.



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