

City of Sydney turns committee meetings paperless with Diligent Boards



Supporting the decision-making process of the City of Sydney is no easy task. The local government authority oversees vital public works, including maintaining roads, parks and other infrastructure for over a million residents and visitors, as well as assessing development applications for the burgeoning metropolitan area. Hundreds of decisions need to be made within each of these areas to ensure the continued success of one of the world's most iconic cities. To help facilitate decision-making processes, the Diligent Boards™ solution was adopted to enable Councillors' real-time access to critical information wherever and whenever needed.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The City of Sydney has more than 190,000 residents. During the day, that number swells to more than 1 million as commuters and tourists travel to the city centre. The job of the City of Sydney is making sure that everything from roads to the local libraries are in good working order. The Lord Mayor and nine Councillors are elected for four-year terms. They participate in a roster of Council and Committee meetings—at least 10 Council meetings annually—that are open to the public throughout the year.

Four committees within the City of Sydney deal with everything from new parks to tenders for garbage trucks. Each Councillor is a member of the committees. Every time committees meet, reports are created with details supporting different aspects of decision-making.

Owing to the public nature of the City of Sydney's work, the information in these reports is lengthy and often contains hundreds of pages of information funnelled through a chain of stakeholders. In fact, fully collated paper reports for committee meetings were typically more than a foot high when stacked. Every Councillor has at least one and sometimes two Councillor Support Officers (CSOs) that support and advise them on different issues. The CSOs also receive the full reports.

Lugging a thick stack of paper was an obstacle. The City of Sydney needed a way to easily and quickly support their decision-making process—one that did away with paper-based reports that were difficult to update, share and distribute.



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HOW DILIGENT HELPED

In 2014, following a request from the Councillors for a digital solution, the City of Sydney decided to explore other options. Professionals responsible for the city's IT met with the Councillors and asked them what they valued most when it came to managing meeting materials. High on the list was ease of use. Councillors had different levels of comfort with technology, and Diligent Boards proved to be the most intuitive of any other competing solution.

Another deciding factor was Diligent's round-the-clock helpline. According to Leander Klohs, executive manager to the City of Sydney's Chief Executive Officer, "None of the other companies offered such comprehensive service. For us, Diligent took the uncertainty out of making the switch from paper to digital."

RESULTS

Now, thanks to the Diligent Boards solution, running the City of Sydney is a lot more streamlined. Instead of using reams of paper to create meeting packs, Councillors have all the information they need at their fingertips. What's more, everyone has access to the information at the same time—accelerating collaboration. Since issues are often decided upon in phases (building projects, for example), Councillors and their staff not only have access to immediate materials but can also access an archive of previous meeting packs to reference different critical information.

Although Diligent Boards has saved the City of Sydney the work involved in creating different versions of meeting packs, the solution also allows for tailoring. Through the board solution, Councillors can, for instance, communicate privately through "sticky notes" to their CSOs. And access to certain sections of reports can be restricted when possible conflict of interest issues arise.

Use of Diligent Boards has spread, and now the City of Sydney leverages the solution to disseminate weekly emails from the CEO and for the City's internal Executive meeting papers. According to Leander, "We did a staged rollout of Diligent Boards, and by the time we had it implemented in two committees, the others were clamouring for it."

"For the City of Sydney, Diligent took the uncertainty out of making the switch from paper to digital. Our Councillors can now securely access archived and current information via an easy-to-use digital communications tool anywhere at any time."

— **Leander Klohs**
Executive Manager, City of Sydney

Contact us for a demo today:

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