

From AI Oversight to Cognitive Governance:

Building Behaviorally Intelligent Boards

How boards preserve judgment, dissent, and accountability in AI-mediated decisions

Speaker: Giovanni Giamminola

Moderator: Nihad E. Karabernou

THE CORE REFRAME

From AI Oversight	To Cognitive Governance
✓ Governing the model	✓ Governing the human–AI decision system
✓ Is the output accurate?	✓ Is the reasoning sufficiently rigorous?
✓ Managing technical risk	✓ Managing cognitive and behavioral risk
✓ Human in the loop	✓ Human judgment genuinely in command
✓ Compliance and controls	✓ Agency, challenge, accountability, and learning

The main governance question is: Are we still exercising independent judgment?

COGNITIVE GOVERNANCE IN PRACTICE

When legacy, identity, and strategy become entangled, AI can amplify existing power dynamics — unless the board designs for behavioral safety.

THE CHALLENGE	THE INTERVENTION
✓ Dissent can be experienced as disloyalty ✓ Succession, transformation, and capital-allocation choices often become personal ✓ AI may quietly reinforce influential biases	✓ Separate identity from strategy via a decision matrix ✓ Establish protected dissent roles through behavioral diversity ✓ Require transparent attribution of all inputs

Strategic Outcome:

Difficult conversations become objective enough to challenge without becoming personal enough to fracture trust.

INQUIRY METRICS AND AGENCY KPIs

Metric	What it reveals
Assumption-testing rate	✓ How often material assumptions are explicitly challenged before approval
Alternative-options count	✓ Whether the board considered genuine choices, not just one AI-polished recommendation
Dissent participation	✓ Whether challenge is broadly distributed or carried by the same few voices
Chair/founder speaking order	✓ Exposure to authority bias in strategic discussions
AI attribution coverage	✓ Whether AI-generated, human-generated, and human-validated content is transparent
Verification coverage	✓ Whether high-risk claims have been independently checked
Posture-switching frequency	✓ Whether the board moves intentionally between exploration, generation, critique, and execution
Near-miss learning rate	✓ Whether the board reviews decisions that nearly failed, not only those that did

Inquiry metrics make judgment quality visible before poor decisions become outcomes.

THE AUGMENTED AGENDA AND BOARD CHECKLIST

Governance prompt	Key questions
1. Decision and owner	✓ What decision are we making, and who remains accountable for it?
2. AI contribution	✓ What did AI generate, influence, summarize, or recommend, and what was independently human-verified?
3. Posture check	✓ Are we exploring, generating, critically testing, or executing? Are we using the right posture for this phase?
4. The missing view	✓ What are we not discussing? Whose perspective is absent? Which assumption has not been tested?
5. The credible case against	✓ What is the strongest argument that this decision is wrong, premature, or incomplete?
6. Verification and next step	✓ Which high-risk claim still requires independent human verification before commitment?

Add this as a permanent agenda item for strategic, capital-allocation, succession, and AI-transformation decisions.

ACTIVATING COGNITIVE GOVERNANCE

A Move Forward Plan

1. Select one consequential decision category
2. Add the six-question cognitive-governance check to the agenda
3. Assign a rotating dissent or verification role
4. Track two inquiry metrics for one quarter
5. Conduct a near-miss review at the next board cycle

THE NON-NEGOTIABLE QUESTION

**If this decision fails in 12-18 months,
can you explain why you made it
without defaulting to
"the model recommended it"?**

Cognitive governance ensures the answer is grounded in human judgment—not in deference to a model.

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BUILDING BEHAVIORALLY INTELLIGENT BOARDS

Speaker: Giovanni Giamminola

Founder & CEO, Systemic Zero

Affiliated Fellow - UCL School of Management, London

Author, The Augmented Manager

Moderator: Nihad E. Karabernou

Founder & CEO, Acquence

Board Advisor, Transformational Leader

Behaviorally Intelligent Governance Expert

Research:

Giamminola & Taticchi — "[Cognitive Governance in the AI Era](#)" (UCL, 2026)

Giamminola & Pollicino — "From AI Regulation to Cognitive Governance" (Policy Brief, 2025)