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2013 Study: Role of Governance

In 2013, Vizient investigated the **role of governance** in driving top performance among academic medical centers (AMCs). The study sought to understand how **board structures, practices, and engagement** influenced organizational outcomes as measured by Vizient's **Quality and Accountability ranking**.

Using **40 consensus-based standards** from the American Hospital Association as benchmarks, Vizient surveyed **58 AMC CEOs** to evaluate the presence and impact of governance practices within their organizations. Each standard was analyzed for its relationship to organizational performance.

Key findings

Three governance practices were found to have a **statistically significant correlation with top performance**:

1. **Strategic recruitment for board expertise**
   High-performing organizations' boards actively identified and filled gaps in expertise—bringing in members with relevant skills, including physicians and nurses, to strengthen governance.

2. **Commitment to continuous board education**
   Successful boards engaged in regular, structured learning on metrics, measurement, and evolving trends in the national health care landscape. This prepared them to oversee quality and safety with confidence and clarity.

3. **Routine review of governance processes**
   Boards at top performers regularly evaluated their own effectiveness—reviewing processes such as financial oversight, CEO evaluation, and board operations—to ensure alignment with organizational goals.

Conclusion

The study highlighted that governance is not a passive function but a **critical driver of organizational performance**. Boards that deliberately sought expertise, pursued continuous learning, and refined their own processes directly contributed to their organization's ability to achieve and sustain excellence.

These insights laid the groundwork for further exploration in the 2019–2021 study, which provided a deeper understanding of **how board leaders actively shape and sustain top-performing cultures**.

Learn more about Vizient's work around top performance.