



Coaching the Board

Why an Efficient Board is Key to the Success of a Company

By Dr. Clare Beckett-McInroy

Building Boards

An efficient and effective Board is pivotal to the success of a company and teamwork is crucial to Board performance. Yet teamwork has been proven time and again to be the number one challenge and very few Boards use psychometric profiling or other diagnostics to ensure that Board positions are held by members with diverse competencies, backgrounds and experiences. Despite this, the functions and roles of Boards have grown exponentially in terms of globalization, governance, legal responsibilities and diversification. That said, even fewer Boards partake in long-term, impactful team building or team Coaching to enable Boards to work cohesively. What works? Pure Coaching and facilitation through trust programmes surfacing 'new' ways of working together, authentically.

When Coaching Boards...

Coaches of Boards use the same skills as with Executives and Leaders, however, the context is distinct to each situation, especially in family businesses, and different again in the public sector and non-profits. The main message? When choosing a Coach to facilitate your Board moving to a higher level,

We know that businesses should stay focused on what is beneficial to shareholders and stakeholders, manage responsibilities, establish operational and societal goals, report regularly to ensure transparency and focus on engagement orientation behaviours for customer trust and reputation as an employer of choice. This is all important. Easy? No so.

ensure that you choose a qualified and experienced Coach who has cultural awareness and Board experience.

Growing Challenges of Boards

Over the past 20 years, events and trends have meant that corporate governance has become a key business issue. Issues have arisen such as:

- Corruption
- Incompetence
- Politics
- Financial crisis
- Power
- Change and complexity
- Diversity.

There is an ongoing body of research around Board diversity, increasing the number of women as Non-executive Directors on Boards and gender is merely one aspect as international representation, different professional backgrounds, age, personality traits and team styles are all important. Increased diversity has been proven to correlate with higher organisational performance including bottom line. However, diverse Boards are only effective when utilized and when such strengths are either sought or at least identified.

Fear and Focus

There is often a fear of change, lack of meta-view or focus when Boards become ineffective or need to tweak their impact. Coaches ensure they manage expectations from the onset of any Board engagement. Coaches help facilitate

- Good board functioning by enabling effective entrepreneurial endeavours and prudent management
- Obligations to shareholders are met and understood
- Strategic aims
- Financial, human and other resource allocation
- Challenges and transitions
- Open, honest, transparent reviews and
- Added value.

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All the above elements tend to surface during Executive Coaching, however, where trust and relationships need work, Team Coaching then comes into play so that a designed alliance or way of working together on strengths and development areas is accepted. Team Coaching needs clear contracting with all involved and ideally diagnostics and interviews to understand what is really needed for the Board to perform at a more impactful level. This initial clarifying of what is needed is paramount. Contracting also needs to include stages of formal and informal feedback to the Board in general as well as individuals. The most effective Boards co-create with their Coach what behaviours are acceptable. This is important especially when skills and knowledge are abundant because, quite often, we find that small tweaks in behaviour or attitude can have a major positive impact and improve trust.

Research shows that clear Board roles and responsibilities in itself can guarantee added value in terms of social, physical, financial and human capital. BMC has found that there is often a mismatch between alignment of the Boards roles or functions and the needs of the business and so frank discussions on policy, strategy, operations and governance need to be resurrected regularly. For example, is the

role of the Board primarily to save guard the brand and reputation of the company, to provide access of information, to retain and increase profit and market share, to deal with long-term policy, all of these or more? Some Boards welcome non-executive and external members whilst others see this as a threat and choose to build alliances with members. Senate Boards, Unitary Boards (usually with a Chair and a CEO) and Advisory Boards all have their quirky element, advantages and development areas, even more so when culture, language and other nuances are at play. Coaches help to surface any issues and build confidence through clear coaching objectives.

Calling in the Coach

Even the most highly experienced Boards may have a need for a Coach at a one time or another. The majority of the work BMC has engaged in to date involves Board dynamics, connection and Board members learning and development (with 360 degree elements as an ideal).

Accountability is increasing in the public and private sector and especially in family businesses. To this end, impartial Coaches can enable your Boards to deliver the needs of the whole system. **BIG**



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