

## A BOARD FOCUSED CEO

A guide to actions a CEO can take to help the board in areas of: recruitment and induction of board members; preparation and running of meetings; personal motivation of board members; and linkage with the Chair.

### RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION

- > Suggest possible future board members. It is the board's (or the membership's or perhaps the Minister's) prerogative to appoint board members – but the CEO can also be looking for potential recruits who bring professional skills, networks, personal experience or new energy. With board agreement, they can be drafted into Task Forces or Sub-Committees, or harnessed through pro bono advisory or consulting work for the organisation to explore the fit
- > Help with the due diligence process – in coordination with the Chair or Nominating Committee respond to potential board members' queries about the organisation, communicate enthusiasm about its future
- > Assemble an effective induction process and pack: the process will include at least personal briefings with CEO, Chair and perhaps other board members, and a visit to the premises. The pack will include Constitution, annual report, current budget and program, recent board minutes, policy documents, up-to-date strategic plan, and other material
- > Help to draft board duty statements, code of conduct, and a board or governance charter. These would naturally form part of the induction pack. Strictly, it's the board's job to require and create these framing documents – but if they're not there it is in the CEO's and organisation's interests to encourage and assist their production
- > Be responsive to enquiries: especially in a board member's early days there will be a need for explanations of working processes, of environmental issues, and of the acronyms and contextual knowledge many of us take for granted in our industry sector

### MEETINGS

- > Plan the agenda and timing of items with the Chair, identify priority items and decisions needed; ensure the agenda includes strategic issues as well as operational reporting
- > Produce timely, informative board papers – periodically discuss the desired format and length with the board, and discuss what is considered 'board business' and what is considered CEO-business
- > Include a full CEO report in advance with the papers – the board can't afford to be listening to a 20 or 30 minute verbal report at the meeting; report on outcomes and results, not just busy-ness and work done
- > Produce discussion documents to stimulate and guide debate of strategic issues
- > Provide relevant industry background material that improves board knowledge and awareness – agree with the board how much or how little of this they want
- > Keep the board informed of any risk-sensitive areas – board members don't want unpleasant surprises
- > Help the Chair to run a purposeful and punctual meeting
- > Assist in producing Minutes promptly, and actioning items agreed at the meeting

### PERSONAL MOTIVATION

- > Provide encouragement: even though the board employs the CEO, in many non-profit organisations the professional knowledge and drive of the CEO carry a lot of weight. The CEO is in a powerful position to motivate board members individually and collectively
- > Suggest targets for the board, in cooperation with the Chair – specific ways in which the board can assist in furthering the interests and operations of the organisation
- > Pass on good news, organisational achievements – board members want to be proud of their association
- > Say thank you

## CHAIR-CEO LINKAGE

- > Discuss CEO leadership and Chair leadership – be clear who is the media spokesperson, what are the parameters of each role
- > Confirm board-staff communication protocols
- > Discuss organisational priorities, agree the key things which need to be achieved in the next year
- > Clarify what information the Chair and the board want
- > Clarify what support and feedback the CEO wants
- > Welcome appraisal and feedback
- > Alert the Chair to when your, or the organisation's, workload is particularly demanding – help to manage workflow

*To increase trust the CEO must be both engaged and open with the Board. The CEO must provide information and answers when asked, while at the same time not allowing the Board to get distracted from their governance roles.*

Peter Mullins, CEO, Greenpeace Australia and Pacific

