4

ASSESSING THE CHAIR'S PERFORMANCE

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The chair of an organisation has an important role to play for both the wider board and the executives. The chair's role is to lead the board in discharging their duties and to support the executives as well as be the main contact to the board for the executives.

There are a number of attributes which make for a great chair. Leadership styles in the twenty-first century have moved towards a greater emphasis on emotional intelligence, coaching skills and an ability to influence others without dominating. A good chair gives support to others and, like any good leader, creates an environment where others succeed. They lead the board without ruling the board. They should demonstrate the highest personal standards with regard to integrity, reliability, credibility and honesty, always leading by example.

It is generally expected, especially by large institutional investors, that a chair should not also be the CEO, as the role of a chair is to lead the board, not the organisation. The chair's focus is to ensure that the board is fully enabled to function as the highest decision-making and oversight(?) body of the organisation. A chair should be clear about the vision for the organisation and ensure that the board and executives share the same vision. A great

chair leads the board in setting the vision and values for the organisation and ensures these are clearly communicated to executives, employees and other stakeholders.

A board, consisting of a majority of non-executive directors, is not your standard team. As such, they don't need to like each other, but they do need to be able to collaborate and have trust in each other. The chair is responsible for ensuring all board members have the opportunity to be heard and that the members are using all of their skills for the best organisational outcomes. The chair ensures that the directors are working together collaboratively, and as such, emotional intelligence has become possibly the most important attribute of leaders of the twenty-first century.

Good chairs are passionate about their role and take the time to develop a strong relationship with the CEO. They generally work as a supportive sounding board to the CEO and develop the board meeting agendas in close collaboration with them.

On an annual basis the board should conduct a review of the performance of the chair where a number of questions should be asked. The list of questions below covers the main body of what should be asked both in the review and on an ongoing basis.

Key questions to ask of the chair:

- Does the chair act with integrity and demonstrate ethical leadership at all times?
- Is the chair effective in planning, coordinating and managing board meetings?
- Does the chair consistently display a sense of purpose?
- Does the chair encourage healthy board dynamics and interactions?
- Does the chair welcome different perspectives and robust exchanges of views?
- Is the chair open to being challenged themselves?
- Does the chair enable all board members to raise issues and concerns?
- Does the chair demonstrate fairness and objectivity in managing board discussions?
- Does the chair have a role in creating trust between board members?
- Does the chair lead the setting of the agenda and board calendar to ensure all relevant subjects are being discussed in a balanced way throughout the year?

- Is the chair ensuring that adequate time is available for discussion of all agenda items?
- Is the chair ensuring time is spent on discussing strategic issues on a regular basis?
- Is the chair coordinating the work of the committees, ensuring that they interact with the board in an appropriate manner?
- Is the chair accessible to board members and executive management both in and outside of board meetings?
- Is the relationship between the chair and the CEO constructive?
- Does the chair engage effectively with shareholders, employees and other significant stakeholders?
- Does the chair ensure that directors are made aware of the views of stakeholders?
- Is the chair regularly in individual contact with each director?
- Does the chair seek ways to enhance directors' contributions and effectiveness?
- Does the chair understand the strengths and weaknesses of the board?
- Is the chair committed to developing the overall effectiveness of the board?
- Does the chair live and breathe the organisational values?