



Director Recruitment: Filling Unique Niches

Human Resource Specialist

By Linda Hanson

Sometimes a board fails at targeting trouble spots simply because its members were chosen for the wrong reasons and many of them don't know *how* to target trouble spots. For example, who makes sure there is a board member who has the skills to zero in on the general status of management-employee relationships? Boards that are comprised entirely of people whose first loyalty is to the CEO or whose self-interests are disjointed from the organization create chaos in the overall picture and a breakdown in communication channels.

Even when a board of directors is selected solely on the basis of each member's experience and merit, there can still be discrepancies in their combined abilities to oversee the company successfully. For this reason, among others, it should be mandatory that each board include an individual who excels in the people side of business. This way the employee perspective always has a voice.

Director Summary: When recruiting board members, think about what qualities they bring to the table. Here, one author highlights the value of a human resource person as a key to enhanced board interaction; another the value of a "green" director to add expertise in environmental matters.

Ensure Channels of Communication

Much too frequently, the hard skills required by the financial aspects of the company overshadow the soft skills that are just as critical to keeping the company operating day-to-day. A board member with soft skills has the ability to convey ideas clearly and articulately, the inclination to listen well to others, the ability to ask good questions, and the patience to manage relationships.

Having a Human Resource Person on the Board

Maintaining a consistent set of values is critical for any board of directors that is genuinely interested in representing a company heading for long-term success. Part of the board's responsibility in looking at the big picture is making sure the big picture paints an environment that is desirable to work in. This challenge is far more feasible when a person with excellent people skills is on the board. Consider just a few of the ways in which it would facilitate a board's progress:

- **Time saving.** Human resources make up a board of directors just as they do the staff of a company. Evaluating the board from a people standpoint is necessary in gauging whether or not the board is capable of working together.
- **Asking the right questions.** Someone who feels comfortable communicating also feels comfortable asking questions regarding matters that are unclear. Otherwise, these questions typically go unspoken. Also important is the need to ensure all members can voice their opinions.
- **Multi-level synergy.** A people-person can help make sure the board of directors bonds well with the CEO, as well as with the executive team. ■

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