



Driving up Board Performance

From 10.30am until 4.30pm on Tuesday, March 20th 2018

**Background Note and Agenda
for our 16th Leadership Conversation**

Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

"Applying deep insight and rubber stamping are such counter propositions"

Pearl Zhu, Digitizing Boardroom



A Conversation in four stages

■ Exploring the roles of Chief Executives and Executive Directors

Many Non-Executive Directors still complain of being expected to rubber stamp decisions already made by their Executive team. They criticise information overload and lack of real consultation on the part of their Execs.

We will ask Chairs and Non-Executive Directors:

- *Do you feel that your Executives do enough to seek guidance and overall direction from the Board?*
- *For any who don't, how would you like your Executives to change the ways in which they engage with you to enable you to offer greater added value?*

We will ask CEOs and Executive Directors among us:

- *What experiences do you have of changing your practices of reporting to your Board, to engage NEDs earlier in the decision-making process without giving up your Executive responsibility for operational decision-making?*

A Conversation in four stages

2 Exploring the roles of Chairs and Non-Executive Directors

Many Chief Execs and Executive Directors still talk of how some of their NEDs act as if their role is to try and expose any flaw in what they put before the Board, however miniscule the point might be.

So we will ask CEOs and Exec Directors:

- *When you are aware of an unexpected shortcoming in performance, how much do you feel able to share it openly with your Board?*
- *How much do you feel a need to “manage” the presentation of this, lest one or more of your NEDs use this against you instead of supporting you in tackling the problem that you are raising?*

We will ask Chairs and Non-Execs:

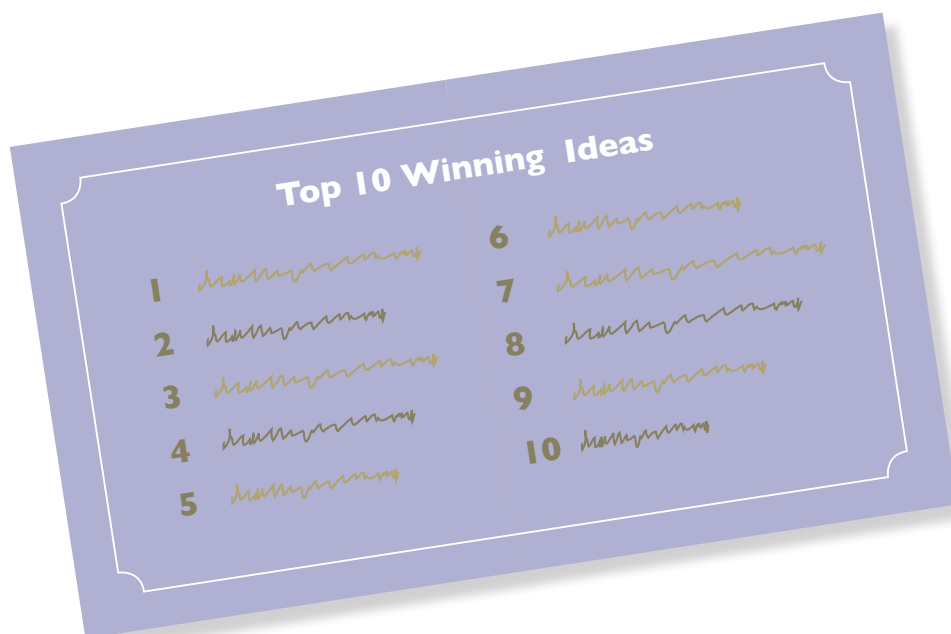
- *How much do you feel that you can rely upon your Executive team to volunteer any “bad news”, instead of you having to hunt it out?*
- *How far are you from being in a position where difficult things can be said openly at Board meetings, without fear or favour?*

A Conversation in four stages

3 Creating a menu of potential winning ideas

Part of the attraction of this process is that there is no need for anyone to knock down any ideas that you're not particularly keen on. All that matters is sharpening up the proposals that you might take forward with your own Board.

This is why in stage 3 we will draw up a menu of potential "winning ideas". We will encourage those not keen on an idea to act as constructive "devil's advocates", helping others to see where they might trip up – without taking the wind out of their sails!



A Conversation in four stages

4 Asking how we might each change our leadership style to become a more effective champion of change at Board level

In this final stage, we will ask how we each need to develop our own leadership style to become more effective in encouraging Board members to take on our ideas as their own.

In previous Conversations we have found that this session provides some of the richest “nuggets” that we all take away from the experience.

This is why we plan our time carefully to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to receive supportive feedback from others about their key conclusions, before we finish our discussions on the dot of 4.30pm.

It is remarkable how much we all gain from feedback and informal coaching across the group. This is only possible because of the exceptionally high levels of trust that we all work to achieve from the moment we start one of our Leadership Conversations.



Trust barometer

Agenda

Tuesday March 20, 2018

10.30am	Coffee and light refreshments served in the Vicars' Hall
10.45am (prompt please)	We welcome you to the Conversation and suggest a small number of groundrules for our time together. We then break into small groups for 15 minutes to consider our first question: <i>"If there were two ways in which you (as CEO/ an Exec Director) or your CEO and Executive team might be more effective in engaging with your Board, what would they be?"</i> (Refreshments available)
11.15am	Back from groups (different chairs, please). We hear your personal answers to this question, capture the key messages coming forward and then break into new groups for our second question:
12 noon	<i>"If there were two ways in which you (as Chair) or your Chair and NEDs might be more effective in engaging with Executives at Board meetings, what would they be?"</i> (Refreshments available)
12.15pm	Back in the circle in new seats, we hear your personal answers and sharpen up key outcomes. We then split into new groups to work together over lunch
1.00pm	Lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall. Groups support each other in sharpening up the top two or three ideas from the morning's discussions that you would like to take forward with your own Board
1.45pm	Back in the circle, we ask if anyone is EXCITED by one idea in particular, because it has the potential to make your Board perform significantly better. We want to identify a good range of ideas in this session so that you have a "menu" to choose from, by the time we ask you to spend 10 minutes on your own considering the following question:
2.40pm	<i>"Thinking about those two or three ideas that you most favour for improving the performance of your own Board, in what sorts of ways do you need to develop and perhaps change your personal leadership style to make you a more effective advocate for change?"</i> (Refreshments available)
2.50pm	Back together again, we explore how you each see your own leadership style developing to ensure that you have maximum impact in helping to drive up the performance of your Board. We have a brief comfort break at 3.30. We are careful to keep to time so that everyone has an opportunity to benefit from quality feedback from others in the group.

We close the Conversation on the dot of 4.30pm.