



Mentoring Circle

Outcome Report

Topic: Open Discussion

Date: 19 April 2016



INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS
SOUTHERN AFRICA

The aim of the Mentoring Circles is personal development, building a community of directors, and contributing to the social and personal competencies of the Director Development Framework.

The Challenges

- Personal agendas can interfere with decision-making that is in the best interest of the organisation's agenda and objectives.
- Taking a strong leadership role to move the organisation forward can be delayed by the need to take into account everyone's perspective.
- The historical model of operating at senior or executive levels can become entrenched, which can interfere with realigning responsibilities for a more appropriate and effective organisation. This 'old way' approach can also prevent employees from buying in to a new vision for the organisation.
- The functionality of a board can be obstructed by individuals, particularly those who are inflexible and with poor interpersonal skills.

The Solutions

- If a board is performing poorly, such as not preparing adequately for board meetings, an internal or external Board review could be implemented. This might be instituted through off-line conversations with the Chairman (if it is not possible to raise as an agenda item), who should be the one to initiate such a process. If a particular individual director is not fulfilling their duties, the other directors have the power, obligation and duty to address this – if necessary even by voting the individual off the Board. The risks and liabilities to which the board as a whole are being exposed through individuals not performing can also be raised, particularly through the Company Secretary. It may also be useful to get Executive Directors to report on issues from departments other than their own: the Chairman must drive this and it can be effective in creating the environment where people prepare, while serving a director development purpose too. Alternatives may be coaching and mentoring – again either internal (co-mentoring at Board level) or external (independent). Finally, director's KPIs should include aspects like meeting preparation, and can be linked to director remuneration: there is some guidance on this on the IoDSA website.
- Transformation needs to be managed very sensitively with full acknowledgement that it does not happen quickly, if it is to be done with integrity. There is a need for the organisation to have a very strong vision, that is built collaboratively especially in an organisation with a membership base. Realistic targets with KPIs for transformation (across all aspects not only race and gender) need to be set along with a clear path for in-depth engagement around the transformation agenda. All risks, such as loss of membership support and/or loss of relevance, need to inform the planned transformation process and pace.
- Levels of responsibility of directors should be captured in the Board Charter. All agreements about responsibilities, whether in general or for specific projects, should be captured in writing. If responsibilities are constantly being confused it may be necessary to engage with specific individuals (directors) one-on-one to clarify their intentions and responsibilities.
- Deep engagement with employees about their values, and what is important to them can help to grow buy-in to, and allow them to contribute to, a new vision. It can also help for Directors to undertake social and personal competency training, to help them engage in more meaningful ways. New or young directors can also engage with older more experienced directors to find out what worked and why in the 'old' approach, so as not to lose valuable insight, while also ensuring that more experienced directors remain relevant to the organisation.
- A Board skills assessment (status quo), compared to a Board skills 'needs' assessment can be a powerful way to highlight where there are gaps, redundancies, overlaps, or a mismatch of people and responsibilities. Issues such as nepotism may be addressed through raising this issue of risk and liability exposure if directors are not performing. Sensitivity and respect is crucial in all aspects of Board performance, but the law is clear about director's duties and responsibilities, and every individual director needs to abide by these requirements.