Mentoring Circle Outcome Report

Topic: Courage

Date: 22 June 2016

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
- Being honest about ethical issues can have detrimental effects, such as threatening job security.
- Creating a professional board can be challenging in a family-owned business, due to the need to maintain sound family relationships.
- Speaking out inappropriately (time or manner) can negate positive change.
- The need to maintain project pipelines from clients can hinder speaking out against the client.
- Leaving a corporate job can have difficult consequences, including requiring a change in lifestyle.
- Trying to make positive changes to a business is difficult to achieve on one's own, and/or in the face of risk-averse management.
- Fear can prevent an individual taking positive steps towards desired outcomes.

The Solutions
- Courage sometimes means one has to step outside one's comfort zone. In business, we are challenged as to whether we are willing to stand up for our values, or whether we are willing to constantly compromise.

- With specific reference to fear of investing, the recommended book is "The Effective Investor" by Franco Busetti. It is also important to understand your investment criteria, how involved you want to be in the investment management, and making use of BBEEE opportunities. Crucial to conquering the fear is knowledge, including what questions to ask of experts and financial coaches.

- Taking risks is necessary to grow. Where a senior person is risk averse, one can frame the issue in terms of the risks of not doing anything. Also approaching the issue in a collaborative rather than confrontational manner can be helpful.

- Where people are not performing as expected, sometimes a performance management process is the only route to go, once all other avenues have been exhausted. It is unhelpful to everyone and to the business to not hold people accountable for their agreed work. As businesses change (including into new models or new products and services) it may be that the existing people are not correct for the new business, and parallel structures may need to be implemented with new people while the changeover is made.

- When changing career paths from corporate to entrepreneur, it is important to take time to pilot you new endeavour, while maintaining a safety net of existing work. It is also important to prioritise what you believe you can and cannot live without as this will affect your strategy.

- Ethically as a consultant, informing the client of your perception of reality is sometimes all that one can do, even if the client does not listen. One's language, one's approach, and the means of communication need to be respectful and compassionate.

- Diplomacy genuinely can create positive change. Part of this may be conferring with colleagues before raising uncomfortable issues, and ensuring that major issues are not raised as a surprise.

- Managing the governance of a family-owned business is very challenging. It may be helpful to engage the services of an independent non-executive director in an advisory position to break deadlocks and raise difficult issues. An independent board performance assessment may also be helpful in raising potentially uncomfortable governance issues.

- When a Board does not want to face a difficult issue, it may be that the use of risk language can get the necessary attention. In other words, raise the risks of not dealing with the issue, not just the difficulties of dealing with it. In this specific case, when dealing with values, it can be helpful to translate the values into expected behaviours, as this removes some of the emotion and potential for misunderstanding from the discussion. Behaviours provide a more objective measure of performance. Particularly when dealing with values, change is likely to be slow as it requires an entire culture change, so one's expectations need to match that timeframe. Changing the culture is also an ongoing process, requiring ongoing conversations at every opportunity to create a groundswell. If the personal cost is too high, the choice to leave is a highly subjective and individual one.