Is your team fit for growth?

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The question, *Is our team fit for growth?,* is the most important question in the HR field. Having the right players on the Leadership Team is a must in order for your company to compete and win.

Executive Boards play a critical role in building their companies' Leadership Teams and setting them up for success. Here we discuss four best practices that successful Boards use to ensure productive dialogue and effective decision-making on their Leadership Teams.

1. Establish a Shared Language

Every company runs its business through people working together in teams. In today's complex world, lone individuals will not be able to make the difference anymore. It is always a team of people that makes things happen. Think about the most recent success that your business has had; **it is always a result of team work.** Hence, intelligent Boards think in terms of teams and they debate their capabilities to deliver on strategy.

Intelligent Boards understand that the guard rails for a discussion on leadership are uniquely vague. This is unlike a financial discussion where we can frame the debate in more concrete terms. **A people discussion has no obvious shared language**. Hence two imperatives:

A. The first imperative for a converging people discussion is to **create a shared language**. It starts with agreeing on the strategy the team has to deliver. Without a shared understanding of the strategy, it will be impossible to reach a conclusion on the capabilities the team needs in order to deliver on it. Strategy changes like the weather. Clarify and set expectations—with the strategy in mind—before each people dialogue.
B. The second imperative is to have the **CEO/Chairman act as the guardian of the values and behaviours** that are germane and fundamental to the leadership discussions. This ensures they remain at the forefront of these discussions and appropriately influence decision-making.

2. Overview first, details later

Smart Boards will first seek to understand the critical capabilities required at the team level. Given the team's objectives, what combination of skills and experiences does the team need to possess? This overview is key because it defines the key areas of risk and helps set priorities.

A simple *How/What* matrix with the team members plotted offers a good starting point. The matrix allows the Board to understand where their opinions converge and/or diverge. Once this high-level understanding is established, the Board can then zoom in at the individual level; a more granular assessment of each person can be determined based on pre-defined criteria for the *How* and the *What*. Each potential team member must be evaluated against the required capabilities, and the full range of necessary skills must be considered to build an effective team. Personalities and working styles should also be considered to select team members that can work well together.

3. Bridging Strategic Complexity and Team Capabilities

Intelligent Boards make the connection between the capabilities of the team and the complexity of the strategy the team has to deliver. It is clear that a Hold Strategy (do tomorrow what you can do today) has a very different level of complexity compared to an ambitious Growth Strategy (e.g. enter the ASEAN markets without any prior experience). In today's people/team discussions, the strategic complexity is usually overlooked.

A second-tier team can never be successful in the "Premier League". Not because of the team, but because of a mismatch between second tier capabilities and first tier delivery expectations. In business, this simple principle is frequently overlooked. A rigorous comparison between the capabilities of a team and the complexity of the strategy is essential.

4. Ensure Wise Execution of Your People Decisions

People decisions are never black and white. Some decisions are straightforward while others can be much more challenging because decision makers have different perspectives and priorities. In the latter case – and when there is time available – it often serves the decision process well to have the person in question undergo an assessment.

The people without "question marks" do not need an assessment. The people with "question marks" in light of the strategy, and who are in critical positions, are the ones that need to go through an external assessment. **Intelligent Boards use assessments to validate their decisions, not to drive their decisions.**

Assessments can be a great instrument when used in the right context. The right context is knowing the team, knowing the strategy, and knowing the key questions for each of the individuals that are being assessed.

Conclusion

Understanding if your team is fit for growth is a key management task and needs to be undertaken with great care and diligence.

Intelligent Boards understand that and take full responsibility for the ultimate outcome with the above four traits as the roadmap for their people dialogue.

Through the decades of global experience at Stanton Chase in leadership placement and assessment, and its partnership with Intelligent BoardRoom – The Cognitive Software for Better People Decisions – organizations are able to leverage the dynamic combination of technology and expertise to drive effective discussions about the people most important to your strategy. Data-driven and objective, the question "Is your team fit for growth?" will be answered.