



CLIENT STORIES [3]

Changing counterproductive aspects of a board's culture

Rosemary conducted a board review of a top 50 ASX company that revealed a board culture that was not serving the company well. The interaction amongst the directors and between the board and management was exceedingly polite. Dissension appeared to be suppressed to such a degree that if a director challenged management or fellow directors, the tone was both apologetic and careful. As a result, the consideration of issues was protracted and often issues were revisited a number of times before a final decision was made.

Rosemary conducted a more intensive analysis of the board's culture by observing a number of board meetings and further interviewing the directors and relevant executives. The findings of this analysis were reviewed with the board and recommendations made about how to develop new ways of interacting that would allow for more open and rigorous debate.

Rosemary worked in a coaching role with the Chair to help him develop a broader repertoire for eliciting interaction, asking probing questions, determining the degree of consensus and synthesising debate. She also attended a number of board meetings to provide coaching to the board overall about enhancing their interactions.

In a later board review, the positive change in the board's culture was apparent – directors were actively engaged in discussions, issues were thoroughly examined and decisions were made within appropriate timeframes.

Strengthening the processes, decision-making capability and quality of debate is key to building an effective board culture.