

CLIENT STORIES [5]

Providing an independent perspective

Rosemary was asked to work with a newly appointed CEO whom the board had brought in to turn around the company. The market had regarded the company as lacklustre for some time.

Rosemary's role was as a sounding board and advisor to the CEO with a focus on restructuring the organisation, changing the composition of the executive team and introducing more streamlined processes for consultation and decision-making (especially between business groups which had traditionally operated as separate fiefdoms). The CEO was also keen to concentrate on building his relationship with the board, managing the performance of his team and tailoring his leadership behaviour to the task at hand.

In the process of working together, the CEO would at times test a range of ideas with Rosemary to identify the trade-offs inherent in each. At other times they would examine his recent interactions with the board, his executive team and other key stakeholders with an eye to improving the effectiveness of his future interactions. Or perhaps they would discuss different ways to develop his direct reports.

Rosemary was akin to being an occasional friendly co-pilot whom the CEO knew would be forthright and challenging, yet supportive, as he addressed the various components of his role. Additionally, he had a trusted advisor with whom he could share his own aspirations, concerns and challenges in the role.

One of the benefits for the CEO was that Rosemary had no agenda other than helping him be as successful as he could be in reshaping the business. Over the four years Rosemary worked with the CEO, he strategically repositioned the company, restructured the business, built a strong executive team, aligned the culture to the strategic direction and delivered strong business results.

A CEO who builds a relationship with a trusted independent advisor goes a long way towards reversing the adage that 'it's lonely at the top'.