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## Board Evaluation for a Major UK plc

### Summary

- Our client – a major UK plc – had seen significant change on its Board, with existing members changing roles and new executives and non-executives arriving. We conducted a rigorous Board evaluation, identifying developmental needs for individual directors and the Board as a whole. We also helped Board members to understand and appreciate their different styles and approaches, so they could work more effectively together. Our work enabled new Board members to contribute more quickly and helped those changing roles to work out the impact of this on their relationships with the Board.

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### Optimising board effectiveness

Our client is a leading UK plc, with a turnover of more than £2 billion. In 2013, there were significant changes to the Board, including the Non-executive Chairman moving back to CEO, the former Senior Independent Director replacing him as Chairman, and a new Finance Director and Non-executive joining.

In commissioning their annual Board evaluation, the Chairman and CEO wanted to go beyond a tick-box exercise, to look at their capability and effectiveness as a group and to facilitate changes that would optimise the Board's performance.

### Our approach

We worked with the Chairman and CEO to understand what was important to them. They were keen to ensure that the Board:

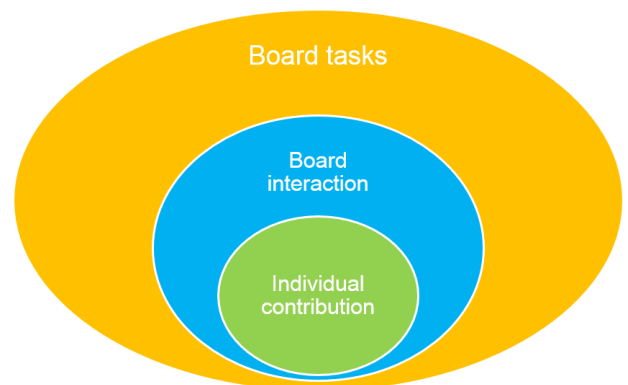
- had clear roles, accountabilities and expectations
- understood and appreciated each other's expertise, perspective and approach, and
- had behaviours and processes that enabled constructive discussion and robust decision making.

We conducted an independent, objective evaluation of the Board's effectiveness from three perspectives:

- shared clarity and effective execution of Board tasks
- the quality and effectiveness of interaction within the Board, and

- the nature and quality of individual contributions to the Board.

We interviewed each Board member to facilitate self-review, gather constructive feedback on colleagues' contributions, and review group effectiveness and the Board's capacity to perform key tasks and fulfil its responsibilities.



We triangulated this data by observing a board meeting, interviewing divisional heads and psychometric profiling using FIRO-B and MBTI Step 2. We integrated this qualitative and quantitative data to produce individual contribution profiles and identify group strengths and limitations with respect to Board requirements.

### Creating a shift

Boards only benefit from evaluations when they use the results to effect change. We used individual facilitated feedback to review each person's profile and the group profile, to help Board members understand and own the

evaluation's insights. We then facilitated a half day Board session, at which individuals tabled their own development priorities and the group worked together to agree a development action plan for the Board as a whole. We also used psychometric based exercises to raise awareness of differences in styles and approach around the table, and to help individuals work effectively together and understand how to get the most from each other.

Individuals received feedback from their colleagues, which helped them sharpen their contribution to the Board, and as a whole the Board set out a realistic development agenda. This covered practical areas such as when and how information is circulated, and commitments such as signalling what type of discussion is required in a particular situation, and being clear if these needs are not being met. The Board committed to review progress against this agenda within a set timeframe and regularly thereafter.

The process helped new Board members to understand the functioning, personalities and nuances of this particular group, and to be in a position to make a constructive contribution more quickly. For those changing roles, it was an opportunity to work out the impact of this on their approach and relationships within the Board.

As the Chairman said, "The Board evaluation was very useful to each of us as individuals and to the Board as a whole, helping us to improve the way we operate and ensure we can harness the diverse talents around the table for the good of our shareholders."

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