

Saxton Bampfylde

# Preparing your Board for the future

Exploring issues in  
governance and how to  
develop a pipeline of talent

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# Introduction



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# Key themes

## **How do we prepare our boards for the future?**

What skills are going to be most critical to have on School boards?

What are we seeing in other sectors?

How do we achieve diversity of thought?

## **How do we build a pipeline of talent to join the boards of schools?**

What has worked in other sectors?

Retention and Sustainability

The changing perception of board roles in the independent education sector

**Takeaway:** 10 things your board can think about

## DISCUSSION

**How do we prepare  
our boards for the  
future?**

# What skills are going to be most critical to have on our boards?

- Cognitive diversity and the most successful and innovative businesses
- What skills? No two boards or schools are the same
- Hard and soft skills to ensure boards operate effectively

# What are we seeing in other sectors?



## Digital / Data

"We are going to gain traction post-pandemic because of digital."

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that digital development is at the core of business economy. This is only going to heighten and bring forward a greater growth of and reliance upon digital capabilities. This will increase the levels of data being generated and the potential it brings to understand and evolve business models and strategies in the future. There must be an understanding of the capabilities, potential and risks at Board level.



## Communications / Marketing

"The regular cadence of communication needs to run through the whole business, including the Board."

An area that was emphasised as vitally important at an Executive level, and integral to drive business continuity and growth in the future is communications and marketing. At a Board level, its strategic importance has also grown and NEDs with senior experience in this area will be sought after.



## Cyber

"It is a major threat, and we know it. In my mind we need more knowledge on the Board."

Cyber security is an area of real and growing threat, especially with a far greater increase in channelisation of business and online operations. For many this was an area where more experience, if not specific skills, would be welcomed, particularly in how to manage and mitigate risks. It was also agreed that for specific challenges or threats it could be more beneficial to bring in talent to support as needed.



## HR

"HR and human capital needs to come into the boardroom with force."

People and their mental and physical well-being are now a clear point on Board agendas, therefore HR and people development experience is growing in importance for Non-Exec candidates. There must be a particular focus on bringing in those who have experience of dealing with transformation and culture development.



## Global Experience

"The world has got smaller. Technology gives us the chance to bring more global experience into our boardroom."

The appeal of global experience may be more significant for companies with international customer-bases, but even those more focused on UK or smaller, more geographically contained markets felt that this knowledge can bring different and useful perspective to the Board.



## AI / Machine Learning

"Boards really must be more aware of technological innovation and what impacts and opportunities this will bring."

The inevitable proliferation of automation, artificial intelligence and machine learning at an operational level will have impacts across business performance, productivity and efficiency as well as labour requirements. It will be increasingly important to have this knowledge represented at Board level.



## Audit and Regulatory

"A greater emphasis on technical skill, such as audit, is going to become more important."

A continuously evolving audit and regulatory landscape is a reality for many sectors, and Boards must be able to support and deliver what is required at a technical level. However, there is an increasing need for Boards to bring more balance in the way customers, shareholders and staff are listened and responded to, which requires a more flexible attitude to strategic decision making.



## Strategic / Business Continuity

"We need much greater eye on strategy than tactic."

In response to the pandemic, the need for more strategic input at Board level to ensure business continuity and risk management is vital. Experience in delivering strong business continuity procedures or running very senior level risk modelling will be highly sought after.

# How do we achieve diversity of thought?

*“The reality that there is more than one way to think about something”*

- Ensure diversity in board member selection
- Understand the skill around the table
- Engage the non-subject matter experts
- Acknowledge all comments
- Rotate the leadership role
- Consider bringing in external experts or advisor to provide fresh insight

## DISCUSSION

**How do we build a pipeline of talent to join the boards of schools?**



# What has worked in other sectors

- Associate NEDS
- Co-opted committee membership
- Keeping the conversation open
- Mentoring schemes aimed at diversifying boards

# Retention and Sustainability

- Create a status-less environment
- Have a good induction as well as regular reviews and check ins
- Offer mentorship and support
- Create an 'ongoing' inclusive board environment
- Carry out regular board effectiveness reviews

# The changing perception of board roles in the independent education sector

- Agile governance and what is demanded of board members in the sector
- Ambassadors for the sector and how the Chair can lead on this
- Perceptions and stigma around the sector or a challenge more broadly for the education sector as a whole
- Concerns around social mobility – am I the right fit?

# Q&A

# 10 things for your Board to think about

1. Consider more how the school can benefit from a diverse talent pool
2. Consider how your board can be more creative and agile in terms of attracting new talent
3. Once we have attracted new talent, do we create the right environment for new board members to contribute and stay on the board?
4. As a Chair/ Member of NomCo, am I carrying out regular skills audits and consciously thinking about succession planning?
5. Consider what can be learnt from the way boards operate in other sectors
6. Look at your risk register and ask are we prepared enough for another black swan event?
7. Do we have the right balance of current experience in our NEDs?
8. Do we have enough resilience, agility and flexibility in our Board?
9. Is my Board the right size? If not, can we change that?
10. Could knowledge of other operating models and governance approaches be additive to our board?

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