

WHY YOUR CEO NEEDS A MENTOR

“She has an impeccable CV, been a great COO in other companies, the staff love her, but the board relationship is terrible. We’re not sure if she understands the role of the board, she is dismissive of our input and defensive about questions, it’s not a very productive dialogue. If we could improve this relationship I think it would benefit her and the company. Ultimately if we can’t find more common ground then one of us has to go.”

“This is his first CEO role, he’s charismatic, but inexperienced. He needs to delegate more get out of the detail and lead the organisation. The board wants to give him every chance of success.”

“The Board is confident in the appointment of this CEO however he has come through the ranks and doubts his own capabilities for this role. We need him to build confidence in his voice, learn how to more effectively work with us and become the leader he can be.”

These are common scenarios that have led us to find mentors for dozens of CEOs in the past two years. They are from a diverse range of companies – family businesses, listed companies, not for profits, government agencies. People working in health, finance, defence, performing arts, professional services, and consumer goods.

Why do they do this and what is the impact?

In short its cost effective, personal/tailored, confidential and high impact.

In our experience the board offers mentoring to new CEO’s as a professional development program to support them in their transition to leadership, but in some cases the CEO initiates the program.

The Chair acknowledges that although he/she and the CEO may have a good working relationship that the CEO needs their own confidential adviser external to the organisation to discuss and test ideas, strategies and protocols.

It’s smart governance by the board. They are managing the risk and supporting their most important asset.

They see the value in offering external, independent sounding board and advisor to help their CEO build their confidence and increase their knowledge of the board’s role.

From the CEO’s perspective they are asking how to work more effectively with their boards, build better relationships, increase engagement from both sides to successfully drive their strategy and vision for the organisation.

For many new executives working to a board is a new experience and in a mentoring relationship they are able to test strategies and ideas, with an experienced company director, prior to meetings.

The mentor can offer insights on board dynamics, governance and leadership in a different forum, with no background politics or agenda.

“I FEEL LIKE THE WAY THAT I AM MANAGING MY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BOARD HAS CHANGED PROFOUNDLY. IT HAS DEFINITELY CHANGED THE WAY I ENGAGE WITH THEM AND THE WAY I GET THINGS DONE.”
CEO, HR COMPANY

“I AM MORE CONFIDENT IN MY ABILITY TO LEAD THE ORGANISATION”
DIRECTOR, PROPERTY ORGANISATION

In addition to board support, CEOs also report benefits such as building confidence, expanding leadership skills, providing an opportunity for reflection and guidance and experienced wisdom in dealing with difficult professional and personal challenges.



“I LOOK AT MYSELF NOW AND LOOK AT MYSELF FIVE YEARS AGO AND IT’S ALMOST LIKE I AM A DIFFERENT PERSON IN UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECTING MY GUT FEEL AND THE CONFIDENCE IN HOW I RUN THE BUSINESS.”
RECRUITMENT EXECUTIVE

In late 2011 we surveyed a sample of executives who were representative of the 600 mentees who have participated in our programs. 32% were CEOs or executives.

They claimed that having access to a confidential mentor ‘who had some runs on the board’ and was external to their organisation was often life changing.

“THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT HAS BEEN IN TAKING A STEP BACK AND LOOKING MORE STRATEGICALLY AT THE BUSINESS AND MY ROLE AND ADJUSTING THE BALANCE BETWEEN WORKING ‘ON’ THE BUSINESS AND ‘IN’ THE BUSINESS.”
PRINCIPAL, ARCHITECTS FIRM

“IN MANAGEMENT I FIND IT’S A VERY LONELY PLACE WITH LITTLE SUPPORT.”
MANAGING DIRECTOR



McCARTHY MENTORING