

## **Getting the Board Out of the Weeds**

### **Question:**

How can boards get themselves out of the weeds and back to the strategic level after a CEO transition where the board needed to be more involved and getting ready for the new CEO?

### **Answer:**

Let me begin with two basic assumptions:

1. The new CEO was chosen as the best match for the organization's culture to lead the organization from where it is into the future.
2. Prior to hiring the new CEO, the board discusses that person's approach to working with a board and how they would like to get started.

First, board leadership should meet with the new CEO to get a sense of what that person sees as the most pressing adaptive challenges / issues on which to get started and, thus, decide where to focus the board's attention as partners in leadership in the year ahead.

Second, with the board, the critical first step is "recognition" of what is going on. The Chair can engage the board in a dialogue about these questions:

- Where is the board's focus currently (as we emerge from this CEO transition process)?
- Have we gotten into some patterns and practices that we needed during the transition process that are no longer productive?
- Where should our focus be to be most helpful to the new CEO?

Third, give board members something else to do! One of the reasons that trustees get into the weeds is that they do not see other meaningful work. And yet, the new CEO will have numerous ideas about what they need from the board. Engage the new head and the board in dialogue about how the board can best add value at a governance level.

Fourth, set goals for the board and develop an annual workplan for the board and committees around the most essential work.

Finally, ask the CEO how the board is doing staying in the governance lane and course correct as needed. Occasionally, an individual board member with all the best intention will overstep; the board chair should gently rein that person back in. The board itself, as a board, can also self-police.