

Recommendations & Session Feedback

Getting the board to work - discussion



Practitioners Forum 2018



Recommendations developed by inquiry group

- 1  Boards need to actively engage and involve members directly
- 2  Boards need to determine the capabilities they require and how to manage succession
- 3  Boards need to be clear what behaviours are expected and how to encourage them
- 4  Coops UK can take the lead in supporting chairs and vice chairs improve their boards



1. Boards need to actively engage and involve members directly

1. Boards need to have annual membership engagement plans

- Important for members that they understand the board's role
- A plan ensures the board directly engages with the members
- A plan needs to be managed and regularly reviewed to ensure it is being delivered and changes incorporated where required

2. A direct feedback loop with members should be put in place

- Board needs to interact directly with members and hear their feedback
- Feedback creates a dialogue built on trust and transparency
- Recognition that this takes time and effort from board members
- Need to consider how feedback is incorporated into board expectations

3. Mechanisms to creatively engage members should be identified and developed

- There are good examples of creative ways coop boards have engaged members that can be learnt from
- Among the mechanisms have included: use of technology; running interesting workshop topics around AGMs; holding board surgeries
- These is an opportunity to encourage members to stand for the board

4. A key aspect of the role of directors is membership engagement

- Election of directors is an important democratic coop principle
- Directors are elected directly or indirectly by members and have a responsibility to find ways to engage members
- Engagement is one way directors develop themselves and others

REFLECTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Which recommendation we are discussing

Boards need to actively engage and involve members directly

What do we like about the recommendation

- They provide a structure for membership engagement
- They think about the mechanism for engaging
- Possible suggestions on how to best engage
- Shows the importance of members feeding back – its not one way
- Without a plan/ structure engagement probably won't happen

What will make the recommendation better

- More specifics within them
- Details on how the board have to take notice of the results of member engagement

What is missing from the recommendation

- This could be a box ticking exercise – something that looks like engagement but is fake/ window dressing
- Sounds quite top-down – “this is what will be done to the ‘members’”
- Doesn't mention the skills needed to be a good director

REFLECTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Which recommendation we are discussing

Boards need to actively engage and involve members directly

What do we like about the recommendation

- Planning and reviewing implementation

What will make the recommendation better

- Creative engagement – food, speakers, take the AGM to the members

What is missing from the recommendation

- Mechanism from members to the board rather than board down

2. Boards need to determine the capabilities they require and how to manage succession



1. Boards need to identify and agree the skills and capabilities they require

- The board needs to be clear on the skills and capabilities it requires to function (visual representations might be worth considering)
- Skills and capabilities include relevant experience and softer skills
- Discussions should acknowledge current capabilities and desired ones

2. There needs to be a clear board plan on how to manage succession

- Important the board has a view on planned succession: including proper induction of new directors; board and individual development
- A board plan needs to recognise the required balance between continuity and bringing in fresh perspectives

3. Directors need to have development plans and annual review sessions

- Boards must have a process to review directors development plans
- Directors discuss their plans and progress with the chair
- This is not necessarily an appraisal process – though some boards might want to consider this

4. Find ways to engage members that encourage them to seek election to the board

- Actively share board capabilities and skill requirements with members
- Hold sessions for potential candidates to understand requirements and expectations (may be run directors not standing for election that cycle)
- Consider means of encouraging members with relevant skills to stand

REFLECTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Which recommendation we are discussing

Boards need to determine the capabilities they require and how to manage succession

What do we like about the recommendation

- Taking ownership
- Internal/ external evaluation
- Overall process towards succession planning

What will make the recommendation better

- More detail – timescales for review
- Capability to obtain guidance if skills not already available within the co-op

What is missing from the recommendation

- Not identified what skills are already present
- No specific roles identified (i.e. relevant and recent experience)
- SMART objectives and 'Plan B'
- Consequences?

REFLECTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Which recommendation we are discussing

Boards need to determine the capabilities they require and how to manage succession

What do we like about the recommendation

- It's really good!
- Forward looking (especially succession)
- Recognises need variety of skills
- Recognises frequent and managed churn

What will make the recommendation better

- Take into account the personalities of the people involved (culture fit? etc)
- Hints at what could do – give examples e.g. co-option
- REGULAR, PERIODIC REVIEW

What is missing from the recommendation

- Diversity of the board!
- Idea of independent scrutiny that saves it from being an insular process – WHO?
 - ➔ facilitating the process of succession planning!
- Consideration of employees



3. Boards need to be clear what behaviours are expected and how to encourage them

1. Deal with poor behaviours in the board immediately

- Our experience is poor behaviours need to be tackled immediately
- Essential to have a process / mechanisms in place to deal with the issue
- 'Behaviours' must not be used to limit debate or dissent

2. Co-produce a code of conduct which is specific and regularly reviewed

- Each board needs to create its own code of conduct which it owns
- As part of this process it needs to be clear on desired behaviours and those that are unacceptable
- There needs to be a safe space for the board to reflect on its practice

3. Have clear escalating consequences for poor behaviours

- Should be made clear what are the implications of poor behaviour on a scale e.g. private conversation, warning, suspension etc.
- Important to consider different ways of educating directors on how to deal with behavioural issues

4. Role of the chair / vice chair is to encourage right behaviours

- Chair / vice chair roles are fundamental in encouraging and promoting the right behaviours e.g. giving everyone a voice
- Chair / vice chair must be empowered to dealing with behaviours without requiring the board's permission

5. All of this is underpinned by clear processes, rules and expectations

- The above work more effectively where there are clear processes
- Important that boards have agreed agendas, meeting structures, pre-reads and timings (with an emphasis on decision-making and oversight)
- There is existing good practice on making boards effective and efficient

REFLECTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

#PF18

Which recommendation we are discussing

Boards need to be clear what behaviours are expected and how to encourage them

What do we like about the recommendation

- Point number 1
- Point number 2

What will make the recommendation better

- Link with point number 2 – be clear what are the right behaviours
- Reference the importance about creating the right culture

What is missing from the recommendation

- Anyone can challenge poor behaviours
- Chair should be a role model

REFLECTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

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Which recommendation we are discussing

Boards need to be clear what behaviours are expected and how to encourage them

What do we like about the recommendation

- Clear – especially the point about bad behaviours
- Provides structured guidance
- Clear definitions of responsibility of roles – the chairman and vice chair
- All underpinned by roles and process

What will make the recommendation better

1. What happens if chair is the issue? How can that be dealt with
2. Is good and appropriate – what is good behaviour
3. Policy document for detail

What is missing from the recommendation

- Detail
- Definition of good behaviour
- Appraisal process
- Ground rules for meetings – board values

REFLECTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

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Which recommendation we are discussing

Boards need to be clear what behaviours are expected and how to encourage them

What do we like about the recommendation

- In co-ops always has to be managed and have to deal with it creatively – preventative
- The fact that behaviours is mentioned and is a wide area
- Important reference point to those who join and are on boards

What will make the recommendation better

- (2) Directors devising and writing policies and procedures
- (1) and (5) Focusing on positive more than negative – what does positive look like – learning from negative behaviours

What is missing from the recommendation

- Underestimate the role of the chair/ vice chair – important/ vital that they are ‘up for the job’
- Preparation and leadership
- Importance of involving boards in creating processes and rules so that they own them
- No mention of values
- Having a policy doesn’t delete individually