

# XCEO Toner

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## Boardroom Leadership: Do you know how effective you are and who says so?

By Dr. Curtis J. Crawford

The XCEO principles of Extreme Personal Leadership (XPL) represent a process of effectively engaging with others to produce a desired set of extraordinary outcomes. When deployed in a constructive manner, these principles establish the foundation for building long-term leadership effectiveness within the boardroom.

At XCEO, we are engaged with a very eclectic group of directors. These board members represent a broad set of organizations from various industries and regions throughout the country. Through this process, and substantial research, our experience suggests that most boards believe their leadership effectiveness is far better than what it really is.

Likewise, as a result of our personal discussions with hundreds of board members, we have concluded that most directors also believe their personal boardroom leadership effectiveness is better than what it likely is. We draw these conclusions because most directors cannot clearly articulate, with great clarity, how they measure their board's overall effectiveness. Nor can they define how they measure their own personal contributions to the organization's success in building long-term shareholder value.

A recent study conducted by Heidrick & Struggles, WCD, and Dr. Boris Groysberg and Deborah Bell of Harvard Business School, surveyed corporate directors from public and private companies across North America. The survey, conducted from February to June 2010, elicited responses from a total of 398 corporate directors representing nearly 800 individual boards.

The study reports that more than 41% of women and 33% of men participating in the survey believe their boards' performance processes are less than effective. Further, 39% and 32% of women and men, respectively, believe their boards are missing skill sets on the board.<sup>1</sup>

As we close the 2010 year, we suggest all boards desiring to improve performance, and their respective directors, reconfirm their commitment to excellence by applying the same value to leadership within the boardroom as they apply to executive leadership.

All directors should be able to answer the following two questions: 1). Are you a highly effective board member? 2.) Do your board colleagues believe you are a highly effective board member? Directors must be able to answer these questions based on data, versus intuition, derived from a confidential and secure process which includes informed and constructive sources.

It is not possible for directors to assess their leadership effectiveness if they are not afforded a process to receive constructive feedback from their peers. Similarly, a board is surely to be less effective if it fails to receive helpful feedback from its members.

Your assessment of your board's effectiveness is likely to be influenced by your assessment of your own personal effectiveness in the boardroom. Furthermore, your assessment of your own personal effectiveness is likely to be influenced by your perception of your board colleagues' assessment of your value as a director.

To help directors reach higher levels of effectiveness, the board should develop a set of expectations and guidelines by which each director can evaluate his or her performance. XCEO's Director XPL support system is designed to assist directors in this endeavor, as part of our commitment to enlightened corporate governance. This process supports a director, in the quest to consistently improve leadership performance and, therefore, be more effective.

Also, our Board Leadership Effectiveness (BELIEF) Analysis was designed to assist boards in measuring their real

effectiveness, versus their perceived views of reality. This is a quantitative process, which produces a qualitative assessment of the board's performance. It provides the board with insightful data to help substantiate what it believes its performance to be, and offers meaningful suggestions for continued improvement.

As we close this year, and begin a new one, we should all reflect on our leadership effectiveness. What did we do well and what can we do better? On a personal note, this has been a great year. However, the more insight I garner, relative to my value as a director, the more feedback I desire because I still I want to grow. Doing all I can do is unacceptable if I fail to seek constructive feedback to do better. In other words, the reward for doing good work is more good work to do.

Happy New Year.

References:

1. 2010 Board of Directors Survey, Heidrick & Struggles  
[http://www.heidrick.com/PublicationsReports/PublicationsReports/HS\\_BOD\\_Survey2010.pdf](http://www.heidrick.com/PublicationsReports/PublicationsReports/HS_BOD_Survey2010.pdf)

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