



How does the board president discuss the evaluation results with the directors to get the most benefit from the evaluation while not offending any of the board members? Most directors probably have not gone through an evaluation process like this. Most individuals, by human nature, are insecure about being evaluated. In fact, some may not have ever done a self evaluation except perhaps in school and that may have been a long time ago. However, in actual practice we find that very few negative comments emerge about the board itself. Rather, the comments are usually positive and constructive.

### Acting on the Evaluation Results

The first time the board does an evaluation, the comments tend to focus on the relationship between the CEO and the board. Also, the comments are often about the meetings themselves and how they may be improved.

The board often wants to define its relationship with the CEO or general manager. A long-term manager may have had a very comfortable relationship with previous board members. However, if there has been a lot of board turn-over, the new board may be struggling to find its relationship with the manager. Questions often emerge such as, “Is it okay to invite the CEO out to the farm for supper?” and “if I’m at the office, can I knock on the manager’s door and say hello?” These things may seem inconsequential but are uncertainties for many new board members.

A new director may have difficulty finding his/her voice in the board room (how they fit.) Conversely, you often find that the other board members wish the new director would speak-up because they want

to hear his/her opinion. A board evaluation will bring this situation to light for discussion. The board evaluation will give confidence to individual directors that their opinion is important and that their voice needs to be heard in the board room.

A good board practice is to minimize the time spent on routine activities and maximize the discussion in the board room on important issues. They may ask the secretary to record the amount of time it takes to discuss individual routine items. After several meetings the secretary reports to the board on the amount of time spent discussing various routine items. The board can then determine if that number is high or low relative to what they would like to accomplish during the meeting. The amount of time is often too high. So the board may look for ways to get content out to directors before the meeting in order to minimize routine activities and maximize time spent on the important issues.

In summary, when the evaluation results are tabulated and presented to the board of directors, we usually find that the results focus on positive and constructive comments of ways the board can function better and more efficiently as a group.

- Introduction to Governance – C5-70
- The Role of the Board of Directors – C5-71
- Recruiting, Selecting and Developing Board Members and Managers – C5-72
- Business Strategy and the Board of Directors – C5-74
- Governance Issues Unique to Start-up Businesses – C5-75
- Board of Director Educational Needs – C5-76

---

#### ... and justice for all

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th

and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jack M. Payne, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.