

Truth. No leader succeeds alone.



Action.

Get Help

Build a board. Retain experts.
Get a coach.

Get Help

Many CEOs and their leadership teams orchestrate meetings with their boards to:

- Show how great they are and how well things are going
- Avoid leaving the meeting with more to do than when it started

There is a lot more value that can be derived from working with the board but it takes a lot of work in building, cultivating, preparing for, and working with boards.

There are three distinctly different kinds of boards. People often mix up the three kinds of boards and things get very confusing. It is wise to be clear about what kind of board you are dealing with and to manage each accordingly.

A **Celebrity Board** is staffed with people who bring attention and prestige to the organization and who may provide access to potentially valuable resources (money, clients, people to hire, partners, etc.). Celebrity boards do not otherwise help organizations perform and grow much and so are not covered further here.

Advisory Board

A **Board of Advisors**, see *Figure 74*, is staffed with individuals with directly relevant personal experience in what the organization and its leaders are doing; e.g., they have first-hand experience in the industry dealing with the very same problems the organization faces and who provide valuable perspective and insight on best practices, benchmarks, and what will and will not work because they have been through it themselves.

Advisory Board members generally have specific experience, knowledge, and perspective to draw on and that is often ideally tapped-into in a separate session with each outside advisor rather than as a group where each will struggle to find the way to deliver on why they think they have been recruited to participate in the first place while also jockeying for position and esteem from those present.

The **Sample Advisory Board Charter** in the Appendix shows how one organization's Advisory Board was set up. The organization's leaders routinely contact Advisory Board members to draw on their wisdom in key situations. The Advisory Board also meets as a group with a broad set of internal leaders two to four times a year for three or so hours at a

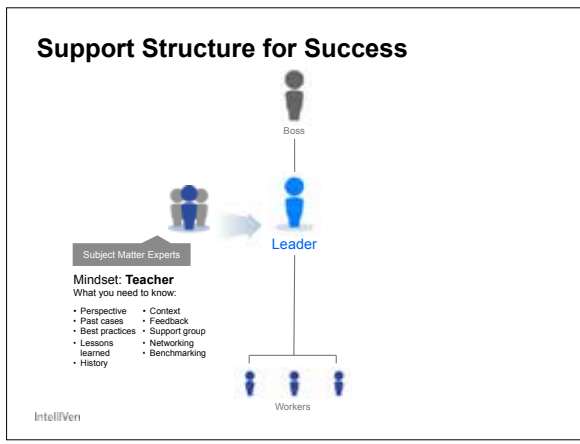


Figure 74. Board of Advisors

time. Background material on two or three of the most important things going on are prepared and sent to the members approximately two days ahead of the session along with specific questions that leadership wants help with. Members read the background ahead of time, think critically about what has been presented, and work hard to develop a point of view that they will share at the meeting. In the advisory meeting leaders talk through the key points, field clarifying questions from members, and then draw out their best advice for each of the items in turn.

Accountability Board

An **Accountability Board** (or Board of Directors or Governing Board), see *Figure 75* has a three-pronged charter (see: Sample Board Charter in the Appendix):

- To provide a **consistent point of accountability**. I.e., where management puts before the board a plan and regularly reports on how things are going relative to plan
- To help with **individual and collective focus**. I.e., what is the organization as a whole seeks to accomplish and how it is going, and what each of the C-level team members are specifically trying to accomplish and how is it going
- To provide **access to resources** such as ideas, money, clients, people to hire, partners, etc.
- Accountability Board members may also attend and participate fully as Advisory Board members.

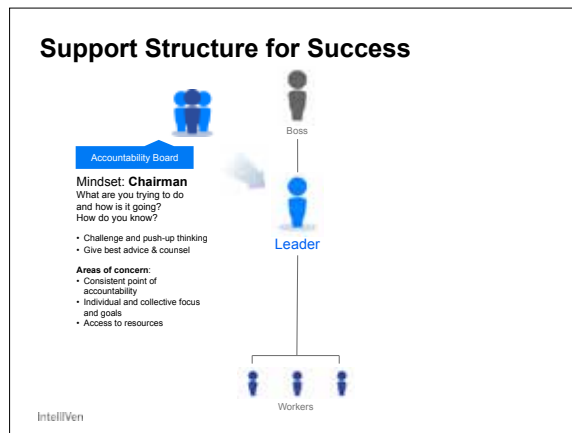


Figure 75. Accountability Board

The Accountability Board meets four to six times a year for management to cover the following agenda:

- Here is what we said we would do,
- Here is what we actually did,
- Here is what happened,
- Here is what we learned,
- Here is what we plan to do next.

Materials are prepared, forwarded two or so days in advance (to give board members time to prepare and to allow the leadership team time to step back from the details of their material), and walked through in the meeting using the outline above much as for an Advisory Board meeting. Accountability Board members then ask questions to clarify and push-up management’s thinking and then board members each offer their best advice.

Members of the leadership team who attend Accountability Board

meetings must work hard to listen carefully to what members have to say through their questions and comments and without being the least bit defensive. The Board Chair works with the CEO to ensure that the environment is safe for management to say what needs to be said and to be sure that management hears what needs to be heard. To do so takes conscious cultivation and effort to intervene and give individual and group coaching when discussions go off track or when people talk past each other as often happens.

The organization's fiscal health is a key topic for every Accountability Board meeting. The organization's financial model, its financial plan, and its performance as reported in its income statement, cash flow, and balance sheet are constantly in focus and assessed carefully relative to past performance, planned performance, and performance relative to other organizations.

There are significant legal obligations that come with being a director of a legal corporation. For this reason, firms either buy their directors Director's & Officers Insurance (which is a significant expense) or call their governing board a Board of Advisors even though it functions as a Board of Directors but without the liability and also without the power to hire and fire the CEO.

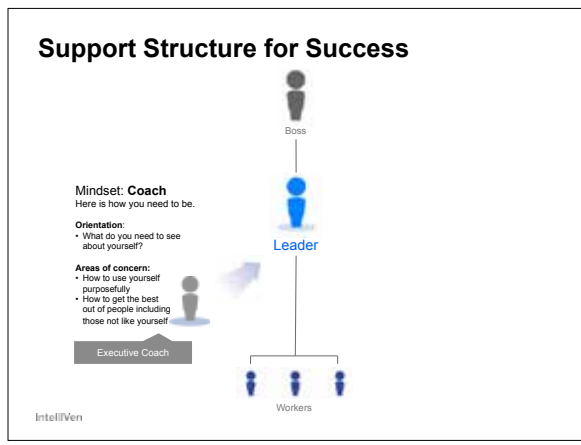


Figure 80. Personal Effectiveness Coach

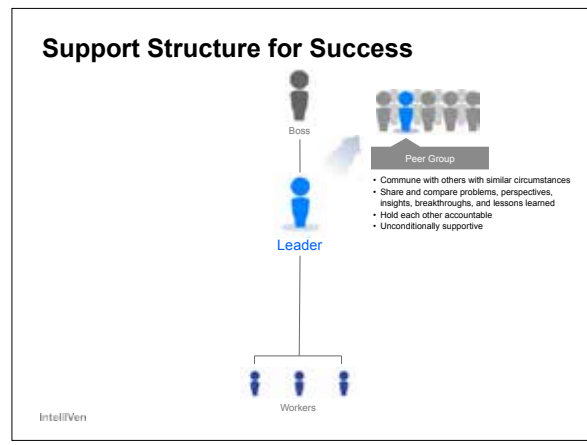


Figure 81. Peer Group

Personal Effectiveness Coach

An OD consultant provides valuable input to the CEO and in a different way than does an Accountability Board or than do Subject Matter Experts. An OD Consultant, or Personal Effectiveness Coach, helps the leader understand and learn how to better work with people and to use him/herself in a thoughtful and intentional manner; see *Figure 80*¹.

Peer Group

A group of Peers who run organizations of similar scope, scale, business type, industry served, and location run by a trained facilitator is an opportunity for leaders to be vulnerable and open to input. Peer groups are an excellent way to get perspective, learn by hearing and comparing, and to hold each other accountable.

¹ Improving human interaction is a major focus of Organization Development and is well beyond the scope of Manage to Lead. Interested readers are encouraged to participate in a Human Interaction Lab or take a course of study in OD.

Figure 82. Support Structure for Success template.

Summary

Arrange an operating framework of outside support from an accountability board, advisory board, and personal effectiveness coach.

- Keep Accountability Board separate from Advisory Board or subject matter experts.
- Build Accountability Board to provide help with accountability, focus, and resources.
- Work with a coach to get feedback on human interaction, facilitation, and team building.

Commune regularly with a group of outside peers to get perspective, unconditional support, advice, and accountability.

Support Structure for Success

