

Carmichael.

Seven signs that show your Board needs a Spring clean.

This weekend thanks to the new bank holiday, I finally ran out of excuses and got round to spending some time in my garden digging, weeding, cleaning up and getting the garden ready for new growth. It is a task I kept putting off. But I know that for a little work now, the garden will reap the benefits throughout the year.

Likewise with our Boards, regular spring cleans will do wonders for its effectiveness. The following seven signs will help you decide if your Board needs some weeding, cleaning up and fertilising.

1. Do we need to clear some deadwood?

Gardening is about giving plants the food and space to flourish. Our boards also need to be given the opportunity to flourish and renew. Sometimes board members stay on too long. Their energy and commitment drop. Their contribution and value to the board diminishes. They may need to be encouraged to step down. This is a role that Chair, or the Nominations Committee need to perform by reviewing the current board composition and the needs of the organisation. Freeing up places on the board creates space to bring in people with needed new skills and energy to strengthen and reinvigorate.

2. Has the Board reviewed its performance for the past year?

The Board needs to review its collective and individual performance regularly and objectively. Springtime is suitable time to look back over the past year and evaluate how the board fulfilled its roles and responsibilities. The review will be more effective if there is something specific to evaluate and measure against. This leads us to the third sign.

3. Has the Board set itself specific goals and objectives it wants to achieve in the coming year?

The Board needs to be proactive in setting its own agenda on what it wants to achieve as a board and an organisation over the year. The organisation's strategic plan will be a key input to setting these goals, but the board should also reflect and decide what the Board itself would like to achieve.

4. Has the performance of the CEO been reviewed for the previous and goals and target set for the new year?

It is surprising the number of Boards that do have proper performance review mechanisms in place for their CEO. Board Chairs can be reluctant to perform this task, but it is essential for the effective functioning and well-being of the organisation that the CEO has annual goals and targets to achieve and the performance against these goals are formally reviewed.

5. How long has it been since the Board reviewed the organisation's objectives as set out in its Constitution?

The Board should at least every two years have a formal review of how it is doing against the objectives set out in its constitution. Has the organisation defined actions and planned outcomes that deliver on these objectives? Are the objectives still relevant? Has the organisation drifted away from its mission and objectives and is need of some realignment or new objectives? Have recent events highlighted the need for a fresh look at the organisation's purpose and capacity to achieve it?

6. Do the Board Sub Committees need some re-invigorating?

When was the last time the terms of reference of the committees were reviewed? Are they still fit for purpose? Do you need to freshen up the membership of the Committee? Board sub committees are important components of the governance framework that allows for detailed and specialised work to be completed on behalf of the Board. But the committee structure like the main board will also benefit from regular spring cleans.

7. When was the last time the Board had an "away day"?

It does not have to be an entire day, even a half day is valuable. The Board needs from time-to-time, to get away from the routine of the normal meeting agenda and give itself some quality time to reflect and think strategically. Going somewhere different for the meeting, doing something different as a group, bringing an external speaker or facilitator are just some examples of things you can do to inject new energy.

So do not keep putting it-off, organise your Board's spring clean today.

Diarmaid Ó Corrbuí CEO