Watermark Philanthropic Counsel

The Board/CEO Partnership: Sharing leadership and getting results

Canadian Charity Law Association
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Agenda

1. Why does the Board/CEO relationship matter?
2. What does effective partnership look like...and not look like
3. How does shared leadership happen?

1. Why does the Board/CEO relationship matter?

People, purpose, performance

The board can delegate authority but never responsibility...

You can have an organization without staff but you cannot have an organization without a board

4 Roles of a Board*

1. Determine purpose, identity, and direction
2. Ensure adequate resources and stewardship of the resources
3. Provide fiduciary oversight
4. Attend to board operations

*rarely in isolation

- Maintain a mutually supportive relationship with CEO
- Ensure effective board development
- Support the board in policy and oversight

Role of Board Chair

- Chair and facilitate board meetings
- Align board actions with organizational priorities and purposes
- Liaise between board and CEO, and review any issues of concern
- Lead and encourage board to support and evaluate the CEO

- Develop staff
- Establish operational plans
- Manage resources

Role of CEO

- Represent the organization
- Identify internal/external issues
- Support board governance functions
- Collaborate with chair on board meeting prep

2. What does effective partnership look like?

Potential Sources of Conflict

Wrong people on the bus

Poor data, information, and communication

Varied working styles, personalities, cultures

Unclear roles, expectations

Different values or priorities

Change or transitions in the leadership or in organizational direction

Micromanagement, or disengagement

Characteristics of Effective Board/CEO Partnerships

Shared understanding of mission and values

Clear roles and responsibilities

Clear, honest & timely communication

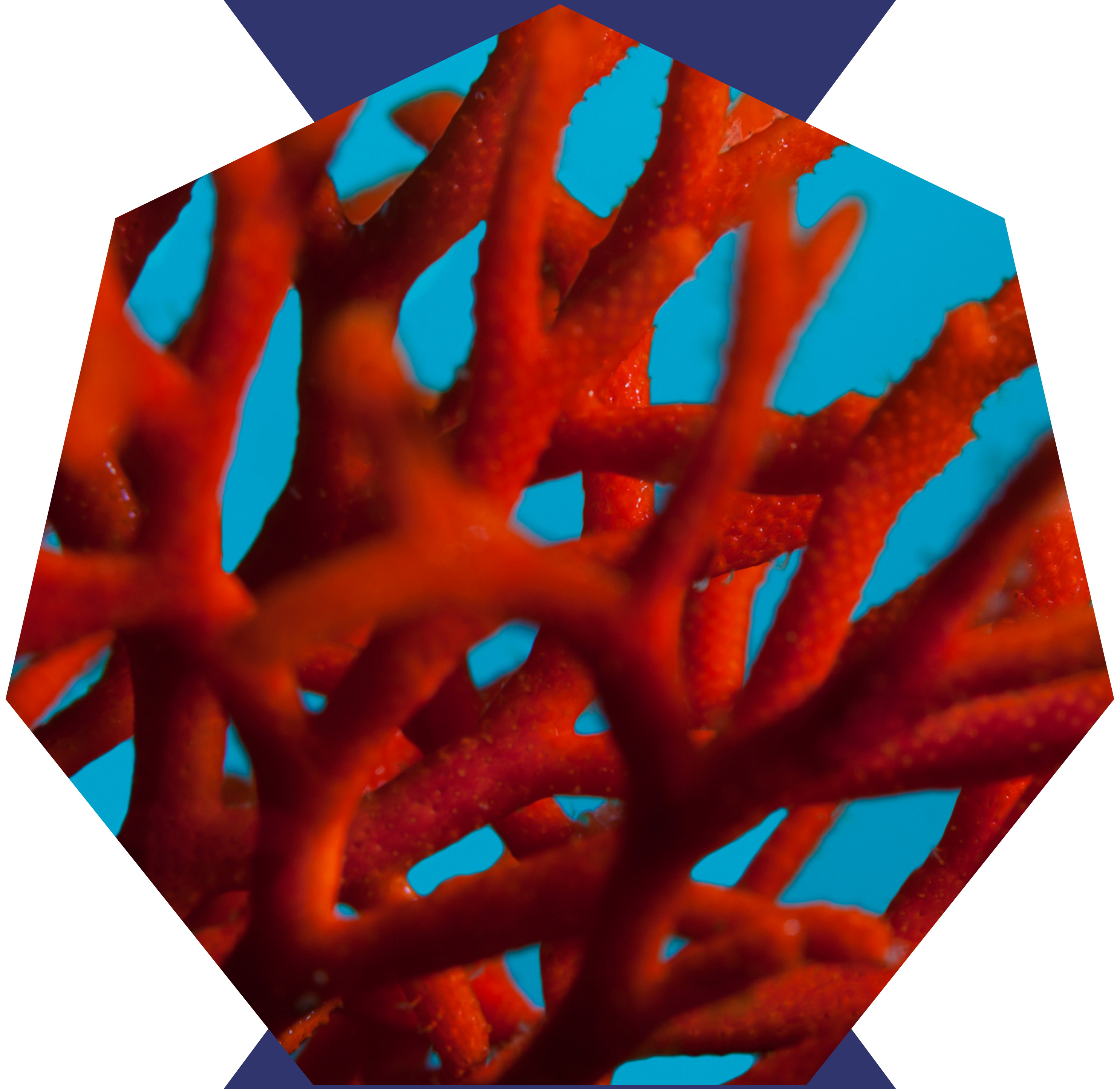
Two-way evaluation and accountability

What should the board expect from the CEO?

- Positive attitude about the partnership
- Liaison between board and staff
- Identify issues for board attention
- Provide strategic information that assists the board in its work
- Recommendations for action
- No surprises...Accept accountability

What should the CEO expect from the board?

- Provide value
  - Generative exploration
  - Govern more, manage less
- Directors who are informed and prepared
- Timely and clear decisions
- Mutual accountability
- Job description, performance objectives and reviews
- Speak with one voice



3. What is shared leadership and how does it happen?

Not by accident...

Shared Leadership

BOARD Leads

- Values-informed policies that put mission into action
- Hire/supports CEO; model shared leadership
- Fiduciary due diligence
- Board development

CEO Leads

- Hires, supports and supervises staff
- Develops business plans; implements programs
- Stakeholders
- Develops/proposes policy questions

SHARED Leadership

- Strategic plan
- Fund development
- Board meetings
- Identifying potential leadership volunteers (co-creation)
- Crisis management

Tips to cultivate shared leadership:

1. Practice self-management
2. Avoid self-defeating habits
3. Create trustful and accountable relationship
4. Articulate rules of engagement
5. Build knowledge; learn together

A special word to CEOs

1. Provide feedback and knowledge
2. Find allies on the board
3. Prioritize incremental change
4. Know your deal breakers

Summary

1. The Board/CEO relationship matters a great deal - people, purpose, performance

2. Effective partnership is a useful model for crafting a productive relationship

3. Shared leadership respects leadership is never practiced in isolation, and that we can take active steps to cultivate it

For governance support, assessment, coaching and education.....

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