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Promoting Cultural Health in a Post-COVID World

As we exit the “20-teens,” industries of all stripes require a markedly different kind of leadership. Out of the ashes of 2020, we are beginning to see a new, emerging breed of leaders who exhibit the kind of authentic leadership that reinvigorates, heals and provides purpose.

We want—and need—leaders who promote a culture of safety, inclusion and diversity. Doing so engenders a more committed and energized workforce, which is beneficial to all.

With great speed and agility, extraordinary leaders and their teams are changing the face of our workplaces, and with it, they are also helping shape society at large. These leaders are creating sustainable business performance and taking care of people and the planet. They need to be recognized and rewarded, and additional opportunity to focus on their leadership development is a reward that benefits everyone.

How can boards guide current leaders and their teams on the transformational path to exceptional leadership? The first step is selecting promising leaders who embody these practices and can model desired behaviors. Equally important is making the investment in existing leadership teams through constructive assessment, development, coaching, and mentorship, and rewarding those good actions.

Currently, management teams are focused on overseeing another year of great transition. Considerable time is being dedicated to actions that yield healing and transformation. By necessity, they are transitioning a fragile and uncertain workforce to a new and better place. They are wrestling with a global pandemic, economic crisis, social injustice, and environmental climate shift in addition to running a viable enterprise.

Effective boards can help their management teams prepare for this leadership journey by providing clear support and distinct actions. Such efforts will be rewarded with an innovative, creative workplace that embodies renewed purpose, hope, and confidence. All of that adds up to greater individual health and well-being, along with organizational

sustainability.

Board Actions to Drive Change and Ensure Organizational Health	
The Opportunities	**The Work Ahead**
Develop transformational and humanistic leadership	• Help leaders take a broader view that includes consideration of all stakeholders • Have organization clarify the leadership competencies required for long-term success: vision, character, empathy, humility, social responsibility, innovation, listening skills, etc. • Support CEOs and their teams as they navigate how best to lead their organizations through these significant near-term challenges and as they plan for future change
Encourage and reward a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture	• Insist on clear company values—outline what the organization stands for and ensure the words match the actions • Encourage assessment of the organization's culture and core values annually • Routinely discuss culture and engagement as a board and advise the CEO and executive team consistently • Recognize and reward leaders for instilling a progressive culture of diversity, inclusion, teamwork, flexibility, innovation, caring, and accountability
Focus on talent development	• Reward leaders for actively growing their leadership bench and developing talent • Ensure leadership succession planning is ongoing, objective, and fair • Ensure your board has visibility to the management team (and possibly layers below) and understands their strengths and areas for development • Coach and mentor leaders to grow in their roles

It is still premature to know just how profoundly the past year has changed our world; the effects of 2020 may be felt for generations to come. However, reflecting on the work I've done to help organizations align their business strategy with compensation and build great management teams, several lessons have been learned. Such learnings can help inform your outlook for 2021.

All organizations have individual, unique problems, but boards overall are at a crossroad—they need to step up and become more involved and more courageous in solving them. Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues are a compelling force that cannot be ignored and organizational health is not a "nice to have" or a beneficial accident. From top to bottom, individually and collectively, a company's workforce can be the ultimate competitive advantage.

The boards that help their organizations achieve a strong, positive and flexible culture focused on learning and leadership at all levels will ultimately be the ones driving sustainable long-term performance.

About Pearl Meyer

Pearl Meyer is the leading advisor to boards and senior management helping organizations build, develop, and reward great leadership teams that drive long-term success. Our strategy-driven compensation and leadership consulting services act as powerful catalysts for value creation and competitive advantage by addressing the critical links between people and outcomes. Our clients stand at the forefront of their industries and range from emerging high-growth, not-for-profit, and private organizations to the Fortune 500.