Coaching and Leadership for Innovation and Future-Ready Organisations^

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Accumulating international experience, supported by mounting and consistent scientific evidence, indicate that the negative impacts of human activities upon the environment, eco-systems and our future prospects continue to increase (Dasgupta, 2021; IPCC, 2022c & 2023; UNEP, 2022). The consequences suggest urgent, aligned and corporate and collective action is required. Positive messages and appeals to shorter-term interests may have traditionally attracted custom and support, but should more business and political leaders confront realities, change direction and act more effectively to confront existential threats? Are the moods of stakeholders and the public changing? Are their aspirations and priorities evolving? What are the repercussions for business leadership, strategy, excellence and innovation? How prepared are current organisations to confront strategic risks and changes underway in their operating contexts? Do their purpose, priorities, strategies and support require review?

How should corporate boards respond to multiple and inter-related challenges, emergent concerns and changing expectations, whether to achieve greater resilience, net zero or sustainable economic, political and social development, adopt more environment friendly business practices or build future-ready organisations, communities and infrastructures? Should they embrace UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015)? What are the implications of what is required for directors and boards, the direction and guidance they provide, how they operate, and how companies are governed? How might they be better supported by coaching and other forms of individual and group development as they strive to build future-ready organisations? What questions should they and those who help and support them consider in relation to issues that confront contemporary leaders?

This article explores some of the areas considered by directors and other business leaders who attended the 2023 Dubai Global Convention and 30th World Congress on Leadership for Innovation and Business Excellence. What needs to happen for directors, boards and the people of their organisations to be resilient, innovative and ready to confront the major risks they face (Coulson-Thomas, 2023a & b; WEF, 2023)? How might they become more future-ready and better able to cope with what they may encounter as events unfold (IPCC, 2023). Some organisations might already be evolving and on transition and transformation journeys as they adapt to changing situations, circumstances and contexts. What their leaders feel might be relevant and helpful in terms of advice, guidance and/or learning, development and/or other support might likewise need to be fluid and reflect changing priorities.

Directors, Boards and Development Activities

Board membership often consists of both executive directors, who may have line responsibilities towards staff for whom a board is accountable, and non-executive or independent directors who do not. Directors may or may not support, offer and/or use coaching and other forms of development support or feel it is relevant to their situation,

circumstances and context. Available guidance on coaching for executive directors tends to relate to performance and can embrace various interests other than those of board members and other corporate leaders (Wilson, 2007; Drønnen, 2022). The coaching skills of leaders may in certain contexts be conducive of happiness and might reduce staff turnover (Romão et al, 2022). However, confronting existential threats requires engagement with negative externalities and other stark realities. While being and remaining positive might be seen as desirable, it can also be challenging in relation to existential threats and the impacts of scaling down and discontinuing operations (Drønnen, 2022). Ethical considerations also apply to the coaching activities of executive directors, CEOs and other leaders (Milner et al, 2022).

CEOs that act as a 'chief coach' may give a lead in the coaching and support of executive directors and chief officers. Directorial responsibilities can be more difficult to address. Some directors are more focused upon developing, releasing and harnessing the talent of others that they overlook and/or do not focus upon developing their own potential (Coulson-Thomas, 2015 & 2017). When directors and boards are themselves to be coached, the distinction between direction and leadership needs to be understood as their client expectations and those of their stakeholder may differ from those experienced in managerial coaching (Carvalho et al, 2023). The effectiveness of a coaching relationship depends very much upon the attitude and disposition of the client. The three most frequently identified factors in one systematic literature review were 'willingness or motivation to change', 'commitment to the relationship/process' and 'openness to change' (Tee et al, 2022).

Many coaches have been concerned with enhancing individual areas of performance or helping clients to address certain career development challenges (Yates, 2019). Different considerations may apply to directors grappling with multiple inter-linked environmental and contextual challenges and the need to re-purpose, re-invent, collaborate with other parties and initiate collective responses. The impact of an effective coaching relationship may emerge over time (Passarelli et al, 2022). It may be difficult to track as changes of policy and priorities occur during transition and transformation journeys. Directors with stakeholder relationships to manage during a period of transition and/or transformation who are willing to make the commitment could consider self-coaching support possibilities (Angawi, 2021).

Director and Board Development Requirements

The focus of many trainers and coaches is upon managerial rather than director development. Support offered might not reflect the distinct requirements of directors, even if a development need is identified and accepted (Coulson-Thomas, 2008). While particular directors may or may not be especially influential in the discussion of certain policies and priorities, board decisions are taken collectively. Development activities should reflect the requirements for building an effective boardroom team (Coulson-Thomas, 2007). Directors may or may not believe that some form of development support might better enable them to cope with crises or other difficult situations they face from a directorial perspective (Coulson-Thomas, 2019b). Some directors seek coaching support in an area like public speaking, while the important general requirement to listen might not be recognised (Coulson-Thomas, 2014b).

Strategic thinking is an acknowledged requirement for many directors and boards (Coulson-Thomas, 2021e). While recognizing a need, directors may be uncertain as to who might help them to become more effective from a board perspective. Some directors might also have confidentiality concerns, and/or may not listen, trust or respect those who have not themselves had board experience (Coulson-Thomas. 2021e). Critical thinking in the boardroom is also required (Coulson-Thomas, 2022b & c). Past educational and professional development activity may have introduced some directors to it. This earlier exposure and their previous experience might also have made some board members wary if not distrustful of 'expert opinion' and 'scientific evidence'. In situations that requires agility, flexibility, resilience and continuing adaptation to changing situations, circumstances and contexts, directors may not relate to someone whose own approaches may be viewed as dated, irrelevant or otherwise suspect (Coulson-Thomas, 2021c, 2022d & 2023a).

The language used in coaching sessions and other development activities can be critical (Joullié et al, 2022). It should aim to lift or elevate rather than undermine, and open-up and encourage focus on the achievement of shared goals. Assuming a development need is identified and recognised, coaching may or may not be the best way of addressing a particular area of directorial competence or building a high-performance board (Coulson-Thomas, 2009 & 2012a). Mentoring like coaching could be considered for leadership development (Lancer, Natalie; Samuels et al, 2023). It might be thought less relevant for directors concerned with staying current in relation to emerging issues and changing priorities, rather than career advancement per se. Continuously updated 24/7 mentoring and performance support as and when required for a particular decision, team or workgroup may be far more acceptable, convenient and helpful for busy people than less flexible coaching support relationships that might become quickly overtaken by evolving events (Coulson-Thomas, 2011 & 2012b).

Formulating Strategies in Turbulent Times

Many past board, business excellence and innovation strategies have been pursued with commitment and the investment of significant time, money and other resources. However, they have also collectively contributed to negative externalities and shared challenges alluded to above (Dasgupta, 2021; IPCC, 2022c & 2023; UNEP, 2022). Their affects, such as the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events being felt by increasing numbers of people around the world, suggest that what is considered excellent, purposes and innovation priorities may need to be reviewed. Business excellence models can require updating and modification to address their limitations and better relate them to a national and/or sectoral context and the conditions in which they are adopted and applied (Petrovic et al, 2022). Models used have varied in their relevance to an operational context, their focus on results and whether they refer to UN SDGs and address the impacts of corporate activities and responsible leadership concerns such as sustainability (Petrovic et al, 2022; Saks, 2023).

Given the volatility of the contemporary business environment and the threats faced, will the continuing review and improvement of existing activities and approaches deliver what is needed? Are more transformative and transformational strategies and different business, organisational and governance models required? If so, what form should they take?

Transformational leadership can exist in many guises in a variety of contexts and may be authentic or inauthentic (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Boards need to be aware of its potential dangers. For example, if unchecked, could it result in narcissism, megalomania and poor decision-making on the part of a powerful and charismatic CEO (Tourish, 2013)? The relationship between board and top management team should be dynamic and conducive and supportive of innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship (Huynh et al, 2022). How might coaching and other support help to build responsible and mutually supportive relationships with those directors need to connect and engage in order to achieve their strategic direction?

Boards and corporate leadership teams should regularly revisit and review their role in relation to excellence and innovation (Coulson-Thomas, 2020c; 2021c; 2022c&e). Directors and CEOs should encourage questioning, critical thinking and exploration (Coulson-Thomas, 2022b). For example, what strategy should be used to drive business excellence through synergy across a supply chain? What constitutes a high performance board? How might it enable corporate transformation through collaborations? What role should non-executive directors play in strategizing corporate risk, innovation and business excellence? UN SDGs can be used to support multi-stakeholder dialogue on business transformation and transition to more sustainable models of business (Sebhatu and Enquist, 2022). Given the decisions required, how should ethics be embedded for realigning the moral compass of a boardroom?

Building Resilient Organizations

Organisational resilience, human capital and clustering can have a positive impact on performance, especially in challenging times (Pereira et al, 2020). What should the priorities for director, board and corporate resilience and coping with contemporary risks be (Coulson-Thomas, 2023a & b)? With greater inter-dependence and cross-enterprise collaboration, resilience across a supply chain can be especially important for reliability (Sawyerr and Harrison, 2020). What constitutes people, process, system, supply chain, strategic and relationship resilience? How might they and relevant, resilient and sustainable business excellence be achieved through visionary leadership, creativity and innovation? Are these factors interdependent and mutually supporting? Where, when and in what form might coaching and/or other development support help? If something new or significantly different is required, should there be more focus on creativity and innovation (McCraw, 2007)?

When followers are future-oriented, could visionary leadership encourage them to assume responsibility and 'take charge' (Liu et al, 2022a)? Might visionary leadership, and how an image of the future is communicated, align team goals and have an impact on creativity and/or innovation (Mascareño et al, 2020)? A challenge for some boards is that their past conduct and corporate reward mechanisms may encourage a focus on short-term corporate priorities. Whether visionary, transformational and/or responsible, for many companies and situations is there a need for values-based leadership that has been defined as "a way of making authentic decisions that builds the trust and commitment of employees and customers" (Barrett, 2006). Should visions and values embrace our relationship with the natural world (Coulson-Thomas, 2019a)? Would this encourage longer-term thinking?

Factors such as trust can be important for the performance of a team (Lapshun and Fusch, 2021). Is the trust that may be required for innovation more likely to be inspired by responsible leadership (Voegtlin and Patzer, 2020; Saks, 2023)? Inspiring visions are usually of a future state of affairs that is perceived as attainable and noticeably better than the present. Many directors and boards face the prospect of situations that are uncertain and which may become worse before they get better, while in the case of challenges such as global warming, improvements in our prospects are likely to require more determined collective action. In such circumstances, will the shared goal of human survival provide the required alignment and motivation (Coulson-Thomas, 2022a)? What approaches and strategies might best achieve the step changes and acceleration of progress that are required?

Strategies and Cultures for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Innovation, transformation and other strategies need to adapt to reflect changing threats and opportunities in the environment and contexts in which businesses operate (Aube et al, 2021). A starting point for many boards could be a review of corporate purpose and priorities (Mayer, 2018; Coulson-Thomas, 2021d). Should a higher priority be placed upon how, where, when and by whom the negative externalities of corporate activities and operations are acknowledged, measured and addressed (Coulson-Thomas, 2019c)? Innovation, adaptation and transition and transformation journeys, especially in relation to survival, existential threats and related opportunities should be a core element of corporate purpose. Engagement and their support should be a priority for many if not most people. In this sense, does innovation needs to be democratised (Hippel, 2005)? Do some corporate cultures still favour continuity and traditional approaches, models and practices over innovation and new ones?

Given the scale and urgency of what needs to be done, and particularly where purpose and goals are shared, what role could transformational leadership play in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship (Coulson-Thomas, 2017 & 2022c)? Much will depend upon the vision, whether it is also shared, and how it is articulated and implemented (Mascareño et al, 2020). Some innovations result from breakthroughs, discoveries and entrepreneurial initiatives that create options and possibilities that a board may respond to after due consideration. Others may be actively sought or planned, whether for their own sake or in support of a corporate objective such as decarbonisation. Innovation could be an element of a sustainability or internationalisation strategy (Reuvid, 2020; Savastano et al, 2022). Multiple and collective innovations are now required for addressing certain existential threats (Medhat, 2023). Might greater commitment to innovation and its support enable some boards to be more ambitious?

Strategies across networks of relationships, collaborating organisations, supply and value chain partners and a diversity of cultures need to be aligned, compatible or complementary. How should one unleash break though innovation for leveraging contributions and excellence across value chains and other networks, and align and/or build strategies and cultures for creativity and entrepreneurship within and across organisations? It has long been recognised that teams need to cross business unit, discipline and organisational boundaries and embrace customers, suppliers and business partners, and in so doing can lead to new ways of working and organising based upon networks and/or clusters of relationships and skills that allow

more flexible adaptation to changing situations and circumstances (Drew and Coulson-Thomas, 1996). How can corporate leadership ensure strategic direction, collaborations and collective responses result in inclusive, responsible and holistic transformation?

Climate Change and Net Zero Ambitions

More environment friendly best business practices need urgently to be identified, adopted and practiced. Unsustainable growth, lifestyles and business activities continue to damage the environment, reduce biodiversity, deplete natural capital and contribute to global warming and climate change (Dasgupta, 2021; Hannah, 2022; IPCC, 2022a; UNEP, 2022). Global temperatures are set to reach new records within the next five years (WMO, 2023). The pre-COP 27 United Nations Environment Programme gap report suggests Governments are not doing enough and that time for an effective response is running out (UNEP, 2022). What can and should boards do now to step in and work with other parties to encourage more aligned, consistent and determined responses to bridge the gap before it is too late? Could they be catalysts? How should they prepare for COP28 and contribute to it? What needs to be done for companies to decarbonise and be more resilient and future-ready? How might the short-term costs of involvement and new initiatives be financed? What incentives would help?

The scientific evidence for the negative impacts of climate change is overwhelming (IPCC, 2021, 2022a & c & 2023). In the world's most populous country significant numbers of people are already affected by extreme weather events (CSE, 2022). Without further action and mitigation many more are likely to be at risk (IPCC, 2022b). How do boards perceive the current state of business, their responsibilities as a cause of climate change and for addressing it, and their ability to achieve Net Zero goals? Are the latter ambitious enough? What changes might help the journey to Net Zero? How should they be adopted? Are impacts and risks assessed, monitored and managed? How should climate risks be managed across international supply chains (Ghadge et al, 2020)? Are particular operations, facilities, customers and other stakeholders located in areas likely to be severely affected, or which might even become uninhabitable (Wallace-Wells, 2019)? What strategies are required for climate governance and the achievement of United Nations (2015) (SDGs) and a Net Zero mission?

Given multiple challenges and existential threats, boards should ensure different strategies (e.g. environment, infrastructure, global warming/ climate change, biodiversity and natural capital) are aligned, coordinated and supported, and do not make incompatible demands upon available resources and executive bandwidth (Zhu et al, 2022). What should the elements of an overall sustainability strategy be? How might they be better aligned with ESG concerns and other stakeholder considerations? Do social and economic priorities embrace stakeholder lifestyles, infrastructures, and the requirements of cities and other local communities? Are relevant external parties being engaged? How might companies work with them and concerned citizens in joint and collective activities to achieve shared objectives (Bloomberg and Pope, 2017)? How might sustainable technologies assist drives to address contemporary challenges and how should the conundrum around technology and its cost be tackled?

Digital Economy Innovation and Requirements

Innovation often results in disruption (Christensen, 1997). Digital technologies can be disrupters of existing activities and/or enablers of alternatives, innovation and new approaches and models. Whether these are beneficial will depend upon their purpose and whether the latter are less harmful and more sustainable than the former. In view of their resource and natural capital requirements, and the energy demands of many applications of digital technologies, their continuing and widespread availability should not be assumed. In changing, uncertain and turbulent situations, and during transition and transformation journeys, it may not be easy to assess the sustainable benefits of investments in digital and other technologies (Savastano et al, 2022). The extent to which the potential of digital transformation might be realised, and it's desirability, in the light of required collaborations, its energy and scarce resource requirements, and whether the benefits might be enjoyed by a favoured few or most people may also be difficult to determine.

Assessing the benefits of some general purpose technological breakthroughs can be problematic when an innovation is closed and an entity incurring development costs may be uncertain of how to obtain income streams from certain applications (Yang et al, 2022). Proponents and vendors of digital and other technologies sometimes exaggerate their potential benefits. Even when these arise if may take some time to recover from initial disruption, recoup acquisition and set up costs and get up to speed with new processes and routines. There may also be periodic upgrading costs. Practical problems such as servicing and support and end-of –life disposal or recycling are often overlooked. Shortage of time due to workload pressures can also limit exploratory consideration, evaluation and innovation (Zhu et al, 2022). Given their possible applications, what strategies should boards adopt for initiating and responding to digital disruptions and employing digital enablers? How should they monitor digital transformation in financial and other sectors and assess possibilities they create? Who do they exclude?

Given their advocates and active promotion, to whom should boards turn for independent and objective advice on the assessment, selection and handling of digital technologies, and opportunities and cybercrime and other risks associated with *inter alia* FinTech, Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT) (Wuillamie, 2023)? Misinformation, alternative realities, false narratives, cyber threats and other challenges abound. For example, are mental health risks for young users of social media, worried about their futures, addressed (Clemens et al, 2022)? How should the integrity, veracity and relevance of data and its governance be assured? How might directors ensure a company is future-ready in relation to data analytics and corporate data, digital and cyber strategies and governance? What steps should boards, regulators and Governments take to confront the access, behavioural, connectivity, ethical, technological and operational dimensions of cyber challenges? How might they ensure innovative applications of AI and other 'exponential' technologies are cost-effective and responsible in relation to their resource requirements and social and environmental impacts?

Responsible Economic, Political and Social Development

The purpose of innovation and whether it is responsible, sustainable and inclusive could be more important than innovation for the sake of it or innovation regardless of opportunity and

other costs and its consequences for whom and where (Owen et al, 2013; Coulson-Thomas, 2021b & 2022e). How should boards promote responsible innovation and ambitions that ensure scarce human talent and natural capital such as rare minerals are used for collective priorities rather than trivial purposes and for minority interests? What form of leadership should boards provide for social and community innovation and transition? How should a strategic roadmap be developed? Within India, as elsewhere, it is often the least advantaged communities that bear the brunt of extreme weather events and other impacts of climate change (CSE, 2022; IPCC, 2022a). How might boards contribute to the development and adoption of models of economic growth and accompanying rural, urban and city living that are less environmentally damaging and more sustainable? Could lifestyle innovation lead to a more inclusive, less resource intensive and stressful, and healthier and more fulfilling future? How might board advocacy and coaching and other development support enable change?

Open innovation may be more appropriate for tackling societal challenges (McGahan et al, 2021). How should boards encourage engagement with stakeholders and cooperation and co-creation with customers? What customer-centric marketing strategies might be required to promote innovation? Social innovation and transition to more responsible and sustainable ways of living and their associated built environments, infrastructures and collaborations can require shared aspirations, collective action, public-private partnerships and cooperation with a network of organisations with aligned interests. Where it involves circular economy solutions, how might the parties evaluate them and ensure they are beneficial (Corvellec et al, 2022)? How should boards identify those with compatible aims and objectives, address those with different and vested interests, and foster and reward ethical practices? How might they ensure integrity, transparency and accountability across supply and value chains and collaborative networks and during transition and transformation journeys?

Effective cooperation can require mutual trust, compatible interests and aligned aspirations and goals. Uncertainty, volatility and adversity can cause people to reflect on their priorities and what is most important to them. Could a shared human goal of survival in the face of existential threats help to align aspirations and interests and foster collaboration and collective action (Coulson-Thomas, 2022a). Adversity can also sometimes speed up the focus and process of innovation (Liu et al, 2022b). Should what is required in areas such as climate change and adaptation be a priority for corporate, collective and social innovation? How might boards identify, access and harness the knowhow, resources, partners and support required to build a sustainable society that is perceived as desirable and more prosperous, but without the negative externalities and risks associated with existing growth models? What human capital, talent, skills and relationship strategies and development support might this require?

Good Governance for Sustainability Ambitions and Journeys

During transition and transformation journeys towards sustainable excellence in the face of existential threats, boards are likely to encounter what may become a succession of innovations, business and organisational models, networks and collaborations which corporate and collective governance arrangements and practices and adaptive strategies will need to accommodate. Do these encourage rather than constrain innovation (IoD, 2022)? As

aspirations, expectations, requirements, situations, circumstances and contexts evolve and change, new possibilities emerge, crises arise and breakthroughs occur, a board's strategic direction and its innovation and other strategies must remain current and relevant. How might this be achieved? In an era of volatility, should directors and boards review how they lead and learn (Brassey et al, 2022)? Is innovation in corporate and collective governance required? Greater diversity might be helpful so that arrangements better reflect the situations, circumstances and contexts of different companies and business units according to their particular ambitions, stage of developments and requirements (Coulson-Thomas, 2023c).

There could be other and more relevant forms of governance that a board could explore which, for example, might be better able to engage stakeholders and obtain their views and those of other interested parties (Bridoux and Stoelhorst, 2022)? What adaptation, adaptive strategies and form of enterprise governance might be appropriate to be future-ready, enable creative board leadership, and facilitate responsible innovation? How flexible are governance, risk and compliance practices, and are they kept under review? Are they an appropriate framework for responsible leadership and business sustainability (Saks, 2023)? Do they and management practices recognise that innovation can require space and time for reflection, exploration or experimentation, activities that key players may not focus upon when they are distracted (Zhu et al, 2022). How might they complement culture and strategy as business transformation enablers? What additional principles and practices should be adopted to initiate, enable and support more radical change and different and novel approaches?

During periods of crisis, uncertainty, economic slowdown or recession, more adventurous companies that question, explore and innovate can secure competitive advantage, while more cautious enterprises hold fire or cut back (Coulson-Thomas, 2020a & b; Purr & Purr, 2022). How might boards that recognise the need for rapid change, more quickly seize and assess opportunities and accelerate innovation that is urgently required (Liu et al, 2022b)? Are there particular values, approaches, adaptive strategies and practices that would be beneficial, or lessons and critical success factors that could be adopted from more successful initiatives, collaborations and responses? What might superior governance look like and how should a board build upon a stakeholder paradigm and supportive values to achieve it? In particular, what do boards that successfully operate sustainably; confront challenges, recognise alternatives, explore possibilities, seize opportunities, initiate and support needed transition and transformation journeys, and build future-ready organisations do differently?

Responsible Leadership, Innovation and Excellence

Realities such as climate change are not being addressed with the urgency and vigour they require (IPCC, 2022a & 2023; UNEP, 2022). Might we run out of time while incremental improvements rather than more radical changes are sought? Responsible leadership and innovation are inter-related (Voegtlin and Patzer, 2020). Without them, the excellence some boards seek may not be responsible, relevant or sustainable. Certain consequences of business activities might continue to be undesirable and damaging. Some directors and boards still appear to be in denial. If more organisations are to be future-ready, their boards may need to

prioritise adaptation, collaboration, relevance, resilience, responsible innovation and sustainability. These requirements are inter-related and they should be collectively pursued.

Transition and transformation journeys to more sustainable and inclusive operations, lifestyles, communities and societies are needed before it is too late. They cannot be successfully undertaken without the active involvement of corporate boards, the responsible leadership they can provide and the responsible innovation they could inspire, enable and support. Innovations and transitions can vary in how inclusive and energy and resource intensive they are, their externalities and their contribution to required collective responses and community and social priorities. Aligning purposes, priorities and commitments to pursue the latter may require specific effort to avoid a stark dichotomy between the private affluence of a few and the public squalor which many experience and JK Galbraith (1958) identified. Some boards over-manage and interfere in operational matters (Murnighan, 2012). In relation to what now needs to be done, all boards should provide clear direction.

Strategic direction and renewed purpose and drive are urgently required. It takes time to initiate, plan and undertake innovation activities, explore and assess options; and develop, test, launch, evaluate, refine and roll out resulting approaches and solutions, Fence sitting, avoidance behaviour and prevarication must be avoided while there is a window in which to act before certain existential threats become unstoppable. Business leaders have a trust advantage over Government (Edelman, 2023). Directors should engage, connect, discuss and be authentic (Sherwood, 2022). They should consider how to best refresh their thinking and themselves. Relevant, current, authoritative and trusted guidance and support may be sought.

Identifying Relevant Guidance and Support

Many items appear on boardroom agendas because they cannot be easily delegated to a particular department or workgroup, or to a known individual within a corporate organisation. They may also be relatively new and unexpected, knowledge and understanding about them might be limited, and their occurrence may leave little time for identifying relevant help and support (Coulson-Thomas, 2021a). Traditional sources of management development activities and programmes may not be appropriate for addressing many contemporary directorial requirements. Some business education may lack perceived standing when generic management development materials are recycled and offered to address a bespoke directorial requirement in a distinct context for a particular purpose (Coulson-Thomas, 2013a & 2014a).

Coaching and other development support should reflect a client's situation, circumstances and context. Entrepreneurial situations may demand a different form of coaching relationship (Diller et al, 2022). It may need to be more fluid and evolve. Engagement with hitherto overlooked or marginalised groups may be needed to build more sustainable and inclusive organisations, communities and societies. Coaching practices may also have to tackle biases in order to address under-representation at senior levels (Roche and Passmore, 2023). Many directors do not find it easy to identify authoritative and objective sources of advice and support for themselves and others. Those who champion living in harmony with nature might

find inspiration in Indian and other ancient wisdom that reveres the natural world (Baindur, 2015; Coulson-Thomas, 2019a).

Whether or not particular directors might be able to influence policies and priorities relating to strategic direction, innovation or sustainable development may depend upon a number of factors (Cheng, 2023). These in turn may or might not be impacted by some form of individual or group. coaching or counselling support. The values of directors can influence environmental sustainability focus and this may be amplified by compatible CEO values (Prompeler et al, 2023). Both director and CEO values can also be important in promoting environmental policy (Prompeler et al, 2023). Whether or not these might be influenced by coaching, mentoring or other forms of ad hoc or periodic support may depend upon a variety of factors and be difficult to predict or arrange.

Values and Ethical Dilemmas and Choices

Many directors and boards are increasingly involved with collective responses, collaborative arrangements and partnerships, and areas of concern such as adaptation and resilience. The inter-related challenges they face, stakeholder aspirations and the business, regulatory and environmental contexts in which they operate may be very different from those in which they might have gained the experience that led to their board appointments. Similar catching-up, refresh, renewal and reinvention challenges may confront those considering what services to provide to help and support them. The dilemmas which many directors and boards face involve difficult decisions that raise moral and ethical considerations that cannot be easily delegated to others or left to available and/or emerging technologies.

AI applications can analyse large quantities of data, remain up-to-date, handle complexity and address regulatory and reporting requirements more quickly than most professionals. However, they optimise without value judgements. Integrity and responsible leadership are essential in boardrooms and for addressing existential challenges such as climate change (Coulson-Thomas, 2013b & 2022f). Boards need members and advisers who exercise independent judgement and 'do the right thing'. Values and integrity could and should be search, selection and support requirements and priorities. Directors and boards can influence action on negative externalities and advocate more responsible, healthier, less stressful and more fulfilling lifestyles. They can listen and learn from their peers and should initiate, enable and support journeys to sustainable operations, communities and societies.

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Abstract

The relevance and value of coaching and other development support delivered, instigated or received by busy directors and boards can depend upon whether it reflects their requirements, priorities and distinct directorial responsibilities and accountabilities in the situations, circumstances and contexts in which they operate, and the challenges and opportunities that confront them. It should reflect their availability and preferences, the distinction between

direction and management, the differing perspectives and involvements of executive and non-executive directors, changing requirements during transition and transformation journeys, and the need for adaptation, resilience, innovation, entrepreneurship, collaboration and collective responses to multiple challenges, existential threats and related opportunities. Directors and boards often find it difficult to identify potential sources of current, relevant and authoritative advice. The provision, relevance and potential value of coaching and other development support should reflect director and board agendas, the ethical and other dilemmas they face, and issues and questions they and their leadership teams might or ought to consider.

^ Publication