

Professor Colin Coulson-Thomas

“Avoid distractions and help people excel at the fundamentals of business”

Directors told to ensure that key work-groups within their organisations are properly supported



“The new leadership advocated in his recent reports ... puts greater emphasis upon intelligent steering, implementation and ensuring the people of organisations are properly supported.”

Too many boards approve disruptive restructuring, unnecessary culture change programmes and expensive talent wars rather than ensure key work-groups are properly supported, according to Professor Colin Coulson-Thomas, author of *Developing Directors and Winning Companies*; *Winning People*.

Speaking in Bangalore to members of the Institute of Directors of India he suggested: “In many companies there are far too many corporate initiatives that are not relevant to customers and which do not relate to critical success factors for competing and winning. Sources of competitive advantage, differentiators and the fundamentals of buying and selling are being overlooked.”

The Professor calls for a return to basics: “In place of preoccupation with areas driven by vested interests boards should concentrate upon the distinct contribution they can make to the growth and development of a business. Their behaviours – what they do and the quality of their thinking and the decisions they take – determine the value they add. Directors should keep their

feet on the ground in terms of focus, speed and affordability and be aware of what is happening in the business and market environment. The Conference Board in its CEO Challenge 2015 report undertaken with the support of its regional partner the Institute of Directors of India identifies the concerns of Indian CEOs. Their top two issues are human capital and operational excellence.”

Coulson-Thomas believes “Boards need to ensure human capital, financial, technological and other resources can be harnessed and applied to what directors are setting out to do in terms of vision, goals and objectives. Many companies are rich in human capital but poor in terms of operational performance. Impressive capabilities represent overhead costs if they cannot be accessed and utilised by key work-groups as and when required to address a challenge or pursue an opportunity.”

He continues: “The key to competitive success is to ensure certain jobs are undertaken in a winning way. In uncertain and competitive markets there may be little point recruiting expensive people with potential who may not be required at a future date if they are neither engaged nor

properly supported. If existing staff in front-line roles are not equipped to excel at tasks such as winning business, building customer relationships, pricing and purchasing there may not be a tomorrow.”

The new leadership advocated in his recent reports *Talent Management 2*, *Transforming Public Services* and *Transforming Knowledge Management* puts greater emphasis upon intelligent steering, implementation and ensuring the people of organisations are properly supported.

The professor's investigations identify critical success factors for activities that contribute directly to competitive and sustainable success. They discover what high performers do differently from less successful peers in these areas, and examine how others can be enabled to emulate their superior practices. His recent reports highlight what evidence suggests is the quickest, most affordable and least disruptive route to high performance organisations. The findings suggest a new approach is required. Coulson-Thomas points out:

“There is little point producing plans that people are not equipped to implement, or having

highly motivated people who lack the tools needed to do their jobs. Boards should challenge CEOs and their executive teams and question whether people – and especially those in front-line and customer facing jobs – have the help they need to do what is required to compete and win. Personalised 24/7 performance support can provide relevant assistance whenever required, including when on the move. It can also enable customers, clients and citizens to help themselves, and it can simultaneously deliver multiple benefits to both people and organisations.”

Professor Coulson-Thomas has recently returned from India where he spoke at events in Mumbai and Bengaluru. His presentation on “what's keeping boards awake and what should they do about it?” was delivered to the Bangalore Chapter of the Institute of Directors of India at the Hotel Royal Orchid Central.

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About the Author

Professor Colin Coulson-Thomas, author of *Winning Companies*; *Winning People* and a new report on talent management and creating high performance organisations is an international consultant who has helped over 100 boards to improve board and corporate performance. He is chairman of Adaptation, process vision holder of complex transformation programmes and a business school academic at the University of Greenwich. Reports covering his investigations are available from

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