

Conflict Resolution in the Boardroom

21 April 2025, Monday

9.00am – 5.00pm

SPEAKER: MR PAUL DUBAL

Virtual

Course code: CG210425W1

Closing date: 19 April 2025

**8 CPD
HOURS**

Introduction

The word 'Conflict' often conjures up negative visions of antipathy, arguments and fighting, and so we regard it with fear, something to be avoided. However, if conflict is managed in the right way, it can be a source of enlightenment and creativity, a chance to consider alternative and innovative approaches to problem solving. This session is designed to identify some of the common sources of conflict in the boardroom, why they occur and what can be done to ensure healthy conflicts that upgrade the vibrancy and diversity of the board's thought leadership and accompanying debates. This in turn will lead to comprehensive, high-quality decision making that can take an organization forward with confidence.

Course Objectives

1. To provide attendees with an understanding of why and how conflict can occur in the boardroom, and what it looks like.
2. Provide a comprehensive set of tools and strategies for managing and resolving conflict in a constructive way that enhances board cohesion and dynamics, (including effective board processes and creating the right culture.
3. How to address the problem of underperforming directors, often a significant cause of boardroom conflict.
4. Examining the role and attributes of the various stakeholders, the Chair, the board (company) secretary and individual directors and what they can do to foster a collegiate board environment.
5. An opportunity to discuss current boardroom challenges.

Course contents

The session focuses on why conflict is all around us and how we can reframe our approach to conflict as a powerful tool in the boardroom. We examine the mindset and ground rules to promote healthy debate and examine the key roles of the board secretary and the Chair in creating the culture, environment, and systems to facilitate and resolve board conflicts. This includes analysis of the conflict resolution strategies that can be used to create a unified and high performing board that supports every decision made. Although the board acts as a collective, the personal attributes of each individual director are an important ingredient to its ultimate success. We identify and consider personal skills, conduct and attributes required to contribute to the strength of the board, particularly from an EQ perspective.

Who should attend

Corporate and board secretaries, board and Committee Chairs, individual directors, boards (as a collective), and any senior management team member or governance professional that interacts with the governance function and/or the board in their organization

About the trainer: MR PAUL DUBAL

Paul has 25 years of corporate secretarial, corporate governance and regulatory experience both in house and as a professional services consultant in the United Kingdom, Canada, Caribbean and Middle East. He has worked for KPMG LLP and PwC in leadership roles and served in senior in-house roles for several listed financial services companies. Paul has worked extensively with a diverse range of boards and senior management teams globally on governance matters. His most recent corporate assignment was as Head of Corporate Governance at First Abu Dhabi Bank, the largest bank in the Gulf region, where he developed the Bank's corporate governance framework, and developed its international governance structure across twenty jurisdictions globally. A certified life coach, group coach and certified emotional intelligence (EQ) assessor and practitioner, Paul founded Perfect Balance Consulting in 2021 (www.perfectbalanceconsulting.ca), providing governance solutions to small/mid-Cap organizations, group training across a variety of business solutions, and one-to-one executive coaching to mid-senior level professionals with a focus on leadership and EQ. Mastering EQ is an essential requirement for professionals to support their personal brand and reputation to propel them to success. Paul has coached over 2000 professionals individually or collectively globally to become better leaders. Paul is a Fellow of the Chartered Governance Institute of Canada (CGIC) and holds an LLB from Middlesex University (UK) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice from Leicester De Montfort University (UK).

Course Outlines

1. Introduction – What is Conflict and Why it is All Around Us

- Setting the scene – conflict is ever present, and we need strategies to deal with it, not to shy away from it.

2. What Does Conflict Look Like in the Boardroom?

- The important role of tension in the boardroom – an integral element
- Sources of conflict – where can it originate?
- When does conflict become unhealthy? (Toxic behaviours, personal, historical tensions and how it can impact decision making).

3. Conflict Resolution Strategies for the Boardroom

- Strategies for Conflict Avoidance – clarify the board v management role, establish orderly processes, recognise the importance of the board agenda, meeting protocols, information flows.
- The Importance of Board Culture – regulating behaviour and creating the right conditions for effective debate; how to create and maintain an effective board culture.
- Managing conflict when it arises – tools to address conflict productively
- Resolving conflict outside the boardroom - The power of informal team building.

4. Underperforming Directors

- Identifying underperformance – what does it look like?
- Reasons for underperformance – understanding why it happens
- How to improve performance – strategies to support the director to improve
- Exiting Directors – when and how to exit directors

5. Role of the Chair in Managing Conflict

- Set the Ground Rules.
- Attributes for effective meeting management – diplomacy, tact, EQ, authority, relationship building, communication, composure.
- Gaining Consensus.
- Collective Efficacy – Ensuring board directors are committed to the outcome.

6. Role of the Board Secretary in Creating the Conditions for Healthy Boardroom Conflict

- Creating the Right Infrastructure – skills matrix, board evaluation, induction, board support (logistics, documents and meetings, board mandate, directors' code of conduct, board minutes, conflict of interest checks);
- Developing culture – work with the Chair, observing and providing feedback, board composition (diverse), board dynamics (avoid groupthink and interlocking boards), CPD for directors, mediation and coaching, managing the directors (power difference)
- Strategies to Resolve Conflict – building trust by working with the Chair, observing meetings and providing feedback, board composition (diverse), board dynamics (avoid groupthink and interlocking boards), CPD for directors, mediation and coaching, managing the directors (power difference).
- Skills and Attributes of the Company Secretary – humility, integrity, Discretion, EQ, servant leader.

7. Personal Attributes and Conduct of Individual Directors

- Understanding The Role – fiduciary duties and liabilities, implications if you don't speak up, taking accountability for ourselves and each other.
- Empathy, active listening, assertiveness, optimism.
- Mutual trust and respect, humility (leave your ego at the door) – 'negotiate not confront' mindset.
- Art of asking the right questions for the director.
- Courage and fortitude to address boardroom issues.
- How can we Develop as Directors

8. Case Study/Discussion

- Open discussion and some practical examples of conflict resolution in the Boardroom.

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