

Walking a Fine Line: Steps for CEOs Assessing the Senior Team



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Assessing your senior leadership team on their performance is an essential step in ensuring that your organization meets its strategic objectives. But this evaluation can be a delicate balancing act. Here

are some recommendations every CEO should consider when measuring the senior team's core competencies.

As a CEO or executive director, it's important to assess your senior leadership team on how well they are performing in executing the organization's strategic plan. However, the process can be fraught with pitfalls if you don't know how to do an assessment effectively. Luckily, there are some tried-and-true steps that any association executive can take to measure their senior management team.

Initiating this process begins with breaking down the SWOT analysis—evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, assuming an analysis was executed before building the strategic plan—to examine who among the senior leadership team possesses competencies to address key issues.

Next up is the actual assessment. The CEO should ask these questions:

- Do these skills exist within the organization?
- If so, who among the senior leadership team possesses this expertise?
- Where do gaps in skill set reside?

These are big questions that can be difficult for the CEO to answer alone. These steps can help fill out the picture:

Get help from human resources. Connecting with human resources is key because your HR leader can help answer questions that the senior team might have. This person can serve as an objective partner in the assessment and help in reflections that help the senior team to think critically about core competencies.

Consider gathering input from board members. While bringing the board of directors into day-to-day operations might give most CEOs heartburn, leveraging their potentially valuable input could reap significant returns and should not be dismissed outright. Perhaps specific board members can help with the assessment on a limited basis or be kept at arm's length to identify issues within the senior team.

Conduct a scenario-based test drive. Building a scenario-based test drive is another excellent way to see how the senior team works on strategy individually and collectively. This is a team exercise where leaders prepare a response plan to hypothetical scenarios. These exercises are designed to test core competencies, and it's particularly effective to identify gaps and fix shortcomings. The HR leader can assist in building a matrix to map where strengths and weaknesses lie within the senior leadership team as these factors relate to the strategic plan.

After taking these steps, the CEO will have effective tools to assess the senior team. Both the CEO and the senior team would be well-served if an outside executive coach or organizational psychologist is also engaged offering assessment instruments that bring comparative data from other leadership teams.

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