



Active strategic leadership must be creative and always looking ahead, whilst being confident about the present

The creative approach to governance, policy direction and board development

As a board, it comes down to this: How can we, on behalf of our stakeholders, ensure the organisation achieves what it should and avoids the unacceptable?'

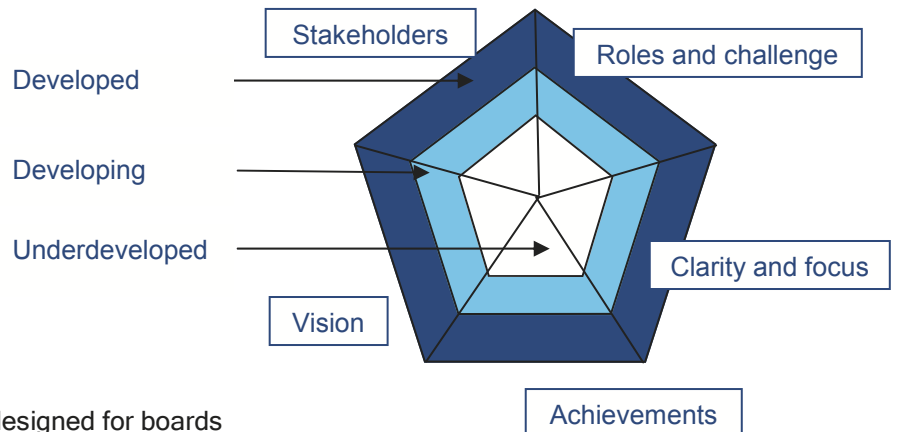
In recent years there has been greater emphasis on the crucial position of good governance to our private and public institutions. Many more people are becoming board members of organisations that range from small charities to large corporate businesses.



Good governance results from the active strategic leadership of the governing body. It must be creative and always looking ahead whilst being confident about the present. Q. Learning has developed a model that demands a reassessment of what a board member is there to do, and how best to fulfil that role creatively and with purpose. The emphasis is on freedom within the board for the individual qualities (not only the professional skills) that each member brings and how to use diversity of comment and perception to strengthen the governing body's corporate voice.

The Creative Governance model focuses on the relationship between the chief executive and the governing body and the unique roles and functions they hold in taking the organisation forward. At the heart of the model is a Creative Governance Diagnostic Assessment. This tool enables boards to assess how well developed is their performance in five core areas:

- Vision
- Achievements
- Stakeholders
- Roles and challenge
- Clarity and focus



Q. Learning's approach is carefully designed for boards in the public and private sector, believing there is a common approach that is useful for both. It frees up boards and their CEOs to be creative and find time and space for their organisation's future.

¹Adapted from John Carver's work on Policy Governance

The Creative Governance Model

‘Boards of directors should create a type of value not widely known or consistently created in today’s boardrooms. It champions a powerful, active board that makes decisions of its own and exercises its judgement independent of management (though not in the absence of management).’ John Carver, *Corporate Boards That Create Value* 2002

Q. Learning’s five governance tests

We have integrated our own research with the Policy Governance work of John Carver to develop a holistic, creative model for governance. The model helps boards to understand their performance in five areas.

We have used this model to create a straightforward diagnostic assessment tool. Data from the assessment is used to help boards plan their development through conversations with the chairman and chief executive, and whole-board development days.

	Vision	An organisation’s vision is of value if it has been developed by the board itself and is communicated to all who need to know it and is compelling enough to effect the operations of the organisation to achieve its goals.
	Achievements	An organisation’s achievements have a life changing effect on people inside and outside the organisation and provide a tangible platform for future initiatives.
	Stakeholders	Knowing the stakeholders of an organisation and responding to each group in a definite and appropriate manner will clarify governance priorities and inform future direction.
	Roles and challenge	The key function of the board is to work with the CEO by articulating vision and challenge to ensure the primary purpose of the organisation is upheld.
	Clarity and focus	Boards are responsible to inspire and find the future for the organisation and all their time and deliberations are geared towards this end.

The Creative Governance helps boards develop a focus on policy-based leadership:

Ends to be achieved	What needs are to be met? For whom? What is the cost or relative worth?
Means (via Executive limitations)	Limiting staff by principles of prudence and ethics.
Relationships between board and executive	The manner in which power is passed to the executive and the assessment of that power.
Process of governance	The manner in which the board represents ‘ownership’ and provides leadership in organisations.

Governance in the public sector

The Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) has noted that there are over 4,500 local public spending bodies, with over 70,000 board members between them. With tens of billions of pounds under their governance, these bodies carry huge burden of accountability.

Boards in private sector corporations focus on their accountability to their owners - the shareholders. Public boards need to define ownership very differently - the communities they serve are the owners.

Many board members possess technical skills and professional or ‘life’ experience that will be useful to the public bodies on which they serve. What they may lack is expertise in how to govern with authority and creativity. Members must also struggle with a complex, ever-changing operating environment, and with mergers, de-mergers and re-structuring of public bodies.

Knowing how to govern - and how not to govern - is therefore an urgent question for tens of thousands of volunteer board members throughout the country. For many board members, their current appointment is their first and only experience of governance. In their hands we place our public trust.



Creative Governance Products

The Creative Governance Diagnostic Tool

Board members' on-line self-assessment on the five key areas of governance, followed by expert feedback.

Outcomes

- Insight into the five areas of Creative Governance and performance in each area.
- Analysis and feedback on the messages from the diagnostic for the chairman, chief executive and, where appropriate, other board members.
- Indicative 'next steps' to help the board and the organisation improve.

Audience – Board members and chief executives.

Duration and delivery

- Board members complete on-line questionnaire in their own time.
- Half a day to a day for feedback sessions and indicative next steps depending upon the number of board members involved.
- Confidential 1:1 sessions with a Q. Learning senior consultant.

Creative Governance Workshop

Tailored board-level workshop to use the Creative Governance model in depth.

Outcomes

- Develop a focus on values and perspectives in leadership policy development.
- Re-discover the role of board members through a new framework for thoughts, activities, structures and relationships.
- Plan for embedding the new approach to governance.

Audience - Board members and chief executives.

Duration and delivery

- One day preparation including interviews and review of board papers.
- One day interactive workshop with a senior Q. Learning consultant.
- One day preparation of report and further recommendations.

Leadership development and coaching

Consultancy support for chairmen, chief executives and senior board members to develop their full leadership potential.

Outcomes

- Clarifying personal development and integrating this with the organisation's strategy.
- Executive-level coaching to round-out overall performance and impact.
- Networking and mentoring support to extend horizons and stretch vision.

Audience, Duration and Delivery – Senior consultancy support and executive coaching by agreement.

