

## STAY OUT OF THE KITCHEN

One of the key governing roles of a board is to provide guidance and direction to the organization. This is usually done through the mission, vision and strategic goals set by the board. If the organization has a paid Chief Executive or Executive Director, it is up to this person to develop and implement strategies and tactics required to achieve the goals.

It would be nice if this is how it worked in reality, but it appears that this reality is foreign to many boards, including some that espouse that their role is to just set the direction.

For many boards and their directors, the temptation to get involved in telling the Chief Executive or Executive Director how to achieve the goals is just too strong to pass up. Consequently, they end up having board discussion on what the Chief Executive should do to achieve the goals. Frequently these are long, involved discussions because there are so many experts sitting at the table, each with the right answer.

This is not necessarily a positive experience for the Chief Executive and it often becomes a source of stress or tension between them and the board.

What boards fail to realize is that if they make the decisions about the method or methods to be employed by staff to achieve the goals, they are relieving the Chief Executive Director of any responsibility or accountability if the strategy fails.

I think it would be helpful if boards started viewing their guidance and direction role as similar to that of a person ordering a meal in a restaurant. The person decides on the desired outcome regarding the meal. For example: the person orders the Rib Eye Steak medium rare, with fries and a Caesar salad. In doing this, the person is sending a message to the chef regarding the results he is expected to deliver. What the person does not do is go into the kitchen and tell the chef what method he will use to cook the steak or how to chop the ingredients for the salad. That is his job and the onus is on him to deliver the dinner you are expecting. In other words, achieving the desired outcome.

So, the next time your board or some of its directors want to tell the Chief Executive how to achieve the outcome the board desires, remember – ‘STAY OUT OF THE KITCHEN’.