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BEN STANSALL



Chief executive should communicate

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training programme just before starting work with Haslam and Roberts, and the instructor told him he had failed.

"I am a president and I look after 3,000 people but it really brings you down when someone says you have failed," he said. "I shared that with Paula and she said nobody fails in these things. You are training. You can only improve."

The coaching, combined with Haslam's training on how to handle difficult or unexpected questions, has given him much more confidence in his ability to communicate, he said.

BOOK EXTRACT

Don't let the board get bored

The chairman holds the key to a successful meeting, says John Dembitz.

IT is vital that all board meetings have a structured agenda. Brevity is a real advantage. Insist that papers are circulated at least 48 hours in advance so they

can be read and studied properly. Keep the agenda focused and short. The topics should be 60%-70% forward looking and 30%-40% rear-view. In other words, they should check the performance of the business, the forward financial requirements, the resourcing requirements of both people and equipment and the strategy.

To ensure that this can be undertaken in a knowledgeable manner, the board needs to have the relevant information covering finances, market share, competitive positioning, product development, relative strengths and weaknesses and so on.

The manner in which a board is chaired is critical. The chairman is there to chair, not to monopolise. The chairman is there to ensure that the meeting is kept on track, that a certain momentum is maintained, that every board member has suitable airtime and all board members know that they have a voice, that there is effective challenge, probing and debate of the executive, that it is as collegiate and participative as possible. The chairman is there to ensure that the minutes are properly recorded, that actions from previous minutes have been actioned and that the board meeting is not allowed to drift on for hours and hours.

Keep it brief, keep it to the point, keep it relevant, keep it focused but, if possible, have some fun along the way too.

■ Extracted from *It's the People* (LID Publishing), by John Dembitz, available post-free for £8.59 from *The Sunday Times Bookshop* on 0845 271 2134 or thesundaytimes.co.uk/bookshop.

