

CEOs: Leadership Planning Through Lockdown Isolation

IAPCO CEO **Martin Boyle** advocates for a special program specifically targeted at association CEOs. It is designed to help them be problem solvers and targeted at the association's Member CEOs.



After two years of enduring the global pandemic, January 2022 has, at the time of writing these lines, arrived and with a new year, comes renewed optimism and energy.

Whilst some CEOs around the world have been returning to their offices to work alongside colleagues, others remain in remote environments as a result of restrictions in place in the cities and countries within which they work. Some CEOs, especially those from within the charity or not-for-profit sectors with limited resources, may have, in fact, never known it any other way having always worked in a remote office environment.

HOW DOES ONE STRATEGICALLY PLAN?

Despite the attractiveness of being a CEO, leadership can be all consuming, stressful and certainly lonely especially when it is paired with remote working conditions as many have had since late 2019. How then does one ensure the successful review, development and implementation of a strategic plan when physically separated from an office and team?

In the recent PWC's 25th Annual Global CEO Survey "Reimagining the Outcomes that Matter", conducted in October and November 2021, it was understood that the "need for bold leadership to unite us as global citizens and problem solvers" remained a key output of the skills of a CEO. Also reported was that three quarters of the same CEOs surveyed stated that they expected global economic growth to improve in 2022.

Uniting citizens may seem an almost impossible task for some when the very CEOs themselves are actually physically isolated from the people and groups they are trying to unite. However, if

interaction through unique models and platforms that empower CEOs to rise from a state of survival to a high level of engagement can be used successfully, great results can be achieved.

Many of the not-for-profit association CEOs from around the globe that I have recently spoken with have been calling on energy they may not even have known before. They had to re-group, re-evaluate and re-energize their focus on their missions and strategic plans to ensure the value proposition their organizations offer will be able to meet the post-pandemic needs of those that they serve this year and well into the future.

DEFINITELY IN LINE

This is certainly in line with what we are experiencing from the 138 company member CEOs that comprise the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers (IAPCO) membership community.

Our own recent survey to our IAPCO membership identified the desire of our like-minded C-suite members to engage with one another through a structured program to explore challenges, opportunities and solutions together to help move from survival mode they had been facing in the recent 24 months to thriving in the years ahead. To help each other to look at what has been working in their strategic plans, what needs to be re-evaluated and what external influences are impacting on these plans.

Interestingly, a McKinsey & Company report from October 2019 entitled "The Mindsets and Practices of excellent CEOs" stated six main elements of a CEO's job that were found within practically all literature about the role of a CEO. They are:

setting the strategy, aligning the organization, leading the top team, working with the board, being the face of the company/ organization and managing one's own time and energy.

Understanding all of this and developing programs that address the aforementioned can help to inspire creative initiatives that drive positive solutions.

Therefore, IAPCO created the IAPCO CEO Meet-up program. The concept was conceived in the summer months of 2021 and launched in November for IAPCO member CEOs to explore, together, the critical decisions CEOs need to make in 2022 - all whilst many are working in remote conditions. To facilitate, guide and support the program, IAPCO called upon external expertise to facilitate the program so engaged business coach and entrepreneur, Hazel Jackson.

The CEO Meet-up program journey includes four active 90-minute virtual workshops with work-based assignments in between. As some of the participating CEOs continue to be working remotely, it was important that the program is designed in a way which each could feel connected and united. So, through the use of a connected virtual platform, Hazel provides the opportunity to give dedicated time to working on the business of each participant, rather than in the business of each. Importantly, it provides the opportunity to work with peers in like-minded businesses in non-competing geographies, who are facing similar situations.

Outcomes anticipated are more clarity on strategic differentiators, being closer to customer needs, more ideas on managing and

retaining talent and tips for managing the oxygen to any business cash. All of this whilst providing that valuable connection amongst CEOs from different regions of the globe who share common desires to lead.

NOT ALONE

IAPCO is not alone in its belief and objective to drive connectivity amongst our CEO members and others within our community. Many other membership-driven organizations, peer-peer groups and networking platforms around the globe also continue to consider what they can provide to support their own CEOs and stakeholders. A little bit of research to discover the one that matches the different styles of CEOs can reap huge rewards.

As Nigel Davies, CEO of Claromentis, described in an April 2020 Forbes' article: "directing, calming and inspiring fragmented teams that have had change thrust upon them, is not easily done from afar without planning and infrastructure."

There is no better time than the present for CEOs to consider how we can work together to lead and unite our own communities, and each other, as global citizens and problem solvers.

IAPCO represents today 138 companies comprised of over 9,900 professional congress organizers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 40 countries. info@iapco.org / www.iapco.org

