

Maximising Contribution,
Maximising Return.



High-Performance Boards E-Book Series

Contribution Compass Introduction

Introduction

In Chapter 4 of *Traversing the Avalanche* by Carl Bates – ‘The Team That Climbs With You’ – we refer to the Sirdar Group methodology of appointing high-performance directors using natural energy. Our preferred model for understanding a director’s natural energy, and supporting them to maximise their contribution to the board, is the Contribution Compass.

The Contribution Compass is a profiling methodology and platform that enables you to understand both your area of maximum contribution to a team and to a company and how you can leverage the most value for yourself and for your organisation.

The Contribution Compass is the result of years of experience at Sirdar Group combined with robust questioning aimed at determining what is referred to as your natural energy. Natural energy indicates the way that you naturally think and operate.

Some people are spontaneously innovative and intuitively drive concepts, projects and activity forward, despite all odds. Others wait for the right time to make a decision or take action based on their sense of the market, their team or their clients. Some will be focused on who is affected by a decision and who they can connect with, whereas others will naturally think of the process or the system first and how that should operate.

The profiling tool, and its practical application, leverages your natural energy for optimum performance and return by investing your time in your area of maximum contribution. Identifying, creating and sustaining your value is the cornerstone of working effectively with your natural energy. It requires that you have a deep understanding of your profile and that you actively seek to utilise that energy to create, build, focus and deliver value – for yourself and others.

When there is a balance of natural energy around a boardroom table, in an executive or management group, or across the operational or frontline team, there is a much more effective flow, and in turn results, for the directors, team members and the business as a whole.

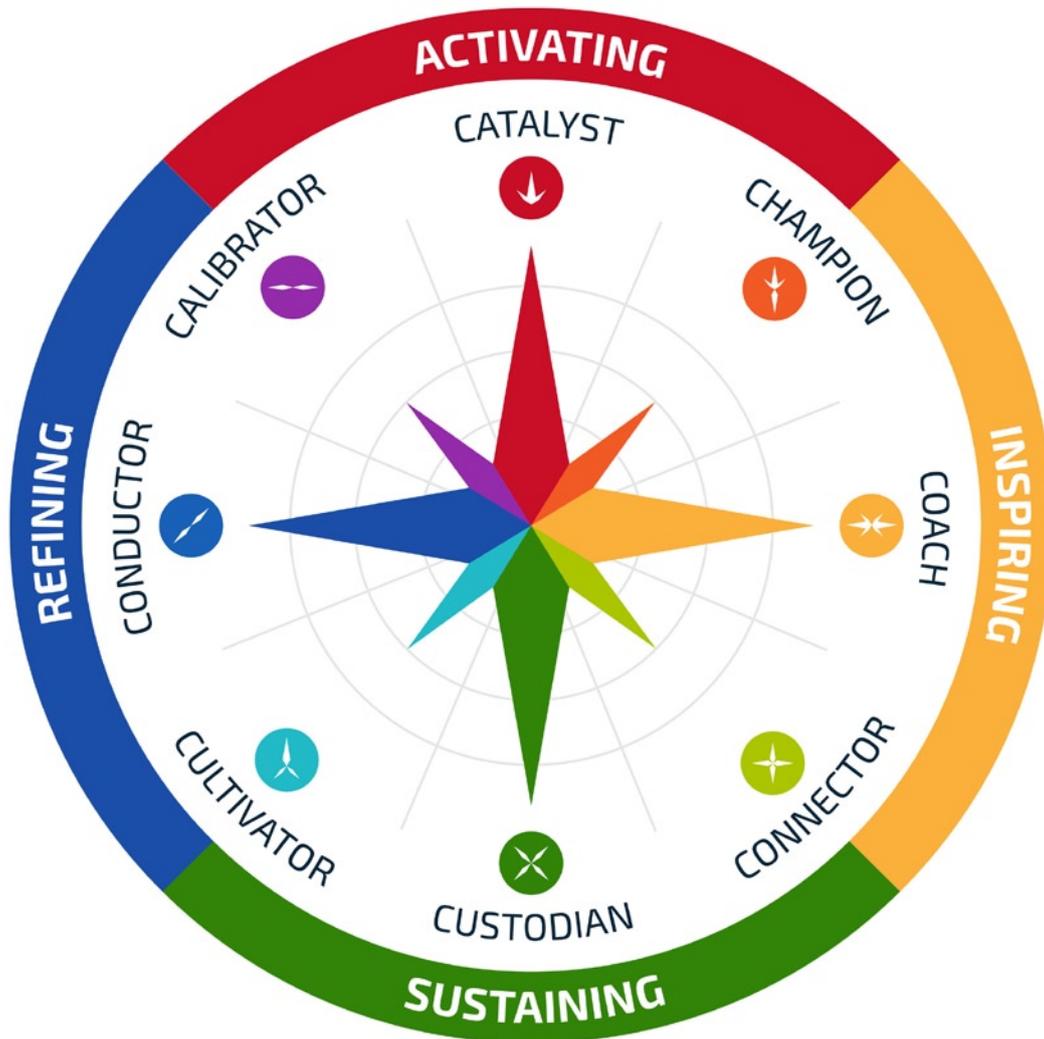
A company that is focused on maximising its growth opportunities should commit to consciously understanding and bringing into balance the natural energies of its board, team and key functions.

In this e-book, each of the Contribution Compass profiles have been summarised and specific guidance has been included on how each director profile can be maximised in the boardroom. While this e-book will provide some insight into your profile and the profiles of your fellow directors on your board, it is the practical application of the Contribution Compass that will drive performance of your board and deliver return.

For more information on how to apply this powerful tool within your board, executive committee or operational teams, contact Carl Bates at carlbates@sirdargroup.com.



 **CONTRIBUTION
COMPASS**



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CATALYST

Accelerating Change

Catalysts naturally bring change through accelerating a reaction or interaction, getting raw substance to interact in a vibrant and new way. They excel at getting something going with energy, and are often found starting new businesses, leading a new project or taking an existing project into its next big step. They easily plug into the world of ideas and into a vision of the future. Naturally innovative, they bring new ideas and creative approaches into any team and like to drive any new project forward.

Being direct in their manner and highly energised, Catalysts bring spark and enthusiasm to a team that can be quite invigorating. They prefer to tackle issues head-on and charge through any obstacles they encounter, even at the expense of making rash decisions that have not been thought through carefully.

Catalysts who have learnt to maximise their natural energy, understand that their value lies in being able to focus their energy into the conception and development of powerful ideas that they move forward with energy and then hand over, when ready, to be taken to the next stage. They demonstrate their ability to be exceptionally critical of their own ideas and contribution and to translate good ideas into proven concepts that will achieve the intended result.

On Board: The Catalyst Contribution

A Catalyst director brings tremendous energy and drive to a board and can spark others into action with a sense of urgency and passion. Catalyst directors who have matured their approach drive change in a way that considers the people dynamic and realistic timelines to completion. They also develop a positive method of inciting change and keeping everyone focused on the strategic direction and the vision that underpins it. The Catalyst's high-energy dynamic can mobilise a board that has become tired, complacent or too slow to adapt to changing circumstances.

Their passion for innovation means that they inherently understand the value of the products and services being taken to market and can unlock deeper value by switching off those offerings that no longer contribute value and activating new approaches to maximise the rest.

However, a Catalyst director who struggles to maximise their natural energy may push fellow directors and the executive team so hard that the team is left exhausted and demotivated. The relentless drive to create – and switch ideas mid-stream – can frustrate a chief executive who is focused on translating the Catalyst's ideas into tangible results. We have witnessed this drive for change showing itself in endless new ideas and to-do lists handed down to the executives, who never have enough time or energy to fulfil the Catalyst's expectations for urgency and action.

Removing distraction and maintaining absolute focus are ways that a Catalyst director can build power around their great ideas. A very clear strategic direction is one such way to keep their creative energy on track. They should also consciously focus on being more realistic about what can be achieved in the timeframes applicable.



CHAMPION

Blazing a Trail

Champions naturally shake up the status quo and stir up people to pay attention to the message they herald. Using their personal credibility, Champions shine light on the cause they rally for and incite others to join them. They are vibrant and exciting, and the call they make to pay attention is hard to resist. They excel at taking a proven idea and broadcasting its value to a wide audience, garnering support and enthusiasm.

Being bold and direct, Champions demand your undivided attention yet are also able to read a group or crowd and understand just how far to push, and in which direction, to get the best result. Champions may, in their haste, take an unripe idea to market too quickly or become too concerned about what that market thinks, thus becoming immobilised.

Champions who have learnt to maximise their natural energy, understand that their value rests in being able to shine their light upon a focused and central idea that then mobilises others to join the cause. They demonstrate their ability to be selective in their message and consistent with how that message is broadcast.

On Board: The Champion Contribution

A Champion director brings passion, zeal and vision to a board and can challenge the promise of the organisation and lift the level of the board's thinking about its cause and its value proposition to the market. Champion directors who have matured their approach have learnt how to clarify, deepen and stick to the idea being championed while not running ahead so fast that the rest of the team is left behind. They also develop an approach or set of criteria in support of being absolutely focused in what they choose to shed light upon. The Champion's fiery enthusiasm can rally a board that has perhaps lost sight of where it should be headed or the bigger vision possible.

Their understanding of public perception means that Champions inherently understand the value of branding and marketing and have an innate ability to know how to increase market attraction and brand appeal. However, a Champion director who struggles to maximise their natural energy may become overly obsessed with surface appearances and reputation, and, without a clear message, may push the business to sell to anyone who would listen. The relentless drive to get the message 'out there' may frustrate a chief executive who is concerned that the message is still unclear or that the timing is premature. We have witnessed this drive for expansion through executives being pushed to rapidly broaden the business scope far beyond its core idea to 'capture the market', which results in no particular area getting enough attention.

Maintaining a clear focus and vision is critical for a Champion director to mobilise the board and blaze a trail. Refining their ability to deliver a succinct and impactful message, be that through public speaking, writing or media expertise, is also very important. They should continuously check themselves that their idea is sufficiently mature and that a clear plan is in place.



COACH

Igniting Greatness

Focused on supporting and bringing a central idea to life and making it shine through people, the Coach ignites the fire in others through their warmth, energy and inspiration. Being able to tune into the emotions of individuals as well as the collective energy of a group, they possess an intuitive understanding of people and how to light the way for them to achieve excellence and success within a team.

Understanding what their team needs to overcome challenges, Coaches are often found rallying the group while developing talent at the same time. Driven by a need for engagement, change and opportunity, they thrive in environments that offer them engagement with a wide variety of people. A Coach excels where there is broad scope of interaction with access to the right people to make it happen.

Coaches who have learnt to maximise their natural energy understand the importance of building a high-functioning and effective team that love what they do. A Coach who has attained mastery of their contribution also grasps the importance of being aligned to a worthy cause and will demonstrate their ability to inspire and guide their team while also holding them accountable for performance. As leaders, they drive and inspire their teams while inculcating commitment and loyalty at the same time.

On Board: The Coach Contribution

A Coach director brings a people-centric focus to the board coupled with a deep understanding of the extent to which accountability drives organisational performance. Coach directors who have learned how to harness their natural energy understand the importance of not getting too caught up in the emotions and dramas of others. The matured Coach knows where to draw the line and set boundaries without losing touch with whomever they are dealing with. At the same time, they can focus the board on the people issues that need to be addressed and how talent can be more effectively developed.

Their deep understanding of the human factor also supports them to understand customer relationships, customer acquisition and networking. This enables Coaches to create value through sales engagement with the market and, on a board, how the company can be more effective in capturing the hearts and minds of its market.

However, a Coach director who struggles to maximise their natural energy may become overly attached to their relationships with others, and so may recoil from holding others accountable or may not get tough when needs be. At a board level, we have seen this as placating conflict around the board room table and avoiding addressing the 'elephant in the room'.

A clear vision and metrics that adequately assess the vision can also greatly assist the Coach director with clarity of direction and performance. This becomes a framework through which the Coach can focus their gift of challenging the board to focus on talent and wider relationships with the market.



CONNECTOR

Building Bridges

Connectors have a special gift that can unite the right people at the right time and place. This ability to connect is driven from a combined understanding of what people really need and the resources and opportunities available that may best serve those needs. They excel in communication and being able to talk through ideas, challenges and solutions to create a collective way forward in their area of expertise – the market that they know.

They are natural diplomats, who love exchanging with others and finding amicable solutions in a polite, calm and practical manner. They will often seek opportunities to mediate for others and support the negotiation for the best possible outcome for all parties. Connectors will quickly become disengaged if they do not feel a resonance with the underlying promise or cannot see that a solution or connection is mutually-beneficial, sustainable or practical for all parties concerned.

Connectors who have learnt to maximise their natural energy, understand the immense value of their networks, relationships and associations. They invest in those relationships with a long-term view to the future value of the social capital they create. They demonstrate their ability to seek opportunities for those around them at the right time and place, and to broker value-creating solutions.

On Board: The Connector Contribution

A Connector director brings to a board a human touch combined with a deep appreciation of the practical reality faced. They would be concerned about issues affecting the people in the company and any actions considered short-term and non-sustainable. They would be particularly focused on the stakeholders of the company and the extent to which those stakeholder relationships have been maximised. With an eye for seeing opportunity to leverage others, the Connector director brings diplomacy and deal making onto the board's agenda.

Creating return by mobilising their social capital to grow the company, Connectors excel at identifying, engaging and closing deals with aligned partners and stakeholders at an ever-increasing value size. This can result in the company having access to best-in-class research, resources or situations where one strategic relationship opens the door to a much bigger pool of connections.

A Connector director who struggles to maximise their natural energy is one who may have a broad base of contacts, yet does not invest enough time and focus for them to translate into sustainable value creation. They can also get so carried away with the joy of creating new connections that they fail to leverage the real value of their existing database and its associated capital. This may result in an executive team pursuing leads down dead-ends or deals, once explored, that lack substance and meaningful potential.

A matured Connector director has learned how to get to the point in conversations and avoid spending too much time deviating from their core focus, or consuming precious time in a board meeting drifting from the key objective being discussed. They can therefore unlock massive value through clearly defined board outcomes that they can support to translate into effective action steps in the market place.



CUSTODIAN

Honouring the Promise

While you may not easily find the Custodian seeking the limelight, they are vital team members in any company or project that wishes to achieve sustainable success. Their responsible and nurturing qualities provide the necessary support to get the job done through maintaining routine and ensuring that tangible results are delivered on time and for a long time to come. Just like the earth itself, their drive to nourish and support brings the ideas of others to life.

Often found in operational and customer service environments, their impeccable sense of timing and logistics, together with an inherent love of routine and service, ensures the diligent and responsible management of resources in their care. They have a grounded understanding of reality, resources, timing and practical considerations. Custodians are very conscious of just how critical it is for a team or company to deliver on its promise, be that to the team, clients, stakeholders and the community.

Custodians who have learned to maximise their natural energy understand how to create value by actively supporting the long-term implementation of ideas and projects through practical approaches and realistic timelines. They drive operational excellence with a customer-centric focus and the momentum of value-adding processes. Custodians, in their quest for a sense of belonging, also tend to create a strong family environment, be that in a community or a team.

On Board: The Custodian Contribution

A Custodian director brings to a board the 'reality check' when plans, ideas and projects are impractical, too hasty, not sustainable or not achievable with the resources and team available. Their long-term perspective will carefully consider the future intended and unintended consequences of every decision. They would be particularly focused on slowing processes down that are not yet ready and keeping the company in integrity with its promise on macro and micro levels.

Custodians often develop operational excellence and customer experience in their careers and therefore can bring this perspective to the board. This is especially useful in service-based environments where customer loyalty and retention are critical success factors. Whereas *Activating* directors would likely be drawn to a company because it is innovative or an exciting opportunity, a Custodian director would look for a deep sense of resonance with the promise of the company and the quality of its foundation already in place.

A Custodian director who struggles to maximise their natural energy is one who unnecessarily or out of habit puts the brakes on change and rapid movement. They may require too much time or a full understanding to appreciate opportunities and make decisions, which may delay critical decisions just a moment too long. They may also become disengaged in environments that lack structure, change frequently, have not matured, lack resources or that risk letting the customer down.

A matured Custodian director has learned how to push through their comfort zone to find ways to mitigate a lack of information or a dominant innovative energy on a board. They also check their natural tendency to get bogged down in reality, especially when strategic blue-sky thinking is required at a board level.



CULTIVATOR

Nurturing Growth

Cultivators are unlikely to spearhead new ideas or lead others in a very public manner. Instead they create value through building an infrastructure or scaffolding of resources and plans in the background which support the fulfilment of the central idea and ensure that it goes the distance. Cultivators are driven by a need for routine and a deep sense of connection to others along with the certainty of structure, process and facts. This is often seen as a drive to create long-term sustainable and meaningful growth that is achieved through incremental refinements applied consistently and with focus. They will therefore tend to seek long-term project environments where they can control the final outcomes, set a planned pace and adjust the plan to get there along the way.

Cultivators have a talent to grow, accumulate and develop assets and resources in a sustainable and enduring manner. They also have an acute ability to sense risk and to see the warning signs that alternative routes will soon be required. Their long-term perspective and refining eye can see far ahead and highlight practical issues that may come along.

Cultivators who have learnt to maximise their natural energy, understand that subtle and flexible growth can only deliver long-term results if it is consistent and persistent. This means that they understand how to support progress at a gradual pace without dissipating their focus or undermining their ability to achieve the required outcomes – not too fast and not too slow.

On Board: The Cultivator Contribution

A Cultivator director brings to a board two essential qualities – the long-term view for sustainable, incremental growth and a deep understanding of the likely risks to be faced along the way. Their nurturing, supportive and diligent approach is forward-planning and aimed at delivering tangible results. A Cultivator director is typically grounded, calm, realistic, data-driven and efficient yet commanding and deliberate. They inspire others to plan, think resourcefully and appreciate the value of how being specific matters.

In a board room, Cultivator directors would typically ask to see project plans, projections, long-term budgets and the risk management framework. They will encourage the company, through the board, to instil a planning culture and a metrics-based performance measurement approach. Gentle yet probing questioning will support a board to slow down its thinking and consider the intended and unintended consequences for every decision.

A Cultivator director who struggles to maximise their natural energy is one who may be too risk-averse, resulting in a climate permeated with trepidation and concern. Instead, risk should be an opportunity that just requires special care. Cultivator directors should also watch out for focusing too much on reports, analysis, and metrics such as return on investment, while being overly adamant about sticking to the plan no matter what. If they do, the opportunity for spontaneous creativity and innovative thinking may have little room to express itself through the board.

A matured Cultivator director has learned how to ground and nurture high Activating energy in the board while being able and willing to make refinements and adjustments in the plan as its implementation unfolds.



CONDUCTOR

Optimising the Performance

A Conductor is a person who, just like the conductor of an orchestra, uses their focused and efficient energy to direct the singular instruments of the orchestra into a unified and optimised collective. With the wave of a baton, the conductor keeps the whole orchestra in rhythm and in tune.

So, too, does a Conductor excel at making sure a process or function runs optimally and efficiently, which may include ensuring that a business unit or company delivers the expected return from its assets. With a natural affinity for analysis and data, a Conductor finds meaningful insights through information and the analysis thereof. Indeed, they revel in solving problems through logic and fact.

Conductors are driven by the need for predictability and routine, and they will seek out environments where there are known outcomes and stable resources upon which they can rely. For a Conductor, the ability to swing that proverbial conductor's baton and take control of the environment, its role players and outcomes, will energise their motivation and accelerate value creation. Indeed, they derive great pleasure out of 'getting the ducks in a row' and creating order out of chaos.

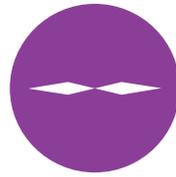
Conductors who have learnt to maximise their natural energy, understand the value they create in any team through the non-emotional and factual view of the world that they hold. Yet they also recognise their main challenge - appreciating the value and dynamics of people - and therefore learn to find the critical balance point between head and heart.

On Board: The Conductor Contribution

A Conductor director brings to the board the contribution of analysis, performance metrics and refinement. They will see patterns and problem areas in the data and financial reports almost as if by magic. When a Conductor sees numbers, an intricate story jumps out at them. The numbers speak; and the Conductors listen. A Conductor director will also be highly focused on the metrics used to assess whether the business is functioning at its peak. Operational efficiency problems would attract their attention as well as a poor or decreasing return on assets and project investments.

In a board room, Conductor directors would tend to keep coming back to data, research and analytical reference points. They want to see the evidence that decisions made will be sound and deliver the desired returns. High activating directors may become frustrated that their visionary ideas are met with such scepticism, yet unlocking the value of data-centred thinking can support those great ideas to come to life and thrive.

A Conductor director who struggles to maximise their natural energy is one who fails to realise that asking the analysis and 'how' questions has a time and place. Hammering the creative process with 'yes, buts' can quickly unravel innovation and agility. Being efficient at a board level can also inhibit deep and meaningful debate. Conductor directors should also watch out for being so focused on numbers, return and optimisation that they fail to appreciate the real driver of high-growth - its people.



CALIBRATOR

Fine-tuning the Instruments

A great example of a Calibrator in their zone of flow is the white-coated researcher or engineer in their laboratory, experimenting with strange substances while Bunsen burners bubble and pipettes and data sheets abound. There is order and method yet also experimentation and surprise. This is a great image to explain the core nature and value of a Calibrator. They constantly try new things and refine old concepts to improve and fine-tune processes or functions for optimum performance. There is a back-bone of diligence, precision and data upon which innovation can be focused and refined.

Calibrators therefore excel at striving for excellence and perfection that can be applied in the delivery of the promise. The instruments and processes that Calibrators are often involved in fine-tuning can range from business models and methodologies to business tools and technologies. Their relentless pursuit of improvement predisposes them to flourish in environments where they can tinker and experiment to their hearts' content.

Besides their love for continuous improvement and experimentation, Calibrators are driven by a need for certainty provided by facts and figures along with achievement, recognition, respect and independence. They thrive when they can do something unusual in a systemic way or ensure that a business is future-proof from the current team or present reality.

Calibrators who have learnt to maximise their natural energy, understand that their path of value creation lies in establishing a culture of continuous improvement while applying systems thinking in improving the foundational design of the business or unit they are involved in. They also acknowledge that no system can ever be perfect or indeed can exist without the people who drive it and bring it to life.

On Board: The Calibrator Contribution

A Calibrator director brings to the board a commanding and high-energy leadership style with a strong rational, analytical focus. They naturally see the business as an integrated system of people, resources, processes, assets and technologies. It would be clear to the Calibrator director exactly where the business model is restricted and the extent to which that model can be scaled up and accelerated. They have a sixth sense for how to charge up growth through leveraged technologies and innovative efficiency. Specifically, the Calibrator would pay attention to the practices and outcomes of continuous improvement and would drive the organisation to incrementally learn and refine.

In a board room, Calibrator directors would contribute the *Refining* qualities of analysis and precision and the *Activating* focus of new ideas and driven action. They want to see evidence of the 'how' question being addressed and whether the action or decision will result in repeatable value or duplicable growth. 'Do it once and repeat' would be the mantra of a Calibrator director. High inspiring or people-centric directors may become frustrated with the Calibrator's drive to replace people with technologies or to systematise the team.

A Calibrator director who struggles to maximise their natural energy is one who has a single-minded focus on system perfection above all else. This may drown out other signals of distress that require attention, especially from human dynamics and operational delivery perspectives. They might push too hard to keep improving or to solve all people problems through technology or process.

Sirdar Group

The leading educator, appointer and guide of high-performance boards for privately-held companies and family businesses.

‘Sirdar’ is the name given to the lead Sherpa on a mountain expedition. Where others view a high mountain as a great challenge or an insurmountable obstacle, the sirdar sees it as a clear path of opportunity. The sirdar builds the right team, chooses the correct route and knows when to go for the summit. At Sirdar, this strategy is applied in walking with companies on their journey to success.

Meaningful Economic Impact

This serves as the promise against which we measure our behaviour and decisions. It is underpinned by the understanding that effective boards grow companies. These companies become more sustainable with less risk and better returns. Stronger companies support a stronger economy. Stronger economies can do more for their people.

When the economy is flourishing and there is measurable, reliable growth, quality of life has the opportunity to improve on a national scale. It makes both the lives of the people, and the world, a better and more meaningful place. Facilitating long-term economic impact makes a meaningful impact on everyday people.

Sirdar Group delivers on its promise by providing three key services to the boards of privately-held companies and family businesses.

Educate. Appoint. Guide.

The first step in creating sustainable businesses is sharing the importance of the role of a board in a business.

Boards are often incorrectly thought of firstly as a practice reserved for big businesses and corporates, and secondly as a group whose key role is to ensure compliance. In reality, a board of directors is a critical business tool for privately-held companies and family businesses. In so doing they improve performance, increase company value and deliver a return to shareholders and other stakeholders.

Sirdar Group therefore drives awareness about boards and in-depth and practical education surrounding their importance and how they function.



The second step is appointing a high-performance board.

Often the success of the board is seen as a function of the names that sit on it. While critical to board success, it is only one part of the three key areas that are the foundation of, and sustain, a high performance board – people, methodology and process. Sirdar Group ensures that the foundation of the board, through the selection of the right directors for the specific circumstances, occurs. Through understanding an individual’s commercial astuteness, to testing their natural energy and ensuring their governance knowledge, Sirdar Group makes sure the right people are appointed to the team.

And the third value-adding step is guiding the board on its journey of success and growth.

To complete the picture, Sirdar Group’s unique methodology to create and sustain high-performance boards blends best practice thinking, holistic governance models, the practical application of governance principles, the provision and performance management of independent non-executive directors and a team to guide the board. This delivers real value to the companies in which we are involved and we see an immediate positive impact as well as an increase in sustained profitability and value in the businesses we work with. It is how we deliver impactful and meaningful economic growth.

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