

# The Search for the „Perfect“ Director

*Ever since the introduction of the new Company Law, Swiss Directors have been treading a dangerous path. A Board of Directors Academy has been established in Zurich that is designed to fill any gaps in the knowledge of Board members.*

„How can Directors monitor and control something if they do not know where and when they have to apply their authority?“ This question put forward by the Swiss communication consultant Anton Glanzmann got the ball rolling. Some three months ago the Academy opened its doors: the first Board of Directors (B.o.D.) institute of its kind anywhere in the world is located in Zurich.

At the present time, the programme encompasses twenty different subjects ranging from corporate management and business administration according to Company Law, technological innovations and management psychology. Top lecturers from the university and business worlds, such as the banking specialist Professor Kilgus who was appointed the academic head of the new institute, warrant for the quality of the “basic and advanced training at university level,” at least according to the advertising literature of its founders..

## **The Board of Directors is responsible for...**

Anton Glanzmann of Arnold, Glanzmann, Kilgus und Schwarzenbach AG, a placement agency for Directors, is puzzled by the fact that no board members have been made accountable so far for wrong strategic decisions in corporate management. "The new Company Law, which has been in effect since 1992, spells out the duties and responsibilities of the BoD in much stronger terms than before," Glanzmann commented. "The Board of Directors is responsible for the strategy, the organization, the selection and supervision of the Management, the allocation of the resources and the control over a company." Directors are often overtaxed when it comes to assessing very specific problems, Glanzmann is convinced, thereby providing justification for his Academy. "My partners and I specifically aim at furnishing the course

participants with comprehensive knowledge, both systematically and in depth..." Communication specialist Glanzmann knows his business as few others do, and that includes making publicity for his own cause.

## **Placing Directors**

Anton Glanzmann firmly believes that more is required of Directors these days than ever before. They must be able to anticipate and appraise developments. To position an enterprise correctly in a rapidly changing environment and to draft longterm strategies. The communication consultant mentions as a graphic example the changes that are taking place in a new Europe, changes that “confront us in Switzerland with new challenges and require of us the courage to find new ways." Thus the Kuoni Board of Directors, also, must continuously as ongoing global changes in the case of new acquisitions. P&O Travel in Hong Kong or SOTC in

India serve as the latest illustrations.

Arnold, Glanzmann & Schwarzenbach AG, which the well known university professor and banking specialist Ernst Kilgus joined last year as fourth partner, has provided Directors to small and medium sized companies for the last ten years. But what, one may ask, does it take to make a good Director? "There are many factors involved," Glanzmann pointed out. And he believes that in the final analysis it is always the chemistry that must be right. In his search activity, Anton Glanzmann has had some strange experiences as well. "Fathers, for instance, who want to pass on their business to their sons but are not fully convinced that these are capable of following in their footsteps and therefore look for a strong Board of Directors..." Then again Glanzmann remembers a purchasing cooperative whose Directors got along so well with one another that the business part of the meetings became shorter and shorter and the social part longer and longer. One day the BoD decided to look for a repulsive person as new member as the last chance to stop the gay goings-on. "There was no problem finding such an unpleasant Director for the Board," Glanzmann remembers.

And how about internationality? "We have the names of a few foreigners in our files," Glanzmann stated, "but until now we have not been able to place a single one on a Swiss Board of Directors." It appears that the Swiss are quite reluctant to deliver ultimate control over their firms into foreign hands.



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