

The Imperfect Board Member, Jim Brown, Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint, 2006

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This book is helpful to anyone involved in the governance of a not-for-profit association or a commercial enterprise. Using a unique urban fable style to convey his message, author and consultant Jim Brown describes the progress of everyman CEO David Slater as he struggles to work with his own company's board and a small not-for-profit community board.

As the fable evolves David and by now you, the captivated reader, discover and learn how to apply the *seven disciplines of governance excellence*, which just happens to be the subtitle of the book.

The author's basic premise is that organizations have to be both smart and healthy, and they can best do that when members' personal interests are subordinated to the interests of the stakeholders they are there to serve. But is that not why we all serve on boards? Yet, as many of us are aware, that is not always the case. Few boards can say that all members leave personal interests at the boardroom door and focus solely on the interests of the stakeholders.

But in fairness to those of us currently serving on boards, has anyone ever taught us how to be good board members? This is where Jim Brown's little book excels. I said 'little' because I read the book cover to cover in under three hours.

While discovering the seven disciplines of governance excellence the reader witnesses the profound and sometimes painful changes high powered CEO David undergoes as he works at the corporate and community board levels. The Seven Disciplines David learns are:

- Reflect ... on Organizational Effectiveness
- Respect ... Owner expectations
- Select ... your Prominent Leadership
- Direct and Protect ... Organizational Performance
- Expect ... great Board – Management Interaction
- Connect ... for healthy Board Relations

Having outlined and modeled the seven disciplines, the author then puts the disciplines into a framework, the Governance Excellence Model or G.E.M., a trademark of Jim Brown's consulting company Strive! Inc. The G.E.M. is graphically illustrated as a diamond with six facets or areas of responsibility essentially delineating board and management responsibilities. Add to the G.E.M. the Secret Formula describing effective lines of communication introduced in an earlier chapter, and you have all the components for a highly effective board.

The Imperfect Board Member is a very worthwhile book that outlines in a clear and concise manner principles of good governance that can benefit all boards. I highly recommend this book to anyone currently serving on a board, and to anyone who would like to enhance their board experience.

Readers can also go to the Strive! Website (www.strive.com) and sign up for a monthly news letter.

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