



# What CEOs Want Their Board to Know

By Leisa Goodman

In his work coaching more than 300 boards, Les Wallace, Ph.D., has found common themes among their CEOs.

"There are many items CEOs regularly ask me to remind their boards of," said Wallace, president of Signature Resources, Inc. ([www.signatureresources.com](http://www.signatureresources.com)) and facilitator of CUES' recent Board Chair Development Seminar ([cues.org/bcads](http://cues.org/bcads)).

- Remember to give feedback in a professional manner and setting, not on the golf course or at the bar.
- Rules of engagement help everyone to know what to expect. This can include having regular face-to-face meetings scheduled outside of board meetings and using advance agendas.
- CEOs appreciate timely, specific feedback, with solid examples and data, not speculation or hints.

Wallace has also found a common thread when it comes to CEO stressors. "In addition to running one of the most challenging businesses in the world, credit union CEOs can be most stressed by their board," he said. Frequently mentioned points of pain include:

- board members who aren't literate in governance;
- boards "getting in the weeds"—the details—of management;
- board members who are not up to date on national and regional banking issues; and
- the board makeup not matching the future needs of the CU, or being conservative to the point that innovation stops.

According to Wallace, it's also important for boards to remember that one of their most important duties is to help their CEO be as successful as possible. He recommends:

- doing annual CEO goal-setting, review and evaluation with the entire board—not committees. The chair and vice chair may deliver the final report, but the entire board needs to be accountable.
- supplementing the annual review with mid-year feedback on CEO performance. Tell the CEO what the board wants—and listen to feedback.
- having a personal management development plan, with at least part coming from sources outside the CU world.

Wallace sums up the CEO/board relationship with one simple idea: "If the CEO isn't 'scaring' the board with big ideas regularly, it's not a robust partnership," he said. "The idea is to stretch everyone's thinking, and not to settle for status quo."

Leisa Goodman is a CUES marketing specialist.

Read this article in its entirety on the CUES Skybox blog at <http://tinyurl.com/boardsneedtoknow>.

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