



Ashley Kate  
HR & Finance

# HR Director Boardroom Summary

May 2024



Hosted by

EVERSHEDS  
SUTHERLAND

# Speakers:



**Mark Hammerton**  
Partner  
Eversheds Sutherland



**Susie Fehr**  
Senior HR Executive

**Discussing the topic:**  
*'Mastering the Art of CEO  
Management: A Guide for HR  
Leaders'*

This engaging and insightful event, hosted by Susie Fehr and chaired by Mark Hammerton, was centred around understanding, and supporting the CEO's role within an organisation. The discussion delved into four key areas: understanding the CEO's vision, influencing decision-making, building trust, and managing conflict. Through these topics, Susie illuminated the pivotal role an HR leader can play to support the CEO. Susie offered practical advice on fostering a productive relationship between the CEO and their team.



Susie Fehr, an experienced Human Resources Executive, is widely recognised for delivering timely solutions to complex organisational, strategic, and employee-related issues. She excels at maximising operational effectiveness while minimising business risk. Susie has a proven track record of building and managing national and international HR teams, inspiring and empowering individuals, and ensuring smooth adaptation to rapid business changes.

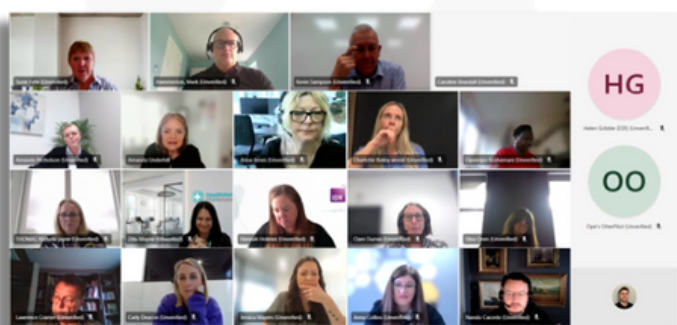
Mark is a partner at Eversheds Sutherland specialising in employment law. With over 25 years' experience, he advises on a wide range of employment and labour issues globally. Mark helps clients navigate challenges such as TUPE, misclassification issues, restructuring and reorganisation projects and contingent workforces. Of particular relevance to the topic, Mark has led projects and helped clients conclude executive severances in sensitive circumstances.

The immense stakes involved in a CEO's performance were first explored. Susie shared that CEOs are usually personally responsible for 45% of a company's overall performance, a statistic that highlights the crucial nature of their leadership. However, only three out of five newly appointed CEOs meet performance expectations in their first 18 months. Only one in twelve companies progresses from average to top performers over a decade. These statistics

underscore the demanding nature of the CEO role and underline the necessity for comprehensive preparation and strategic support.

Susie's first topic of exploration was understanding the CEO's vision. She highlighted the importance of active listening and allocating significant time to ask questions and comprehend the

CEO's background and style. Whether the CEO is newly appointed or seasoned, internal, or external, or has a background in operations or finance, these factors influence their perspective and decision-making approach. Susie encouraged a deep understanding of business knowledge, strategy, and operational challenges. She urged attendees to stay updated on industry trends and bring valuable insights to the table. It was also stressed as essential to demonstrate familiarity with the top three financial metrics of an organisation and their correlations. Susie recommended engaging with a wide range of business leaders to gather diverse perspectives and continuously surprising the CEO with innovative ideas beyond the typical HR scope.





Mark noted the importance of ensuring that the employment contract/service agreement captures accurately the parties' commercial 'deal' and any protocols around decision making (including by reference to policies as determined by the Company from time to time). Somewhat like a 'pre-nup' in a marriage, you hope you never need to refer to the document in detail but you will be grateful you took the time to get it in place if things go awry.

The next key areas of focus were building trust and influencing decision-making. Susie spoke about the critical nature of organisational alignment, stressing the importance of aligning talent with value and promptly addressing underperformance. She pointed out that only a small percentage of value-creating roles directly report to the CEO, with the majority positioned several levels down in the hierarchy. Susie highlighted the often overlooked but crucial nature of succession planning for long-term success. She called for a balanced approach to organisational design that prioritises speed and stability. She advocated for a culture that encompasses more than just employee engagement, but also includes adaptability, execution quality, and a shared sense of purpose.

She emphasised the need for senior leadership to demonstrate positive behavioural norms as they are closely observed throughout the organisation. It was considered crucial for the CEO to maintain a strong connection with employees through visibility, authenticity, and consistent follow-up. This was to strengthen a shared sense of purpose. Susie reminded everyone that the CEO's role has a significant impact on organisational culture and motivation. She highlighted the importance of simplicity, honesty, and preparedness for crucial moments in developing a motivating story for employees.

In managing conflict, Susie acknowledged the real challenges posed by CEO with egos and agendas, and who often believe they know best. She advised learning about the CEO's confidants, both within and outside the organisation, and sometimes orchestrating a chain reaction to achieve desired outcomes. Political acumen was deemed necessary, especially when navigating highly charged relationships. Susie advocated for tough love, where mutual trust exists between the HR leader and CEO, and cautioned that sometimes conflicts may not end well which could potentially lead to an exit situation.

At the end of the session, Susie presented a set of questions to pose to the CEO. These questions were intended to clarify the CEO's priorities, desired team norms,



cultural aspirations, communication strategies, and legacy goals. These questions are designed to promote a better understanding and agreement with the CEO's vision, ultimately supporting more effective collaboration and organisational

Through the insightful session, Susie offered valuable perceptions and practical strategies for understanding and backing a CEO. She also underlined the undeniable impact of effective leadership on organisation performance and culture.



# Ashley Kate HR & Finance

Part of Nicholas Associates Group

## Contact us

If you're looking for a new recruitment opportunity or want to find out more about what our Group can offer, please get in touch.

[ashleykatehr.com](http://ashleykatehr.com)



Apprentice  
Employment  
Agency



Graduate  
Career  
Solutions



Staffforce



Cra-Cro  
Site Services



Nicholas  
Associates



Ashley Kate  
HR & Finance



Nicholas  
Associates  
Software

olano

