

ACROSS THE BOARD

Mark A. Pfister

# ACROSS THE BOARD

The Modern Architecture  
Behind an Effective  
Board of Directors

For Private, Public & Nonprofit Boards

**Mark A. Pfister**

foreword by Michael K. Lorelli

## FOREWORD

$E = MC^2$  was a powerful equation that brought order to the inter-relationship of mass and energy. It took one stroke from a genius to bring a higher-order perception of the relationship to practical terms – this after centuries of understanding the individual factors, but without a repeatable formula, or *'architecture,'* to bring predictability.

Boards are no different. We all understand the importance in the individual factors of our Board existence... good governance oversight, challenging and endorsing strategy, CEO selection, and the like. Now, in *'Across The Board,'* Mark A. Pfister decodes the underlying architecture and ties the foundational elements into a futuristic equation that can be effectively applied to create, or reinvigorate, tomorrow's Boards. There is no reason why our comprehension and picture of the future Board shouldn't be as energizing and impactful as Artificial Intelligence or the Internet-of-Things in terms of how they are furthering and enhancing our non-Board Director lives.

I was introduced to Mark by a mutual acquaintance who simply thought two people with a genuine interest in advancing the state of Board effectiveness should get together for dinner. There weren't enough napkins to scratch the comments, grasp the concepts or process the insight Mark brought to the conversation. For three hours I lived the 2012 version of *'The Laffer Curve'* – scribbled napkins and all.

It's fitting that the challenge to author *'Across The Board'* be undertaken by a person who has dedicated a great portion of their very successful professional life to studying, challenging, understanding, hypothesizing, theorizing and *'bringing to market'* the insights that he uniquely has in creating a predictable Board effectiveness model. Mark's *'day job'* is pushing the envelope on Board governance, contributing on Boards, elevating Board candidates and advising on Board construction... but that understates his reputation as the inventor of the *'Board as a Service'* (BaaS) engagement model, leader of M. A. Pfister Strategy Group's advisory practice, his numerous National Speaking Tours (in 2017, Mark gave over 80 lectures across the country on Board topics engaging over 14,500+ attendees), articles, monthly newsletters, seminars, consulting engagements, reputation for being *'The Board Architect,'* and his passion for cars – both antique and modern supercars. Mark's 200 MPH+ escapades in his *'4-wheel rockets'* and his U.S. Merchant Marine background as an Engineering Officer, certified to operate ships of unlimited horsepower and unlimited tonnage on any ocean, are just additional unearthed mysteries on my journey with Mark. I personally associated with the *'high-speed thrill'* while reading the first draft of *'Across The Board,'* which I am very flattered Mark asked me to critique. That part was easy... and the napkin notes continued...

Each of us will have particular insights from Mark in *'Across the Board'* that will stop us in our tracks. For me, the simplest *'ah-ha'* moment was the realization that just about all Board topics have been covered in depth in numerous books and articles... except for Board *'foundational architecture'* principles, which have remained untouched, and hence, one of the key original-content aspects of Mark's work. A few of the many additional and personal *'ah-ha'* moments for me included:

- It takes work to build a new Board from scratch, but it takes courage to rebuild an existing one.
- In-person Board attendance is a must. Much of the communication is in body language... completely lost on a squawk box.
- Channeling Roy E. Disney - pick one day to make each and all business decisions in ten seconds, and do it 100% solely based on the company values. Witness what happens!
- Do you have '*generational diversity*' as well as an accurate picture of the '*generational makeup*' of your Board? For example, are you leveraging Generation X's highly-developed revenue generating skills?
- A success formula for founder/entrepreneur CEO-led Boards is to introduce the notion of elevating her or him to Chairperson (only) with stewardship of the entire lifecycle of CEO succession.
- The fascinating history of formal strategy and why it is important for all Board Directors to fully understand how, to-date, only three professions have truly evolved and benefited from its strategic application.
- As a Chairman, am I thinking about '*diversity of thought.*' I'm tempted in my lifetime to try building a Board that, in addition to traditional skill makeup, recruits an '*Analyst,*' a '*Diplomat,*' a '*Sentinel,*' and an '*Explorer.*' How cool.

I hope you, too, enjoy the energetic style that Mark brings to this newest evolution of Board governance insight, as I did. '*Across The Board*' has re-doubled my conviction to doing everything in my power to ensure that as a Director, I am fully committed to bringing the power of the best Board architecture insights to our shareholders - directly through our Boards.

**- Michael K. Lorelli**

Executive Chairman, Rita's Italian Ices  
 President, PepsiCo (twice)  
 Private Equity Operating Partner

