Five Questions with Wahab Yusoff

- Board director at:
  - Energy Market Authority (since 2023)
  - Civil Service College (since 2021)
  - National Arts Council (since 2021)
  - Changi Airport Group (since 2019)
  - EZ-Link (since 2009)
  - Workforce Singapore (2017-2023)
  - NTUC Fairprice (2010-2019)
- Delinea, VP Asia Pacific & Japan (2021-Present)
- Regional roles at Forescout Technologies, Palo Alto Networks, McAfee, EMC, Documentum
- [Wahab Yusoff | LinkedIn](#)

1. What are your general observations from having served on multiple boards? What are the interesting and significant differences amongst these boards?

I had the privilege of serving on a variety of boards. First, the composition of the boards reflects the nature and purpose of the organizations. Some boards are conservative and some are more focused on governance, especially those that are deploying public funds for desired outcomes. Some entities, though Government-owned, are revenue-generating and hence commercial in mindset.

I have to say public bodies focus just as much on innovation as commercial entities. Innovation means financial commitment and risk management. As such, for bodies that are using public funds, there is also serious attention on matters such as compliance, desired outcomes and returns on investment.

2. What are your views on the robustness of debate at board meetings and how can we continue to improve decision-making? How are not-for-profit boards different from commercial boards?

There might have been some 'business-as-usual' in the past. But, in recent years, I have seen more robust debate. Digitalization and the transformation in industry as well as in government have been very disruptive. Boards are addressing a lot of new topics and issues, e.g., metaverse, cyber-security, NFT, etc. Organizations have to confront new business models, such as omni-channels. Board members must put in the effort to learn a

lot of new things. The chairperson has a key role, to initiate good debate. He or she has to pull in insights from each board member.

For some boards, I take a pro-active stance and make time to meet up separately with the chairperson. For most public sector or government-related entities, I noticed very good alignment between the chairperson and the CEO. I also see the power of a strong institution that has built up good processes and tapping good institutional history and best practices.

3. What are the ways for Boards, especially not-for-profit boards, to assess management critically and to ensure the right talent are recruited?

For boards at organizations without profit-maximizing shareholders there is often a focus on the team and succession more than on single 'star' individuals. There is sufficient discussion on manpower and talent issues.

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At not-for-profit boards, we might not get exposed much to second or third line executives. We tend to hold the CEO and CHRO accountable for personnel matters, like attrition. Having said that, there are some organizations with many events or activities, internal or otherwise, where board members can attend and be exposed to management talent.

4. What are your views on diversity and sustainability, and are there new areas that Boards should pay more attention to? How can Boards address these issues effectively?

I do believe in the benefits of diversity. However, given my background, I am very careful that it is true diversity and not tokenism. It should never be at the expense of competence. In other words, we should focus on professional diversity and multi-disciplinary skills. The portfolio of diverse capabilities and experiences should ultimately benefit the organization and ensure its longevity.

5. What are your perspectives on the depth of knowledge regarding Sustainability, Energy Transition or Climate Change within boards? What is more important: consistency of understanding or diversity of views?

Technology is definitely a challenge for many board members. Each board member should take ownership of her or his own exposure to – and understanding of – the current technological trends and developments. Many are not fully aware and boards can do more to help improve the collective understanding. Given my Tech background, I help where I can and I also end up engaging more with Management to gain a better overview of the technology-related issues such as deployment and risk exposure.

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