

## I'm also still here!

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**Most people experience assertiveness at some point in their life, in themselves or in others. Every human being has a deep need to be meaningful, no matter how. A person who is perceived as irrelevant, is by definition not feeling well. The inner need to have effect then increases.**

This obviously depends on the person and situation. Some people always jump queues at the supermarket. Others psychologically and physically actually retreat in case of resistance or tension. There are also people who have a bitter fight for their parents' attention their entire life. Yet others play the boss at work or in the family. This process already starts with children at the playground. As you become older, you learn that it is good to control this assertiveness. This does not mean that it disappears. If things go well then you are not steered blindly by this assertiveness but you know when to assert yourself at the moment it is truly needed. This is not always easy.

A fortiori this also applies to supervisory directors. It is three times as hard on them. A supervisory director who always keeps his mouth shut is not adequate. He will quickly be replaced. Nobody is interested in the undoubtedly extraordinarily important inner thoughts of this person. Namely, they are not surfacing. Hence, this is no good. A board full of alpha males is also disastrous. You neither want that. Secondly, a supervisory director does by definition have a paradoxical duty. He must simultaneously be a sounding board, helpdesk and adviser. He must also remedy an imbalanced situation at the right time. This occasionally requires intervention. This can sour the relationship with the board of directors. Hence, a barrel full of contradictions. Thirdly, the supervisory director is only present occasionally. Even with ten or twelve meetings a year (which is already quite a lot) he is only present at the business a few hours a month. And during those hours it all needs to happen, this triptych of supervision and being an employer and sounding board. That is a fairly small timeframe for such an important interaction of duties. This implies that boards of supervisory directors occasionally show ever more who is 'the boss'. This also applies at the individual level. An individual supervisory director knows all too well that he should not keep his mouth shut the full three hours that the meeting lasts. He needs to make a contribution. This mechanism often leads to disruption of the decision-making. You then have people who always want to share the thoughts that are, in particular, highly important to themselves with others and the group of, usually silent, others who suffice with bringing to the fore that in the minutes a word is wrongly spelled with a 'd' instead of with a 't'.

And then there are the dynamics of the board itself. Before you know it a battle is fought between persons on the board over the head of the board of directors. The business is then the victim. A suggestion is to start dedicating half of the meeting to a conversation about the joint performance in terms of 'I am also still here'. You then discuss whether everybody has sufficient opportunity to express their opinion. You also discuss whether the matters that are discussed are actually important to the business or mostly to the people. You can then agree on arrangements about the subject matters that can be settled quickly (by the chairman) and the items that are still relevant. If you can agree on that then you start operating a whole lot better. And everybody is still there!

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