

Team

Is a Supervisory Board a team? Should a Supervisory Board work on team-building? Is the Supervisory Board a team together with the Executive Board? The last question is easy to answer: no. But the Executive Board and the Supervisory Board do have a joint objective. That is the interest of the business.

They each fulfil their duties and responsibilities in the context of the said objective in their entirely own way. This way is so different that you cannot refer to them together as one team. Hence, they are rather two teams that work together. Is the Supervisory Board itself a team? Yes. Although there are differences with a traditional team. For instance, the members of the Supervisory Board only see each other a few times a year for a couple of hours. That is not very much. Usually they are also very divergent persons with a very different background. Hence, this requires additional attention for team-building.

First of all, there must be question of a shared vision about the approach of the supervision that the Supervisory Board exercises. Roughly speaking, a Supervisory Board can remain distant and mostly fulfil an analytical role or, on the other hand, actually be more involved in the management. It is important that the Supervisory Board periodically discusses the approach of the supervision. Namely, the degree of involvement and intensity of the supervision must be geared to the waters the business finds itself in: in case of doldrums more distance, in case of storms more involvement.

Secondly, it is important that there is a certain degree of agreement between the individual objectives of the supervisory directors and those of the Supervisory Board as a whole. If every supervisory director has his own "agenda" then exercising effective supervision will be very difficult.

In a good team there is, thirdly, question of a clear division of duties and responsibilities. The same applies to a Supervisory Board. The special duties and responsibilities of the chairman are, in general, fairly clear. It is recommended to discuss with each other what specific expectations there are of the various other individuals. Unconsciously they often limit themselves to their specific expertise or background, for instance knowledge of the market or legal or financial knowledge. You can take this much further, for instance by agreeing that certain supervisory directors have a certain, special role in the meeting. For instance, it may be useful to, by rotation, ask one or more supervisory directors to basically always ask critical questions in respect of standpoints that are be taken together. This can help the group considerably in envisioning its own vision and guiding principles more clearly.

Finally, in the fourth place, you must consciously work on the cohesion within the group. Sometimes small groups are created within the Supervisory Board who have ample or actually very little contact with each other. In general this is disastrous for the team-building. It is also disastrous for the ability of the Supervisory Board to perform effectively. It is important to acknowledge that these kinds of small groups will be created. You should feel comfortable bringing this up for discussion and to find ways to break through it. This can, quite simply, be done by occasionally having an informal bite to eat together. You can then arrange a table setting that actually breaks the usual small groups. These kinds of measures may seem childish. Yet they are very effective and necessary to have the members of a team who only see each other a couple of times a year work together more effectively. The involvement of the partners in this kind of dinner is also very good. This often stimulates the cohesion within the Supervisory Board considerably. As long as it is not in Singapore or Bali, this kind of dinner is not a waste of money but an in-depth investment in the team-building.



[Frank Kunneman](#)

VanEps Kunneman VanDoorne
Attorney- at-Law | Partner

T +5999 461 3400 ext. 254

E kunneman@vandoorne.com