

Finding the right scale-up board members

Board matching by ScaleUpNation

Effective scale-up board members

My daughter was a competition skier. Her coach/trainer had deep insights in what it takes to win. She would not only train my daughter on technique but also coach her on commitment, courage and focus. She would be involved on request and provide freedom when needed. She would try to propel my daughter towards success, not protect her from failure. It is the kind of relationship scale-up CEOs would look for in their board members. (Menno van Dijk).

Scale-ups are in a transition from first product to growing sales and services in a broader, international market, they need to build the strategy, organization and network to support exponential growth. At the same time, they need risk management and control, solid financial reporting and compliance with legislation and regulation. For all of this they need a board.

Scale-ups do not just need a supervisory board, they need an effective one. And being an effective board member of a scale-up requires quite a specific skillset and mindset:

It starts with expertise. Effective board members ask powerful questions that help the CEO reflect, synthesize and focus. They have scale-up expertise, which means that they understand the practices that differentiate scaling from stalling. And they know the industry and ideally have privileged access to relevant customers or partners in it.

Effective board members do not jump to conclusions, by adhere to a more reflective style and to a clear decision-making process. They are able to educate the CEO on effective multi-stakeholder management, including over-communication, better anticipation and asking for help. And they provide quantified goals and progress metrics to ensure quantifiable and objective discussions at board meetings.

The scale-up phase is deeply personal and ultimately transformational for the founder/CEO, for the team and for the organization. This means that an effective board member will create a safe, inclusive place, with attentive listening, appreciation of differences of points of view, constructive debate and protection of everyone involved. The scale-up phase is a

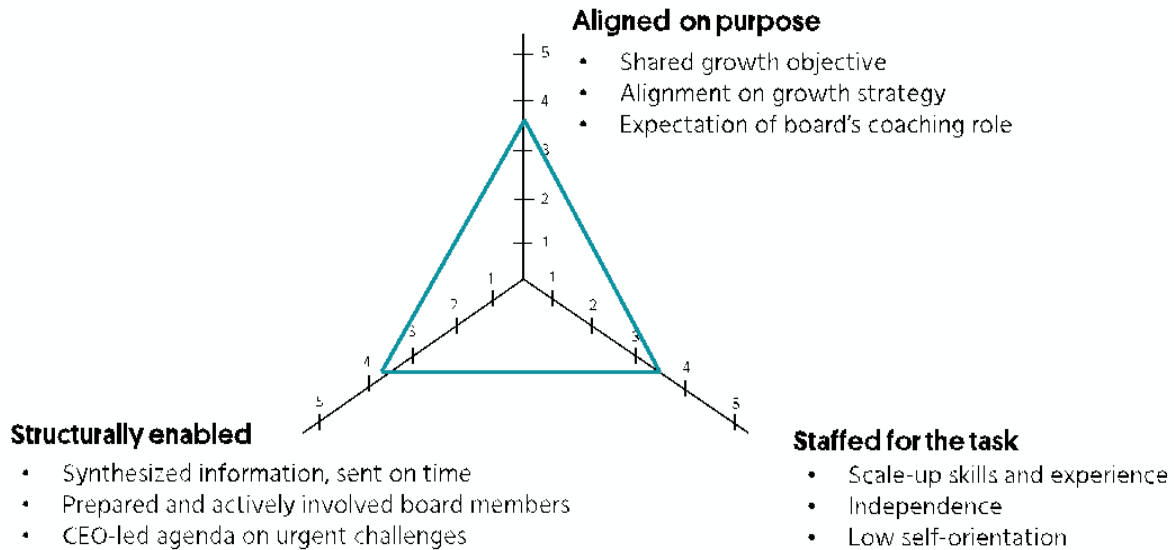
Your founder/CEO is a bit of a stereotype: adventurous, creative, eager to learn, impatient and comfortable to take risk. Open to people, quite informal and preferring respect over power. Very focused on action, execution and speed and very demanding of the team. In the scale-up phase, the distance to the organization increases after the founder has rounded out the management team. To bridge this distance, the founder must become a CEO, shifting from push to pull and from tell to listen mode. Become a better listener, become more patient and more emphatic. It is your role to coach the founder/CEO in this transition and in the new leadership and management roles and in the process be the MT's biggest supporter.

Independence is critical in managing the VC relationship. As the scale-up is getting traction and more people start coming in, everyone wants control and a piece of the cake. For instance, VCs come on board and they require a board seat, which for them might serve primarily as a control mechanism. It is your role to keep the Board focused on overall purpose, on growth and customer success, on delivery, and on building the team and the organization.

Board alignment and chemistry

A board is more than the sum of the parts. Alignment and chemistry are at least as important as the individual competencies. Research on Board effectiveness of scale-ups shows that boards need to be aligned on vision, on strategy and on coachability of the CEO. The chemistry comes from each board member being up-to-speed, with access to well synthesized information, following a CEO-led agenda and engaging in problem solving and opportunity identification.

Effective board



Properly onboarding a new board member and ensuring Board alignment are therefore critical elements of any Board matching process.

Our proposition

To ensure scale-ups have highly effective Boards, we – ScaleUpNation – offer a comprehensive matching service for scale-ups.

The matching service includes:

- Integrating your requirements with the effective board member criteria described above, and achieving consensus on this with CEO and Board;
- Pre-selection of 3 candidates primarily from our own community of certified alumni of our Scale-up Board program, augmented with candidates from our larger network.
- Discussion of each candidate with you before and after the interviews you will conduct;

The professional fees amount to 6000 Euro per match, including expenses, ex VAT. In case, during the process you decide to select a candidate from your own network, we will invoice 50% of the professional fee.

Ways of working

Our ways of working are as follows:

- All parties involved protect the confidentiality of the candidates and their profiles, strengths and vulnerabilities, as well as the business needs and challenges. We will provide a template NDA for all involved.
- ScaleUpNation will do its utmost to properly assess the candidates we pre-select.
- ScaleUpNation is not responsible for the final selection and choice of a candidate. It also not responsible for the conduct and performance of this candidate once in function.
- We will invoice 50% of total fees at the start of the assignment and 50% at the ends. We request to be paid within 3 weeks after sending an invoice.

Next steps

A first step is to contact our Board program Director, Jolanda Holwerda, who leads our Board Matching service, and agree up on an intake call with your CEO and Chair of the Board. In this call we will answer any questions, you can provide a further briefing, and we can agree on the process going forward.

Jolanda's contact details are: Jolanda.holwerda@scaleupnation.com (06-33314077).