

Book it: Best bets for board reading

From a roundup of new books, leadership insights on fundraising, battling fear of failure, coping with 'blurry lines,' avoiding embarrassment ... and some wisdom from the Bard.

A deer in the headlights

*From **Stick Out Your Balance Sheet and Cough** by Gary W. Patterson. Copyright 2009 by the author. Published by Fiscal-Clinic Communications, a division of Fiscal Doctor Inc. (www.fiscaldoctor.com).*

ALTHOUGH PROGRESS has been made to guard against governance scandals, too many board members today are in the dark —sometimes even completely clueless — when it comes to knowing the fundamental facts (read: financial health and profile) of the companies on whose boards they sit.

I'm continually amazed by what board members don't know that will indeed embarrass them if pressed against the wall. My perspective is a twist on the adage, but I believe if you can't see the trees for the forest, you're overlooking fundamental, if not critical, knowledge of your company's business. While the questions below may sound rudi-

mentary — if not rhetorical — depending on your answers, you may be a deer in the headlights just waiting for impact, or at least blushing with embarrassment over poor boardroom performance. You be the judge.

- What is your gut reaction to where the company stands?
- Do you really know the direction in which the company is headed?

- Are you receiving the communication package in a timely manner?
- What is the quality of the communication material you receive?
- Are the financial figures and operational metrics accurate?
- Do you know who your most profitable customers are?
- Is your expertise being utilized to its fullest?

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