



The 6 Attributes of a Highly Effective Board Chair

Who would've thought?

Someone decided to make a TV show that centers around a genuinely nice person — incredibly optimistic about pretty much everything, generous and kind-hearted — and it's a HUGE success.

We're talking [swept the Emmys last week](#) huge.

The show's title character, [Ted Lasso](#), is hired to coach a team for a sport he knows nothing about in a country he's never been to — all in the hopes that he will fail (he's no dope and figures that out pretty quickly).

But does he get angry? Feel duped? Nope.

That's because he is a goldfish. According to Ted, goldfish are the happiest animals on Earth — because they only have a 10-second memory. Goldfish can shake off the bad days without holding a grudge — because they can't remember them.

Ted is our favorite goldfish. He's not just kind, he's complex and he's philosophical. He carries an optimism combined with a keen understanding and curiosity about the people around him.

Plus it turns out that his super power is building teams.

And that is why I think Ted Lasso has [all the makings of an effective board chair](#).... It's true!

Let's talk about why.

6 REASONS TED LASSO WOULD MAKE A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE BOARD CHAIR

1. His Glass Is Always Half Full

Maybe even more than that. He can see the good in everything – in victory, in failing. He has dubbed his core philosophy – “*rom-communism*” – a kind of feel-good path with all kinds of bumps and pitfalls but he knows – he just knows – that everything will

work out in the end. There *will* be a happy ending – maybe not the one you expect – but there will be one.

Ted would love being a board chair. He would bring joy to every interaction. He would both play the hand he was dealt and imagine the possible. His joy for [your mission](#) would be infectious. Board service would be hard but there would be laughs.

2. He Believes

It's one of his mandates for his team: *Believe!*

As a board chair, Ted Lasso would share a deep belief in the power of your organization to have an impact on the world. And he would use his leadership to remind the entire board that this belief – this WHY – will be what will propel them out into the world to be [ambassadors](#) for your work.

3. He Reads People Really Well

You can see it in his interactions with Roy, a famous player who's nearing the end of his career (bad knees) and loves the game (it's in his blood). Ted picks up on the fact that Roy needs a new role that encourages his passion for the sport and fulfills him.

Like a highly effective board chair, Ted knows how to not only connect with his team on a deep level, but also how to tap into the human resources that are available to him. He's able to see that every team member brings something unique to the table.

4. He Appreciates Everyone For Something

You will never hear crickets when you send an email to Ted. That's because after reading your message, he would think about the content and consider how hard you had to work to make it happen. He would respond, not because he doesn't want to hurt your feelings, but because he can put himself in your shoes. That is what would compel him to respond — he appreciates everyone around him.

Closely related, Ted is empathetic in the extreme. And some feel that [empathy is the most important leadership skill of all](#).

5. He Believes Everyone Can Grow

In Ted's world, no one is just who they are. He understands that everyone is on a journey. Everyone is growing in some way. He sees that and ignites it in people.

Just take a look at how he moves Nathan, the team assistant, up the leadership pipeline. Ted doesn't limit his possibilities to being just the waterboy. Ted tosses opportunities towards Nathan to strut his stuff. He appreciates the hell out of him (see #4) and by the end of the first season (#1) Nathan is no longer the water boy — he lands a coaching gig.

6. He Believes In The Power Of Team

Ted has boundless energy. Of course he has his bad days and we see them (his marriage falls apart, he suffers from panic attacks, etc.). But still, he knows that he is not in his life alone. And he knows that everyone has something to contribute. I don't know what lies ahead for Ted, but on the football (that's soccer for you Americans) pitch, Ted is not on any path toward burnout.

He does not take it all on by himself. He sees himself as a joyful orchestra conductor in the business of helping everyone make some pretty great music — no matter what the score (that pun was not intended... well maybe it was).

Okay, so I know it's just a TV show, but Ted Lasso definitely gets my vote for [the ideal board chair](#)... and I have to get the attention of a Board Nominations Committee somehow!!!

CAN YOU FIND YOUR NEXT GREAT BOARD CHAIR?

As you consider who should be your next board chair and Ted is (unfortunately) not in the room, could I encourage you to step away from the tactical “we need to fill X seats by Y date” approach and consider “casting” for a few people who have a little bit of Ted in them? That's how you get an effective board chair.

It's all about teamwork, friends. A nonprofit board is not truly high functioning unless it moves from a collection of individuals to a team. A TEAM. Where board members *really* know one another, their personal value, [their roles and responsibilities](#). Where the work is clear and everyone believes. Where a culture that promotes the joy and privilege of service is front and center all the time.

If you are not there yet, start recruiting with these attributes in mind. Start building a real cohesion among your board members. Fuel your board with inspiring stories of impact.

And then just believe.

P.S. I have heard that Ted will be with AFC Richmond for three seasons so Ted is not likely to solve your current board chair issues. But after season 3, who knows?

YOUR TURN

Is your board chair anything like Ted Lasso? Are there any critical attributes you think he's missing that would make him a more effective board chair? Let us know in the comments!

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