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WHAT'S OFFLINE

Boardroom Types

By PAUL B. BROWN

IT takes all types to run a successful business.

To make sure boards are truly diverse, companies need to take a director's personality into account when they look to add a member or upgrade their performance, two psychologists say in *Directors and Boards*.

Typically, boards "consider an individual's title, industry background and functional expertise," the psychologists, Peter G. Spanberger and Susan M. Jackson, wrote. "They also look to achieve a diversity of gender and ethnicity."

But that, they contend, is not enough to achieve "diversity at its broadest level." A well-functioning board needs a diversity of personalities, they say.

"Highly opinionated, forceful individuals are just as important to the group process as those who are consensus-driven," they write. "Creative risk-takers need to be balanced with cautious, detailed thinkers."

The problem, of course, is if the board makes sure that each personality type is countered by its opposite, nothing may get done, or board members will spend all their time fighting with one another.

The authors concede that, but respond that having these differing personality types is beneficial, if managed properly.

"A creative board member can offer new insights and considerations that may expand the board's thinking," they say. "Another board member can remain cautious and careful and prevent the board from straying too far from important basics."