



Left on a Mountainside

Ed Davidson is at Davos when he hears that his CEO is not naming him president. But Ed knows a nasty secret that could ruin the CEO's reputation—should he use it to try to salvage his career?

by **Julia Kirby**

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Brilliant sunshine and brittle cold snapped Ed Davidson awake as he emerged from Zurich Airport, trailing the limousine driver who moments before had met him at the security checkpoint. After being hermetically sealed in a jumbo jet for hours, focused on a laptop, some analyst reports, his cluttered tray table—nothing more than a few yards away—he shielded his watering eyes. But by the time he reached the car, he was grinning broadly. The skier in him rejoiced at the January air and the prospect of six days in the Alps. He ducked into the backseat, pushing his briefcase ahead of him. He was on his way to Davos.

Not that he would be skiing much. Other than on the scheduled “sports day” on Sunday, participants at the World Economic Forum’s annual conference were facing a packed schedule of sessions, receptions, and dinners. Ed pulled out his conference folder and glanced over the program again. His attention alternated between the scenery outside his window and the people with whom he would soon be mingling. His mother had been awed on the phone the evening before, hearing him rattle off name after name familiar to her from the news and gossip columns. “Eddie,” she’d said, “this is my dream come true for you. I’m pinching myself!” He smiled to recall it, then quickly composed his features. Jutting his jaw slightly forward, he reminded himself that these people were no more than his peers. Soon enough, anyway.

Two hours into the drive, a loud crack by Ed’s right ear jolted him from the doze he had drifted into. He sat up and turned his head toward the noise, only to be thrown off balance as the car accelerated. “Very sorry, sir,” said the driver, catching sight of Ed’s surprised expression in the rearview mirror. “Antiglobalization protesters. We are just a few minutes from the checkpoint.” Ed turned to stare out the back of the car and saw the rock thrower taking aim at another black sedan behind them. Then it occurred to him to look forward. Through the windshield he saw the cluster of black-costumed activists the driver was hoping to blow past.

“Let me get this straight.” Lucy peered at Ed. “David Paterno promised you this position? And now he’s reneging?”

His phone rang. Annoyed at the start it gave him, Ed rooted his phone out of his

briefcase and snapped it open. It was Frank Maugham calling. Normally, this would have been welcome. Frank was CFO and a board member at Carston Waite, and he had been a mentor to Ed for most of the 14 years since Ed joined the company. It wouldn't have been unusual for Frank to call on some routine matter or just to chat; they had become that close. But Ed immediately detected the note of anxiety in Frank's greeting and knew there was something afoot.

"It's a setback, I'm afraid," Frank explained. "David just spoke with me. He asked me to let you know you are not going to be named president of Carston Waite." He paused. "At least not yet. He's planning to make an announcement that he's not appointing anyone for a while." His voice took on a sardonic tone. "He wants to stay close to the business."

Ed's mind was a blank—the news had hit him almost with the force of a physical blow—then he gradually became conscious of the heat rising in his cheeks and forehead. His hand with the phone in it had slipped down from his ear. He jerked it back up when he heard Frank's voice again, saying, "Are you there?"

But now the car was caught up in a swirl of agitated humanity. As the car inched forward, protesters dressed in outrageous costumes and carrying hand-lettered signs pressed toward it, a few getting close enough, despite the efforts of armed Swiss guards, to leer disconcertingly into the windows. Ed could hear their chants through the thick glass. He looked around wildly, then gripped the phone tighter. "Look, Frank. This is a bizarre moment. Can I call you right back? I'm almost at the hotel."

"Yes, absolutely. Get settled in. But first, just know that I have a plan," Frank said. "I'm going to call around to the rest of the board members and see if we can't prevail upon David to change his mind."

"You really think that could work?" Ed tried to focus.

"Who could argue with the wisdom of having a succession plan? And who else but you could the successor be?"

The car lurched forward and passed through a gate in a high chain-link fence. The driver glanced back and raised his eyebrows expectantly. It was time for Ed to produce his passport and conference pass for inspection. "I'll call you," Ed said to Frank and shoved the phone back into his briefcase.

Magic Mountain

Some hours later, realizing he was hungry, Ed quickly shaved, dressed for dinner, and found his way to the Kongress Center, where the inaugural reception was already in high gear. The room was a sea of gesticulating people, chattering in accented English or no English at all. Waiters moved smoothly among them, trays laden with wineglasses and hors d'oeuvres, as a full orchestra played Berlioz. Ed spied a row of white-clothed tables and began working his way toward it.

"Edward Davidson! Well, I'll be damned."

Ed looked toward the voice and was amazed to see his old B-school section mate, Lucy Keh. Lucy had made her millions in a dot-com that went public, then had gone on to found a nonprofit organization. They'd long ago fallen out of touch, but Ed occasionally spotted her name in the news. Now she was breaking away from the group she'd been talking with and coming toward him, her arms extended for a hug.

There was no one like Lucy. Back in school, she'd been brilliant, but she was also the one

who made you feel brilliant. She'd bring homemade brownies to study sessions. She'd read Greek dramas—in the original Greek, no less—to unwind. She'd remember your kid brother's name. She was fiercely loyal.

Almost before he realized what was happening, Ed was outside the ballroom, glass in hand, admitting to Lucy how he had that day been betrayed.

"Let me get this straight." Lucy peered at Ed. "David Paterno promised you this position? And now he's reneging?"

Ed filled in the details. A year ago, Carston Waite's longtime chairman and CEO, Tom Tyrakowski, had announced he was leaving, and a three-way contest among internal candidates for the spot had moved quickly into high gear. The timing wasn't ideal, from Ed's standpoint. A few years later and he might have had a fair shot at the job himself. As it was, he couldn't compete, despite his reputation as a rising star. And neither was Frank in the running.

Already 60, Frank had made his own play for the job many years earlier—and done penance for it. The man who had beat Frank out for the job had promptly exiled him to one of the company's most marginal divisions and left him running it for a good long time before letting him come in from the cold. Frank was a survivor, all right, and at this point he had real influence. He had seen it all, and he knew where the bodies were buried.

Frank also truly believed that Ed should and would run the company someday. That's why he'd cooked up this understanding with David. He and Ed would throw their weight behind his candidacy, and once David got the job, he would grant Frank a seat on the board and make Ed president. Heir apparent.

"So you don't think David would have got the top job if it weren't for you guys backing him?" Lucy had zeroed in on the key question.

"We made the difference," Ed answered, without elaborating. In fact, Frank had made a few downright misrepresentations to the board, making the performance of David's division look better than the other guys'. Lucy didn't need to know that. Ed sipped his wine, then studied it; no bouquet, body, or flavor to speak of. Was it Swiss?

Ed had been wronged before and had felt better than this. But David's rejection cut more deeply.

"What a tragedy," Lucy said. Ed glanced quickly at her face for any sign of irony, but it was all compassion. "I'm so sorry to hear it."

Ed straightened up and looked away. Was it possible he had become an object of pity? A sick feeling came over him, and suddenly he wanted to be far away from Lucy. "Right," he said peremptorily. "But hey, I don't mean to monopolize you. I'm sure—"

"Wait a minute. He's supposed to be here, right? Isn't he on a panel? On corporate social responsibility or something?"

"He was. At the last minute he got hung up in some negotiations. I'm giving his speech on Friday."

Lucy's eyebrows rose slightly. "Interesting. You must be tempted to add a few choice words of your own."

Complex Considerations

Later that night, Ed crunched across the snow past the Hotel Belvedere, an imposing pile installed in the mountain's side. Passing under a lamppost, he paused and, fishing a gloved finger into his coat sleeve, uncovered his watch. He squinted at the swimming numbers. He had had little to eat and too much to drink, to top off his jet lag. He considered calling Frank for an update but quickly realized that made no sense. The business day was just ending, and Frank's plan had been to reach most of the board after hours, at home. In fact, Ed realized, Frank might be on the phone that very minute.

Ed imagined how such a conversation would begin, and a fresh wave of mortification came over him. It wasn't, after all, as simple as betrayal. Ed had been wronged before and had felt better than this; that time, he had at least been able to indulge in some righteous indignation and had come away feeling superior to his rival. But David's rejection cut more deeply than that.

For as close as his relationship had become with Frank, Ed had first been David's protégé. At 26, he had been recruited by Carston Waite for his formidable analytical skills and had quickly impressed his superiors. David, ten years his senior, had spotted him early on, and his work had proved instrumental to some of the biggest deals David put together. The two were very different—David was known as a charming salesman, Ed as an incisive, if somewhat arrogant, quant, but the chemistry worked. David, Ed thought, understood him. In fact, Ed had revealed aspects of himself to David that no one else had been privy to before or since. In the aftermath of this or that celebration of a closed deal, when enough alcohol had flowed for him to claim misinterpretation, if necessary, the next day, Ed had opened up. It had been a heady time.

Even if the two of them had worked less directly together in recent years—David was given a division to run; so was Ed, eventually—Ed retained that sense of connection and only occasionally felt pained by it. It was a source of vulnerability, he knew, but in so many other respects his work was making him invincible. He had developed selling skills of his own, to augment his impressive string of technical innovations. Clients clamored for his time and attention. When he was given a division to run, he was just 38—the youngest in the firm's history—yet he managed to engineer the greatest uptick in profitability among all the divisions that year. He was golden. And at every turn, David—with some call or note—had acknowledged the achievement. Approved of it. Even admired it.

And now this. David knew Ed couldn't cut it.

Ed became conscious of voices and glanced to his right. The group came past laughing, the holograms on their white badges glinting in the lamplight. Ed's lips brushed against the collar of his cashmere coat, damp from the condensation of his breath. How long had he been standing here? He tucked his chin down closer against his neck and turned from the light, as his face crumpled.

Error Apparent

Sitting in a packed room the next afternoon, Ed tried to recall why he had registered for this session out of the many that were running concurrently. The topic was timely enough—corporate governance reform—but the speakers were dull. All were from companies that had instituted new practices, yet all seemed loath to talk about the abuses they were trying to prevent. Platitude after sanctimonious platitude. He wondered about himself: Would I have been so cynical about this a week ago? Or am I still feeling the effects of the sleeping pills?

Ed's phone vibrated in his breast pocket, and he escaped into the hallway.

"It's Frank," said the voice on the other end. Ed closed his eyes to concentrate over the noise of a catering trolley clattering past. "We may be in trouble. David knows about the calls I made last night. And he's calling an emergency board meeting for tonight."

Ed's heart skipped a beat. "*Already?* Wait a minute, who did you get hold of? What's the consensus?"

"I don't know. I needed more time." Frank sounded defeated. "It doesn't look good."

"When is the board meeting happening tonight?" Ed thought about the time difference. "I mean, obviously I want you to call me whenever you get out."

"I would," Frank said. "But I'm not invited."

Choice Words

Ed studied his face in the mirror by the elevator bank as he waited to ride down to breakfast. His left eyelid had been twitching intermittently since he woke up, but he couldn't tell if it was perceptible to others.

He had just emerged from the hotel room he had not left since the day before, since right after Frank's call. It seemed even longer than the 15 hours it had been. The first two of them, easily, had been spent in pure rage. On coming through the door, Ed had been thirsty and had reached for a mineral water. But moments later, catching sight of his face in the mirror, he had hurled the glass bottle at it. What followed was the most sustained string of obscenities Ed had ever given voice to. There was nothing he didn't call David Paterno, no outrageous act the man had not committed.

Later, sitting on the edge of his bed, his hands rubbing his face, he'd remembered Lucy's phrase—"choice words"—with a caustic laugh. *You want choice words? How 'bout those?* And then he'd recalled that she'd been talking about the speech he was to give the next morning: "You must be tempted to add a few choice words of your own."

He had walked over to the desk and pulled out the remarks the communications VP had sent him. "Hypocritical fluff," he'd concluded, as he'd reread the speech. And then he'd reached for his pen. Because, after all, he hadn't been the only one to tell secrets back in those days when he and David were close. How would the Davos crowd react to hearing his boss's real track record on social responsibility?

The idea might have been a vengeful fantasy at first, but it took on a whole new character after Ed, realizing how late the hour had grown, had ordered room service. And when he'd gotten the predawn call from Frank, it had fueled the effort anew.

Frank had been fired, of course. David had accused him of insubordination and gotten the rest of the board to agree that Frank's actions were not compatible with the interests of the business and its shareholders. One of Frank's friends on the board had given him the heads-up right after the meeting ended, to spare him the humiliation of being escorted out by security the next morning.

"Apparently, there was nothing said about you specifically," Frank had offered.

Ed knew what Frank was doing: allowing him to believe that he might still hang on to his own job—and even, as Frank had, continue to advance up the ladder. Suddenly, the old man seemed pathetic to Ed. Taken for granted for years and now thrown out, Frank still

seemed concerned that Carston Waite would lose a valuable employee.

The elevator bell rang. Stepping through the open doors, Ed looked at his watch. Twenty minutes to showtime. A slight queasiness rose in him. But he tucked his speech under his arm and hit the button for the lobby.

HBR Case Commentary

What is Ed about to do?

Four commentators offer expert advice.

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Ed Davidson is obviously angry, but underneath that, he's hurt. He wants to be invincible, but he's actually vulnerable. We see that clearly when he reflects on what has happened: Ed concludes that his CEO, David Paterno, thought he couldn't cut it. That's his own insecurity coming through, and he covers it up with anger and a wish to retaliate, rather than admitting he has these self-doubts.

The vignette with Lucy Keh, Ed's former classmate, gives us further insight into his internal conflicts. He longs to unburden himself, just as early in his career he luxuriated in the sympathy and understanding of others during those drunken late nights. But even though he recognizes and deeply appreciates Lucy's loyalty, he is afraid to show his neediness to her.

Throughout the case, Ed reveals his desire to be shepherded along. To some extent, that's perfectly normal; we all have a dependent side. But here, it feels as though Ed has not worked through it sufficiently. Ed allows CFO Frank Maugham to intervene on his behalf. When Frank proposes a course of action, he goes for it right away. Ed seems to feel that he is as good as fired already, but all he has to go on is Frank's opinion—he's putting too much stock in that. All these are signs of a dependency, of Ed's inability to stand back and make his own assessment. And isn't it interesting that his mother comes into the story? He's 40, but he's still in that realm where he is trying to please his mother and, I would say, he is still looking for a father.

Most people experience their siblings, their fathers, their mothers, on the job. Everybody has transference; the question is, How trapped are they in those patterns?

One of Freud's greatest insights had to do with the phenomenon of transference. People transfer onto current relationships the conflicts and assumptions generated in childhood relationships. They keep assuming that they're in the same constellation of roles and so repeat patterns of behavior. Most people experience their siblings, their fathers, their mothers, and so on, on the job. Everybody has transference; the question is, How trapped are they in those patterns?

If I were to speculate about Ed's childhood, I would guess that he had an adoring mother and problems with his father—he was aloof or in some other way unavailable to Ed. Those circumstances left Ed with a sort of hunger we see played out in his relationships with Frank and David. Obviously, this is a crude assumption based on a few hints, but if

Ed came to me as a patient I would be probing in that area. To help him be better equipped to move beyond these issues, I would try to get at what he was really feeling and get him to be more in touch with his underlying insecurity and vulnerability.

Would I be likely to have that opportunity? You might think that Ed's unwillingness to admit failings would keep him from seeking help. But he looks to others for counsel, and he bonds with older men, so it's not that implausible. If someone Ed trusted said to him, "I know someone you should talk to," he might go along—though he wouldn't if that person said, "Look, you need a shrink." That, I think, is why executives have coaches, not psychiatrists.

As someone who has served in both capacities, I can report that the conversations are the same in a number of respects; the chief difference is that as a coach I focus on work relationships more than on personal ones. But it's more socially acceptable to have a coach. People with coaches aren't admitting weakness. They just need someone to help them get to the top of their form. Ed would probably respond well to a coach.

If Ed's ever going to be a great leader, he will have to reduce his dependence on the opinions of others. Effective leaders aren't constantly looking around and saying, "What will people think?" They need the internal conviction and humility to accept that they don't know all the answers.

Dealing with this setback is a critical test for Ed. If he survives it, he'll become his own man.

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Ed needs to wake up fast! This time, Paterno was right. Frank was a subversive subordinate, pushing Ed's candidacy for his own benefit. Dismissal was appropriate. Ed is not ready to be CEO of Carston Waite or any other company. A vengeful, childish speech will only confirm this to the leaders at Davos.

Ed would fail my CEO assessment in two respects. He's not in charge of the situation or himself. More important, Ed flunks the ethics test.

CEO assessments and top executive coaching have been my sole focus for nearly two decades. Ed would fail my CEO assessment in two respects. For one, he's not in charge of the situation or himself. Frank's in charge; Ed's just being reactive. Protesters distract Ed from an important phone call. The limo driver is more in control than he is. Ed's lack of control and confidence are readily observable. The best leaders project a calm confidence, regardless of their feelings. One of my favorite clients says about himself, "I'm like the duck gliding across the pond. To anyone on the bank, things look serene. But under the surface, I'm paddling like mad."

More important, Ed flunks the ethics test. While Frank actually lied to the board of directors to get Paterno into office, Ed supported the deception. Ed chose badly in an unambiguous example of right versus wrong. CEOs make ethical calls on complex matters constantly. Paterno isn't the best role model, but Ed doesn't recognize his own complicity or responsibility.

One can only hope this will be Ed's wake-up call. He'll do some serious soul-searching

and realize he needs to work on his deficits, starting with his isolationism. Amazingly, he was in his room for 15 hours and didn't talk to anyone, nor did he check online news. He didn't contact Paterno about the governance speech; he didn't make calls to anyone prior to Davos and isn't talking with anyone now. He's not getting information from anyone. CEOs live on information. Ed needs to be communicating constantly—up, down, and sideways. Allies are crucial in a corporation, especially in today's rapidly changing organizations. Ed is naive to rely on just one source, especially one with another agenda.

If caffeine restores his sanity and precludes his divulging corporate secrets, Ed will have to quickly rebuild Paterno's faith in him. His future at Carston Waite can be restored, but it is certainly shaky. If you were Paterno, you would have to question Ed's loyalty and motivations. He switched his allegiance, to Frank, years ago. You were a mentor and supporter, but Ed hasn't maintained contact. You promoted Ed, shared confidences, encouraged him to develop his interpersonal skills, and unofficially designated him your successor. Now you've had to defuse Frank's lobbying of the board on Ed's behalf, hold an emergency board meeting, and fire Frank. The press is calling, but despite the commotion, you haven't heard from the guy!

Ed needs to call Paterno ASAP and try to patch up the relationship, plus develop a backup plan in case he's asked to resign or his future remains tainted. When Ed speaks to Paterno, he should say something like, "Your speech went well, David, and several people sent their regards. I heard you needed to terminate Frank—what happened?"

Ed's tone is important, and it should come across as positive and concerned. Whatever Paterno says, Ed's best move is to respond with something like, "Frank was out-of-bounds. He has always been very positive about you to me, but then again he knows how highly I think of you. How disturbing."

If Paterno asks Ed if Frank told him what had transpired, Ed should not lie. Instead, he should say, "Frank wasn't making much sense, so I called you." Paterno's not likely to believe him, but Ed buys time to prove his allegiance.

Paterno will probably say all the right supportive things, but that shouldn't lull Ed into complacency. He has to improve his contact and relationship with the board as well as develop other essential leadership traits. Insecurity and drive ensured that Ed's work performance is stellar, but a job well done doesn't make him or anyone invincible. These trials are frequently the impetus individuals need in order to change. It is a pivotal time for Ed—either for success or failure. Leaders play the hand they're dealt—and Ed's not playing this hand well. But he could.

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As Ed Davidson walks onto the stage at Davos, he needs to realize that his problem may be more with CFO Frank Maugham than with CEO David Paterno. Ed is a highly capable manager who had been the company's youngest division head. And if Ed didn't have leadership skills, he would not be positioned as David's heir apparent. In fact, he likely would not even be at Davos. Even so, Ed has a reputation as an arrogant quant, and he passively allows Frank to try an end run around David to the board.

**Executives need to see situations for what they are, and
Ed sorely needs a flash of insight before he reaches the
podium.**

Actually, Ed may yet become CEO one day. All we really hear to the contrary is that David is delaying the appointment of a successor. And David may well have good reasons to "stay close to the business"; perhaps he canceled his Davos trip because he's negotiating some colossal deal that really will require him to stay close. Ed was David's protégé once, and though they may not have worked together continuously over the years, they go back a long time. Moreover, David has consistently acknowledged, even admired, Ed's skills and accomplishments. Ed has always been a bit wary of David, but even now there is no clear evidence of hostile competition.

Since Ed does not know what is actually going on in David's mind, he may be mistaken about what he perceives as David's betrayal. He has information only from Frank, who presents the news in a distinctly pessimistic way. Frank is a manipulative sort, someone who gains leverage by knowing where the bodies are buried and by misrepresenting and selectively presenting information. Since Frank failed to become the company's CEO a decade earlier, he has tried to achieve surrogate success—first as the kingmaker who supported David in his bid to become CEO (while gaining a board seat himself), and now as a promoter of Ed's candidacy. This has allowed Frank a sense of control over the company from behind the scenes. In his latest maneuverings, though, he tries to act as a de facto CEO and thus gets himself fired.

While Frank favors Ed on a rational level, he has mixed feelings because of his own thwarted ambitions to become CEO. For instance, he may be bitter that Ed is now the heir apparent chosen to stand in for David on the world stage. Successful corporations clearly thrive on internal competition, but not when hostile or dishonest competitors respond to perceived threats by undermining others or the firm. In this case, Frank feels threatened by Ed, and so he fuels Ed's wariness about David. Frank's actions could undermine not only Ed's relationships but also his performance at Davos. I find that these complex kinds of emotional rivalry are common and destructive in far too many organizations.

For instance, I know of a company where a senior executive tried to take credit for a talented subordinate's accomplishments. Happily, this was a good and successful organization, and its culture did not permit such behavior. As a result, the subordinate felt comfortable speaking up about the situation. Top managers talked with the executive to remedy the problem, and they looked to head off recurrences of the issue by addressing its underlying causes.

Good companies try to create a supportive organizational culture for their employees. Rather than promote executive coaching, some encourage senior executives to seek psychiatric consultation. It wouldn't be surprising if anxiety or depression contributed to Frank's problematic behavior. Executives need to see situations for what they are, and Ed sorely needs a flash of insight before he reaches the podium. Even as he struggles to contain his misplaced anger, Ed probably won't undermine David or himself. The speech could be Ed's opportunity to take a leadership high road that even David would

appreciate. Ed could make the point that corporate social responsibility outside begins with true responsibility inside. That means that corporations must be profitable, well governed, concerned about all employees, and have a strong and ethical culture. A speech like that might go over well in Davos. And if it led to some forthright conversation back in the States, it would help Ed renew his ties to the company's directors and CEO.

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The seeds of Ed's problem were sown early on, in Carston Waite's seriously flawed approach to CEO succession. What do we know about it? For one thing, it featured a three-way horse race. The current CEO, David Paterno, was able to win his position only because he could assemble a faction of powerful internal people to back him. In other words, it was a political process, not one designed for the good of the business. David's own decision not to name Ed his successor tells us that succession planning at this company is driven by the CEO, not the board. That's just not the way to ensure good succession decisions.

Horse races for the top office are, of course, not uncommon. The most famous one in recent history was General Electric's, to fill Jack Welch's shoes. That contest produced a strong leader, but it was at the expense of Bob Nardelli's and Jim McNerney's talents, as they both left for greener pastures. The fallout can be even worse, because horse races heighten the politics when every attempt should be made to minimize them. And that contributes to a broader politicization of the organization.

If Ed wants to stay, he shouldn't try to save his job with some subversive move. He should give the speech unaltered, return home, and concentrate on doing the best work he can do.

It would, of course, be asking too much to demand that politics be eliminated. Companies are full of politicians; it's part of the human condition. But no one could deny that the choice of a successor should be made purely on the basis of who will effectively generate shareholder returns, not according to who was promised what by whom. I'm a firm believer that if you continually remind yourself of an aspiration, it will begin to influence the reality. But such aspirations haven't even occurred to anyone at Carston Waite. Not once in the case study is the question of shareholder value raised. And, not surprisingly, not one of the characters in it is admirable.

To deal with the threat of selfish, political behavior in management ranks, investors increasingly recognize they must have truly objective boards made up of long-term shareholders. Nothing about boards makes them apolitical per se—board members are people, too. So, to make good decisions, they must be sure their commitment is to the enterprise, not to its current management. Under those circumstances, a CFO like Frank Maugham would not be appointed to the board. Here, however, the problem plays out in an odd way because Frank is antimanagement. Typically, the danger is that board insiders will mimic management too closely.

All this underscores the importance of having boards manage the succession process. (For more on this, see the National Association of Corporate Directors' 1998 *Report of the NACD Blue Ribbon Commission on CEO Succession*, which persuasively argues the

point.) But companies that have CEO-dominated boards also traditionally have a CEO-dominated succession process.

Does this mean that Ed's career at Carston Waite is over? Possibly. But if Ed wants to stay, he shouldn't try to save his job with some subversive move. His challenge, instead, is to rise above the politics. He should give the speech unaltered, return home, and concentrate on doing the best work he can do.

Lots of people make mistakes, yet they go on to succeed. Ed's mistake here is playing politics. And his way out is to play business. Ed could become a CEO. But if Ed continues to value self-preservation or self-promotion over the enterprise, he can kiss his career there good-bye.

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