Introduction

The questionnaire covers 4 themes Alignment, Ambition, Mobilization and Execution. Each theme follows a similar and simple structure of questions. Each theme takes 8-12 minutes to cover. Our focus is HOW a CEO should or could work to achieve success.

0. Which year did you start as CEO? (Let the CEO select if several applicable CEO jobs).

**2020: Been with 2 PE owners.**

Theme 1 – Alignment & Governance

Alignment

1. Please describe the 2 most important actions performed by the owner representatives that contributed to successful trust & alignment between the owner representatives and you as CEO (alignment regarding critical objectives, business plan and way of working together)?

**1: Openness on their part. 2: Structure in terms leadership on their side; they did not bypass the CEO or play the owner card.**

2. Please provide 2 specific suggestions for how the owner representatives could have acted to even further strengthen trust & alignment between the owner representatives and you as CEO?

**1: A little closer contact in the beginning.**

3. Imagine that you responded to the following question 6 months into your CEO assignment – how do you score the degree of trust & alignment between the owner representatives and you as CEO regarding critical objectives, business plan and way of working together – on a 10 grade scale where “3” is poor, “5” is ok and “7” is good?

**10.**

4. If score <7, Which 2 key factors explain the score?

5. Which 3 key factors or actions would have improved the score to 9?

Competence

6. Please describe the 2 most important contributions by the owner representatives on the theme of business-critical knowledge & competence (in the shape of competencies, methods, people etc.)?

**1: Financial competence, access to financial sources, knowledge about structuring the financing 2: They surprisingly good market knowledge.**

7. Please provide 2 specific suggestions for how the owner representatives could have made even stronger contributions on the theme of business-critical knowledge & competence?

**Perfect**

8. Imagine you responded to the following question 12 months into your CEO assignment – how do you score the contribution of business-critical knowledge & competence from owner representatives on a 10 grade scale where “3” is poor, “5” is ok and “7” is good?

**10.**

9. If score <7, Which 2 key factors explain the score?

10. Which 3 key factors or actions would have improved the score to 9?

Governance

11. Please describe the 2 most important contributions by the owner representatives to ensure an effective governance model, i.e. for performance management of the company and its business plan?

**1: They did not do anything specific besides have a formal board and rules & regulations which I consider normal.**

12. Please provide 2 specific suggestions for how the owner representatives could have made even stronger contributions to ensure an effective governance model?

**1: Clearer on were they epact to be involved in decisions and where I could make decisions; it was fluffy in the beginning.**

13. Imagine you responded to the following question 12 months into your CEO assignment – how effective is the overall governance model on a 10 grade scale where “3” is poor, “5” is ok and “7” is good?

**7**

14. If score <7, Which 2 key factors explain the score?

15. Which 3 key factors or actions would have improved the score to 9?

**1: Sat down with the owner to set up a clear mandate and responsibilities.**

Theme 2 – Ambitions & Priorities

16. In your first business plan as CEO of the private equity owned company – what is your view of the overall ambition level regarding financial & strategic targets?

(i) Too low targets

(ii) Somewhat too low targets

(iii) Targets at the right level

(iv) Targets were somewhat over-ambitious

**(v) Targets were clearly over-ambitious**

17a. Please provide short motivation to your answer in question 16?

**We were struggling with them because we did not have the financing required to execute on them. We had to continuously explain to the banks why we were behind and the board meetings were difficult as they expected much higher results.**

17b. Roughly, what was the target for EBIT increase for the first 3 years in the business plan?

**I cannot recall that. This is basically the start up so it was tremendously high.**

18. Please describe the 2 most important success factors regarding the process of developing the financial & strategic ambition level of the business plan?

**1: Detailed operational targets**

19. Please provide 2 specific suggestions for how the development of the ambition level could have been improved further?

**1: We were too slow in the process**

20. In your first business plan as CEO of the private equity owned company – what is your view on the number of key initiatives defined in the business plan?

(i) Too few key initiatives

(ii) Well balanced number of key initiatives

(iii) Somewhat too many key initiatives

**(iv) Too many key initiatives**

21. Why did you end up with too few or too many key initiatives (depending on answer in q20)

**It was overambitious simply. That is one of the new learnings that we have brought with the new equity fund; that we do not need so many initiatives as a small organization**.

22. What were the implications of too few or too many key initiatives (depending on answer in q20)

**1: You do not do any of them good enough.2: Furthermore, the organization becomes confused because they do not know where to focus.**

23. How many “mission-critical” initiatives (or key themes / focus areas) were part of your first business plan?

(i) 1-2 mission critical initiatives

**(ii) 3-5 mission critical initiatives (3,4)**

(iii) 5-7 mission critical initiatives

(iv) 8-10 mission critical initiatives

(v) 10 - 15 mission critical initiatives

(vi) >15 mission critical initiatives (200+ initiatives, 10 for each clinic)

24. Which were the 2 most important success factors to ensure a clear priority of the “mission-critical” initiatives in the business plan?

**1: Insight into hard data (numbers) and soft data (from staff) regarding what are the value-creating initiatives 2: Board-level discussions.**

25. Please provide 2 specific suggestions for how the process of achieving a clear priority of the key initiatives could have been even better?

**1: The process was ok but it took too long to get started. 2: Be willing to ditch the initiatives that you do not think will work so not to waste your time. 3: Implement a running evaluation, every 14 days, in order to check if a valuation is worthwhile; use in an especially rapid changing environment.**

26. How what you rate your first business plan on a 10 grade scale with regards to ambition level *and* clear prioritization of key initiatives? where “3” is poor, “5” is ok and “7” is good

**5:**

27. If score <7, Which 2 key factors explain the score?

**Simply too long, too complex, and too ambitious. It was made to sell instead of meant to be executed on.**

28. Which 3 key factors or actions would have improved the score to a strong 8 or 9?

**1: A little more realism; let people know that this case was made to show people and the banks that this was an interesting case for them. 2: Letting bank know that we needed more time to execute on the plan. 3: Do not make business plan too complex.**

Theme 3 – People & Mobilization

29. In which ways did you secure strong organizational ownership for the business plan´s objectives and key initiatives – describe the 2 most important actions?

**1: Involvement from all areas in the organization 2: Constant follow up 3: Openness**

30. Please provide 2 specific suggestions for how you and the top management team could have ensured an even stronger organizational ownership for the business plan initiatives?

**1: Would have been very helpful if we had simplified the business plan to 2,3 pages.**

31. Imagine you responded to the following question 12-18 months into your CEO assignment – How strong is the overall ownership for the business plan´s objectives and key initiatives among the top 10% of management – please score on a 10 grade scale where “3” is poor, “5” is ok and “7” is good?

**10**

32. Which 3 key factors or actions would have improved the score to a strong 8 or 9?

33. Imagine you responded to the following question 12-18 months into your CEO assignment – How strong is the overall organizational ownership for the business plan´s objectives and key initiatives – please score on a 10-grade scale where “3” is poor, “5” is ok and “7” is good?

**8**

34. Which 3 key factors or actions would have improved the score to a strong 8 or 9?

35. After 12-18 months into your CEO assignment; to what degree did you have your “dream-team” - i.e. the right person in the right place regarding the 5% highest managerial positions?

(i) The right person in the right place for >90 % for the 5% highest managerial positions

(ii) The right person in the right place for 80-90 %

(iii) The right person in the right place for 70-80 %

(iv) The right person in the right place for 60-70 %

(v) The right person in the right place for 50-60%

**(vi) The right person in the right place for <50 % for the 5% highest managerial positions**

36. How could you have acted to better or faster ensure the right person in the right place for the top 5% managerial positions – top 2 suggestions?

**1: A little more aware of the fact that personnel will need to change as the company changes: and being more upfront with people about this fact.**

Theme 4 – Implementation & Results

37. How did you secure speed & pace in the development and execution of the business plan – please describe the 2 most important factors or actions?

**1: Constant follow in order to ensure that people are involved, they know what to do, and keep the focus on the right things. 2: Balance activities with resources in order to achieve the activities.**

38. What could you have done even better to secure speed & pace in the development and execution of the business plan - top 2 suggestions?

**1: Pick the right initiatives and quickly ditch the ones that are not working because you do not have time to fix them when you are a new company.**

39. You get this question 18 months into your CEO assignment – How strong is the speed & pace in the execution of the business plan; please score on a 10 grade scale where “3” is poor, “5” is ok and “7” is good?

**9**

40. If score <7, Which 2 key factors explain the score?

41. Which 3 key factors or actions would have improved the score to a strong 8 or 9?

42. In which ways did you secure the organization’s success in implementing the mission-critical initiatives in the business plan– please describe the 2 most important factors or actions?

**Same as the prior question.**

43. What could you have done differently to enable even stronger organizational success in implementing the business plan - top 2 suggestions?

**1: You can always do more in informing and following up on people**.

44. You get the following question 18 months into your CEO assignment – How do you score the implementation success of the business plan’s key initiatives; please score on a 10 grade scale where “3” is poor, “5” is ok and “7” is good?

**6,5**

45. If score <7, Which 2 key factors explain the score?

**We were not open and structured**

46. Which 3 key factors or actions would have improved the score to a strong 8 or 9?

**1: As CEO you should acknowledge that you should spend a higher percentage of your time communicating and talking about the strategy. But it is difficult in a startup because you’re constantly having to make decisions about something new.**

47. Which were the top 2-4 mission-critical initiatives in the business plan to drive absolute EBIT growth – select from the following (read all of them quickly 1-2 times)?

**1: Growth via acquisitions 2: Operational excellence 3: Organic growth**

48. During your last year as CEO prior to the COVID -19 crisis – what was the annual organic EBIT growth?

**(i) Double digit % positive organic EBIT growth**

(ii) Single digit % positive organic EBIT growth

(iii) Flat / zero organic EBIT growth

(iv) Negative organic EBIT growth

49. If you could do your CEO journey all over again from day 1 – what would you have done slightly or entirely differently to ensure an even better success – 2 specific examples?

**1: I would have boiled down the strategy plan from 150 pages to 5 pages; only focus on the initiatives that will work 2: I would have used much more time in communicating the strategic plan and getting people to understand the plan.**

50. Lastly, our conversation has covered best practices and lessons learnt in order to succeed as a CEO in a private equity context – on that theme – which are your top 3 specific advice to an incoming CEO who is new to the private equity context?

**1: Don’t take the job haha! I do not think it is much difference between working in a family owned or a PE company. I have heard that PE owners are number strict and have a 100% number focus but I do not feel that at all. 2: Let the PE fund get involved in the business with their ideas and advices; do not overprotect yourself. A lot of PE funds have a lot of operational expertise. I tried to involve my chairman board as much as possible so they’re no surprises. 3: Do not defend yourself; be open to criticism. 4: Let them apply the competencies they have. The hardest part is actually prioritizing what competencies of theirs that we should use. 5: Get in front of the numbers; everything is easier when you are over-performing on the numbers that you have agreed to.**