Conversations about Bold Change

Given the complex nature of strategy in healthcare today, we have several concerns that shape **bold conversations about bold change**. These concerns derive from dealing with big challenges that are often not readily and clearly addressed with *strategic questions* and *strategic arguments.* In addition, these conversations about bold change require a clear understanding of issues and options. We need to tackle concerns that shape strategy direction, integration, and execution. Bold change is the product of making great choices in dynamic areas, under uncertain conditions, with the capacity for making things happen. *Bold ideas need some work to become good choices.*

Strategic Conversations That Are Proof-Tested, Stress-Tested, and Ready-Tested

One practical and proven way to build-out strategic conversations that drive significant change is to frame guiding questions and cogent arguments around five principal themes:

Enterprise Challenges?	*Near Term and Long Term*
Strategic Agenda?	*Direction, Integration, Execution*
Structure and Talent?	*Organization and Talent as a System*
Cultural Agenda?	*Foundations and Expressions*
Continuous Evolution?	*Perspectives and Adaptation*
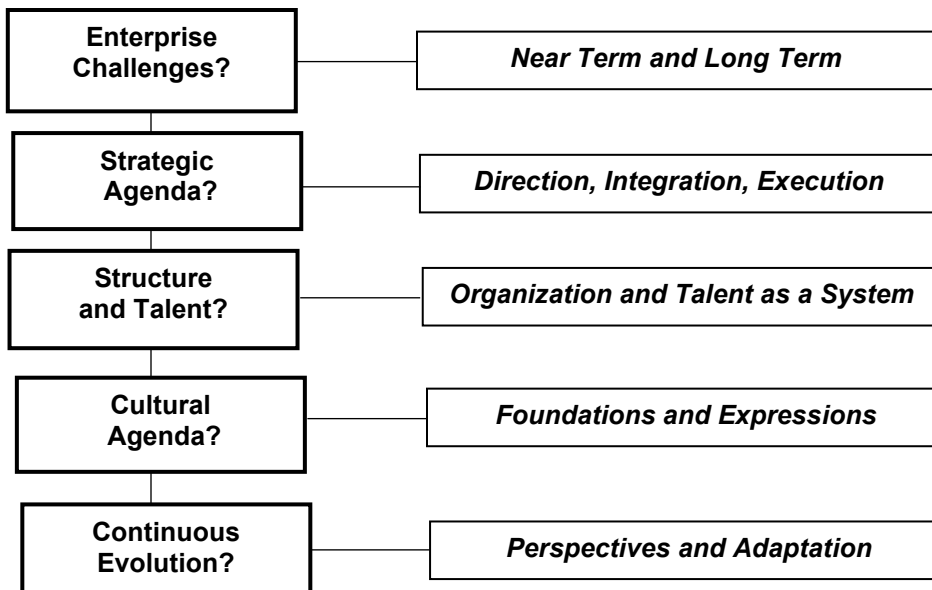
This approach invites serious exploration, consideration, and articulation of strategic options for change, performance, and growth. How do we engage board conversations that are effective and generative? With good information and insights, with personal trust, energy, and the power of collegial discourse. With the collective board's focus on **the whole of the strategic agenda.**

Friction, Arguments, and Exchanges in the Boardroom

Bold change is often disruptive and loaded with assumptions, concerns, and game plan risks. The context for boardroom conversations about bold change is typically charged-up with differences of perspective, cultural effects, available information, and the influence of arguments

for and about a specific avenue of change. Board leaders and executive teams should expect some level of friction, with different arguments and positions and some energized exchanges. Otherwise, we might think that bold change in healthcare today is a simple and relatively easy adventure.

Finding the Trust, Energy, and Power for Conversations about Bold Change

Effective governance reflects the competence, relationships, and confidence in the boardroom. The *work to be done* with regard to bold change stretches the planning and decision-making zones of play for most hospital and health system boards. Here we look at three ideas that are important, and perhaps essential, across the most powerful conversations about bold change:

- **Friction**: There is a lot of friction with the match of strategy, culture, resources, and structure in the work of bold change. By its very nature, bold change forces organizations out of sync with established norms.
- **Arguments**: Making a case for bold change involves reason and logic, emotional positions, intentions, perspectives, and often plenty of conflict. Arguments, examples, and influence play valuable roles in the process.
- **Exchanges**: Serious conversations about bold change are not one-night stands. They tend to be discovery-driven, imperative-driven exchanges convened by people to cultivate better, smarter, value-added decisions.

Questions to consider include:

- Are board members open to influence?
- Are board members equipped with insights about the subject matter of bold change and the organization's capacity for directing, integrating, and executing bold change?
- Are board members confident in their understanding of the consequences of specific bold change options—and the strategic impact of moving forward, or not?

The work to be done with bold change requires a level of *psychological security* and *conversational maturity.* Further, our friends in the field of organization development strongly suggest that balancing the better aspects of friction, arguments, and exchanges is part of the value-add of boards in a world where bold change matters, now more than ever.

This pre-read is a preview of what is to come in Session 3 where we will dive deeper into these governance strategies and leave you with a blueprint for navigating bold change.