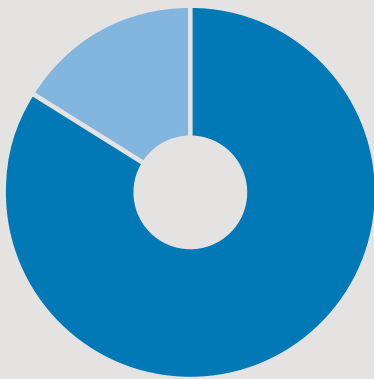


A higher profile

Do you set yourself personal development targets in addition to those mandated by your company?



84%: yes
16%: no

With poor economic conditions still putting pressure on the resources available to business, we asked the *Chartered Secretary/ CSS* survey group how they have adapted their skill set in response to the recent recession.

Respondents have certainly not been sitting on their laurels; 70 per cent said they have acquired new professional capabilities over the last two years in order to make themselves more employable, or indeed to bolster their position against the recession more broadly. Furthermore, 84 per cent said they set themselves personal development targets in addition to those set by their company. This may suggest that individuals do not feel the development opportunities offered to them

by their employer are sufficient. However, that may not be the case; 61 per cent of respondents felt that their employer invests effectively in providing training and other professional development opportunities.

Looking specifically at the role of the company secretary in the context of the recession, 50 per cent of respondents felt the role adds the most commercial value through its governance remit, while 32 per cent saw it adding value through a broader, business-focused remit. In line with that viewpoint, 45 per cent of respondents saw the commercial advantage that a company secretary offers as centred on strategy, and 28 per cent saw it as being provided through work carried out on company restructuring; 25 per cent felt there were other areas to consider outside those specified by our questions, highlighting the broad remit of the role.

We asked the survey group for its thoughts on what the most important aspect of company secretarial work and practice will be in the future. The answers were broad ranging and informative. The most commonly held vision of the company secretary of the future

was as the person who sets and steers the governance agenda in an organisation, and who has a strategic role in the business as a whole. There was a feeling that governance should be seen as something which adds value to a business, rather than simply existing as a compliance cost.

There was another interesting angle taken in the responses, which emphasised softer skills as being core to the company secretary of the future. One respondent saw the future company secretary as 'the conscience of the company', another suggested that '70 per cent of the job is psychology; facilitating the board is critical.' One respondent stated that the company secretary should seek to become 'the chef de cabinet to the chairman and a 'wise friend' to all directors'. Indeed, all were in agreement that now is the time for company secretaries to step forward into a more influential position, to 'demonstrate that they are not just back office' or 'to get out of this 'admin' rut'. Perhaps, as one respondent suggested, the future of the company secretary is as a 'junior board director'... are you up for the challenge?



Conducted in association with **Company Secretarial Services**

If you're a company secretary of a leading UK business, and you'd like to take part in or comment on future surveys, e-mail Caroline Evans at cje@bft.co.uk.