

About HSSMI

HSSMI conducts industrial research aimed at improving the efficiency of British manufacturers. It brings together industry leaders, end users, supply chain partners, SMEs and universities into collaborative projects to foster innovation. Investors include the British Government and Ford Motor Company with Loughborough University also being a key stakeholder.

About First Flight

Specialists in providing Non-Exec Directors who add real value.

Largest active Non Exec candidate database with 160 successful Non Exec projects completed.

Aim to understand the skills and personalities on the Boards of our clients to enable us to provide candidates who will fill missing skill gaps and provide the right personalities to balance the Board.



Chris Spencer-Phillips
MD, First Flight

As an organisation funded by the Government, Ford and Loughborough University, the High Speed Sustainable Manufacturing Institute (HSSMI) is a unique research organisation. Not surprisingly, its requirements for a Chairman were also unique: an international engineering background; experience of leading a high-volume manufacturing organisation; excellent strategic planning and influencing skills; and the ability to provide the strong governance, internal controls and systems needed to satisfy the government's auditing and reporting process.

Bill Williams, acting Chairman of the recently formed HSSMI and CEO of CEME - The Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence - introduced Chris Spencer-Phillips, the Managing Director of First Flight, to HSSMI's Nominations committee. On being awarded the assignment, Chris clarified the brief then used First Flight's unique database of 7,000 high-calibre Non Execs, powerful online advertising and specialist search to identify a long list of suitable candidates. These were graded on a score card devised by First Flight to measure competency suitability, then interviewed to determine the cultural fit. Finally a shortlist of outstanding candidates was introduced to the client - and one, David Anderson, was appointed as Chair, just six weeks after the brief had been agreed.

David was previously Managing Director of QinetiQ Ltd, overseeing its transition from being part of the MoD. He had also been CEO and President of QinetiQ Inc in the US. His leadership style was part of what impressed First Flight and HSSMI.

David said: "The key to being a successful NED is to fully understand different viewpoints and dynamics, find the common ground and create a stable, balanced Board. It is all about taking people through a process, opening their vision and gently guiding them down new routes, gaining buy-in along the way. A Non-Exec Director or Chairman shouldn't be dictatorial". David added "My experience of working with First Flight was entirely positive. I was impressed with the regular updates and communications and complimented Chris Spencer-Phillips on his attention to detail and the thoroughness with which the First Flight team handled the project".

Bill Williams said: "I have used several London headhunters in the past to find Chairmen and Non Execs. First Flight had an efficient process and produced a very strong shortlist that exceeded my own and the Nominations Committee's expectations. They also provided a more comprehensive service than the London Search firms that we had previously used."



David Anderson
Chairman, HSSMI

"First Flight was less expensive than the more traditional headhunters and provided HSSMI with an excellent Chairman. I would certainly recommend them."

Bill Williams, HSSMI