

EXPERT RESOURCE PROFILE – JOHN O’NEILL AO

“A circuit breaker will shift culture... make these tough decisions early.”



John O’Neill has created success running three major organisations in banking and in international sports, where mass entertainment and board community participation are essential.

Between 1987 and 1995, John was the Managing Director of the State Bank of New South Wales. During this time, John introduced innovative home lending that changed the Australian market, and pushed the successful sale of the Bank to get its ownership into the private sector. His legacy saw First State Funds Management within the State Bank, become one of the best high performing fund managers; subsequently now still with the Commonwealth Bank Group as Colonial First State.

Appointed CEO of Australian Rugby Union (ARU) in 1994, over eight years, John transformed the sport in Australia from one run by amateurs, to one with genuine professional management. In doing so, he established practices that other top Rugby nations sought to emulate, establishing Australia as an international Rugby power and for much of his tenure, the Wallabies were clearly the best team in the world. The ARU transformed from being financially bereft to achieving strong commercial revenue and assets.

In 2004, John joined Football Federation Australia (FFA). In his three years leading the FFA, John established the very successful A-League, and took the Socceroos to the 2006 FIFA World Cup for the first time in over 30 years, whilst rapidly growing FFA revenue to make the organisation more sustainable. The first year of the A-League saw the competition average over 10000 per game and the grand final sold out at Aussie Stadium in Sydney. Under John’s leadership, Australia moved into the Asian Football Confederation, transforming the ethos and image of Football in Australia and abroad.

With the success of the FFA, John reunited with the ARU in 2007 as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer to restore the fortunes of Rugby in Australia. 2007 also saw John accept the invitation of the Premier of New South Wales to conduct a review of three important areas of concern to the NSW Government – events, strategy and exhibition space. All recommendations were implemented with a further invitation for John to hold the position of inaugural Chairman of Events New South Wales, which he did until 2010.

John has held non-executive directorships on a number of public company boards. He was a director of Tabcorp Holdings Ltd, Amalgamated Holdings Ltd and of Echo Entertainment Group Ltd.

He was appointed Chair of the Echo Entertainment Group in 2012 and currently holds this position.

John resides in Sydney with his wife and three sons and enjoys Rugby, golf and Australian politics.

Why 2020 Exchange

John has an outstanding feel for consumer markets and consumer response, second to none.

There are common elements exemplified in John’s leadership that are synergistic with the 2020 philosophy. Namely, challenging the status quo, by looking at something like banking and sport; which on the outside seem polar opposites, but by using strategic thinking and good judgement, transforming both businesses, focusing effort and engaging staff in a vision.



Qualifications

Diploma of Law

Foundation Fellow of Australian Institute of Company Directors

Awards

Australian Sports Medal 2000

Sport Executive of The Year 2003

Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) 2004

French decoration of Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur 2005

Published works

It's Only a Game: A Life in Sport, Random House Australia, 2007