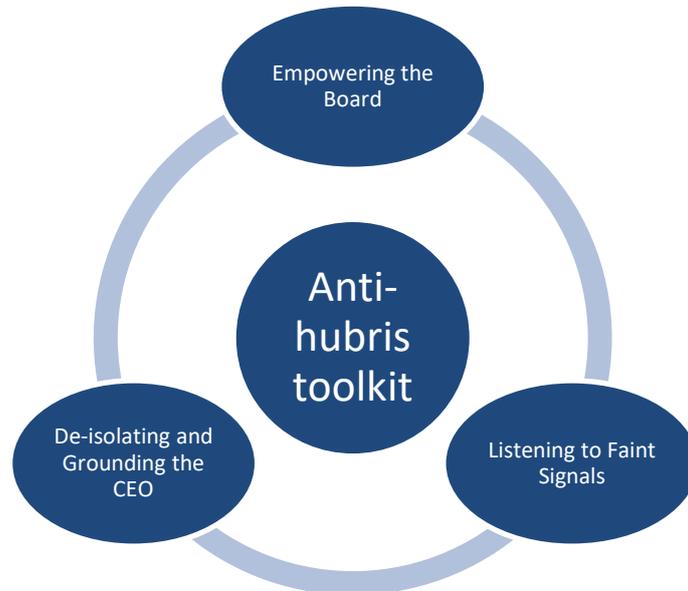


# DEVELOPING AN ANTI-HUBRIS TOOLKIT

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Surrey Business School's 'The Hubris Project'—in collaboration with a wider network of senior practitioners who share our aims—have co-produced proposals for three 'tools' for the management and mitigation of hubris in business organizations. The three tools are: 'Empowering the Board'; 'Listening to Faint Signals'; 'De-isolating and Grounding the CEO'.



**Tool #1: Empowering the Board:** focusing *solely* on the individual hubrist is potentially a mistake because in any organization there's a collective accountability for the emergence, management and mitigation of the leader's hubris. This tool is based on the principle that managing and mitigating hubris will only be achieved through: (a) joint accountability to all stakeholders, not only shareholders; (b) clear-cut, unimpeachable rules for communication and decision making; (c) respect—rather than contempt—for internal and external peer commentary; (d) an authentic buy-in to self-regulatory mechanisms.

**Tool #2: Listening to Faint Signals:** A nuanced approach for spotting emergent or extant hubristic leadership might involve picking-up on faint, 'bottom-up' signals. Tools for garnering and making sense of the messy, unstructured data to be found in anecdotes, jokes, gossip, stories, and artefacts present a potentially powerful system for picking up on emergence of hubris.

**Tool #3: De-isolating and Grounding the CEO:** It's important to put in place mechanisms that can help to de-isolate CEOs and, where necessary give them the reality check that can bring them back down to Earth. Comparing themselves to other CEOs is likely to have a healthy buffering effect on inflated self-evaluation along with: (a) opportunities for candid and informal inter-CEO exchange and feedback; (b) a role for the 'confidant', 'alter ego', 'toe holder', or even 'organizational fool' who is loyal, trustworthy and capable but also immune to sycophancy and is prepared to resist, contest and protest.

We believe that 'empowering', 'listening' and 'grounding' provide solid foundations for mitigating the emergence of hubris before its damaging effects can take hold. For more information on each of the tools please contact: Dr Graham Robinson or Professor Eugene Sadler-Smith, The Hubris Project, Surrey Business School, University of Surrey, Guildford, GU2 7XH. Emails:

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