



# YOUR EXECUTIVE GUIDE TO JOINING A BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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## INTRODUCTION

Following the 2008 global financial crisis, enormous attention has been focused on companies' boards. Boards act as a visible symbol of the corporation that they're a part of and work to advance the objectives of the organization.

First and foremost, boards improve and promote an organization by providing direction for the organization through a fiduciary duty to protect and grow the organization's assets, as well as to advance the vision, mission and goals of the organization. A board does not exclusively benefit the corporation but its own members as well. Outside of financial benefits, boards offer opportunities for individuals to grow their network, strengthen their personal brand and gain new perspectives.

Investors today have an increased interest in boards and their composition. They expect boards to maximize effectiveness through meaningful processes and board member refreshment. Because of the desire for board refreshment, we are seeing now more than ever, an increased number of board seats available for first-time directors. And as boards seek greater diversity in both background and thought it can be expected that these new director roles will be filled by women and minorities, as well as executives outside of the C-Suite with new industry knowledge.

Boards look for a balanced portfolio of expertise. It is no longer solely about who you know, but what competencies and skillset you can provide. Boards are looking for new members to have skills that reflect the company's needs to compete in today's global economy and fill in any gaps in the operating team; In today's age of digitization, organizations are looking for tech savvy individuals that understand the digital marketplace and can manage cybersecurity. Because of the unique goals and strategy each organization has, it is critical for executives to be aware of what expertise they bring to the table and how they add value to a board.

We have developed this Executive Guide to Joining a Board of Directors to help today's executive-level professionals learn how to best position themselves to land a first-time board seat. This guide is intended to help the reader optimize their entire board search process by discerning the right type of board for their skillset, understanding what to expect from the process, glean insider knowledge from recruiters and career coaches to hone their networking skills and optimize career docs, and thriving once they get that board seat.

If you have always viewed obtaining a board role as something you are saving for the end of your career, it may be time to reassess your goals. As boards seek greater diversity in thought, we are seeing a trend toward adding executives that are currently active in operating roles. The most desirable candidates are more and more frequently younger leaders who understand today's business climate and the latest technology and market disruptors.

# 01

# Reasons to Join A Board

**W**hile executives know board positions are great professional opportunities, many still shy away from adding one to their career plan because they find the strenuous selection process daunting or worry about the time commitment of serving on a board. These are fair considerations, but the challenges are well outweighed by the experiences and professional growth it can provide. As you decide whether a board role is right for you, consider the following benefits serving on a Board of Directors will give you.

## EXPAND YOUR NETWORK



Most people who are on boards get there because they enjoy networking and have a strong professional circle that afforded them a board opportunity. When you serve on a board with leaders who are passionate about making new connections, you will be able to expand your existing community of friends and colleagues, adding influential people with different backgrounds and insights. This new network can be an asset for the rest of your career when you are looking for new executive jobs, additional board roles, or simply to swap ideas with someone who has a different outlook than you.

## GROW YOUR PERSONAL BRAND



Outside of optimizing your LinkedIn profile, joining a board is the best thing you can do to boost your executive brand. It is an impressive addition which adds gravitas to any resume, CV, or LinkedIn profile. A board role also shows other executives and thought leaders in your industry that you are a front runner in your field and well-equipped to help shape the future of an organization. The additional exposure will have a positive impact on your visibility to executive search consultants and further assist them in understanding your unique value when sourcing potential board candidates.

## SUPPORT INITIATIVES THAT RESONATE WITH YOU



Many individuals join a board as a way to give back. Non-profit boards can provide an excellent opportunity to positively affect change or support organizations working towards a cause they are passionate about. Small private boards offer the chance to provide your specific knowledge or expertise to the organization to really make a difference to the company's operation. Whether you are helping to hone the focus of an organization currently working toward an initiative that resonates with you or supporting one that is just beginning their efforts to achieve a goal that aligns with your passions, serving on a board can be a uniquely rewarding experience.

## SUPPLEMENT YOUR INCOME



While income and compensation should never be the key motivator in joining a board, we would be remiss in not saying it is a factor to be considered. Serving on a public or private equity board can serve as a side hustle for those looking to augment their income. Look at a board income as an annuity that increases your personal income when you are working and a way to replace the income from your W2 with a 1099 as a complement to your retirement savings and benefits when you are retired.





## INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE



For leaders who are always curious to learn more things, board duties will provide a rewarding intellectual challenge. If the board serves a different industry than your specialty, you will need to become well-versed on the sector and its competitive landscape in order to make informed contributions. Because the duties of board directors are dramatically different than those of operating roles, you will have to learn to look at organizations in a more holistic manner and develop a deeper understanding of a breadth of topics ranging from mergers and acquisitions, market growth campaigns and technological adaptations.

## MAKES YOU BETTER AT YOUR CURRENT JOB



As a board director, you will gain insight into a new company which probably has a different structure and way of doing business than yours. The other board members will also be from various industries and roles, some of which you may not typically work with. The deviation from your norm will teach you new ways of operating and how different organizations and industries approach situations. Simply listening to others in your meetings will provide you cross-functional information on ways to approach problems and find new solutions. Those takeaways can not only help you during your time on the board, but as you continue in your executive career.

## BAD REASONS TO JOIN A BOARD

Bearing those great benefits in mind, joining a board still may not be right for every executive. If you are only looking to join a board solely for one of the following reasons, you may want to reassess if a board position is really the most effective way to achieve your goal:

### PEER PRESSURE

Executives can have lengthy and successful careers even if they don't sit on a board. Don't join a board simply because your colleagues are starting to serve on them. If you don't have your own personal interest in obtaining a board seat, you probably won't put in the necessary effort or enjoy the experience.

### ECONOMIC PROFIT

Compensation should never be the primary motivation for seeking a board seat. While large public firms offer substantial compensation packages to board members, many positions offer only minor compensation or in the case of non-profit, ask you to contribute.

### PRESTIGE

If you are interested in joining a board solely due to the perceived prominence it provides you, it may not be worth the recognition it provides in the long term. Being a board director requires a lot of time and energy. It is a job with ethical, legal and fiduciary duties that can't be taken lightly.

# 02 Types of Boards of Directors

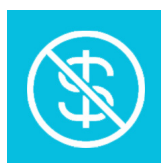
One of the first decisions executives must make as part of the board search process is what type of board they are looking to join. Each type of board provides its own unique experience with different responsibilities, size, time commitments and culture. Learn a little about each to find the one that best aligns with what you hope to achieve.



## PUBLIC

**SIZE:** 8-11  
**TERM:** 8.5 years  
**FOCUS:** Evaluate and approve corporate strategy, assist in identifying changes in the competitive landscape and assess the organization's leadership

As you begin your board search it is likely that your goal is to get a position on a public board. Public board seats are considered highly prestigious and a sign of career success. While public boards are given the power to make important decisions, they also face the highest level of regulation relative to other types of boards. They are required to adhere to laws and the demands of shareholders. On many public boards, members may hold operating roles in the company, however some do not allow this in order to avoid a conflict of interest and get a better outside perspective from the board. Public boards also favor mandatory retirement age policies over term limits, making the average tenure of a board member longer for public boards. In terms of the recruitment process, a public board keeps the process very quiet. You may not know that you are being considered until you are contacted by the company or an executive search firm. Public board positions are generally the most difficult to land due to a small amount of positions available and the fierce competition for those that are. They are also competitive because their compensation level is the highest of all boards, with a global average of over \$285,000 annually.



## NON-PROFIT

**SIZE:** Up to 30  
**TERM:** 2-5 years  
**FOCUS:** Provide governance oversight, facilitate operational and technical support, and generate revenue through event planning and fundraising

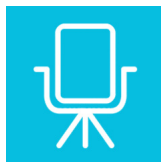
One of the best ways to get an introduction to board service is by joining a non-profit board, such as those for fine arts organizations, NGOs and foundations. While non-profit boards can find themselves subject to public review they have less legal restrictions than those of public boards. Most non-profit boards are relatively large which is great for increasing your network, but the size can lead to decreased efficiency. Non-profit board members are often expected to make large donations themselves to further the organization. Non-profit boards can be a great way to get first hand board experience and potentially help you obtain another board position in the future. Non-profit board members are the most likely to serve on additional boards; nearly three-fourths of non-profit board members serve on multiple boards. Compared to the closed-door recruitment process seen with public boards, the recruitment process for non-profit boards is generally more transparent and follows more of a traditional interview process.



## PRIVATE EQUITY

**SIZE:** 6 (average)  
**TERM:** 3-6 years  
**FOCUS:** A finite goal, typically preparing the organization to be publicly traded or to be acquired by a different organization

The structure of a private equity board is the same as a corporate board, but with shorter tenures. They follow the idea that tomorrow means today and next month really means next week so being able to work quickly and effectively is a must. Private equity boards require that members be able to quickly adapt and are driven by results. Initially, private equity boards usually consist of investment professionals who sponsored the company, the CEO and other operating professionals from within the organization. Over time the board usually grows to include independent directors with operational, industry and governance experience. Regarding compensation, private equity board members often receive less than public board members, but it's usually supplemented by equity in the company which can lead to higher compensation in the long-run. Private equity board members are often asked to provide their own investment in the company as well.

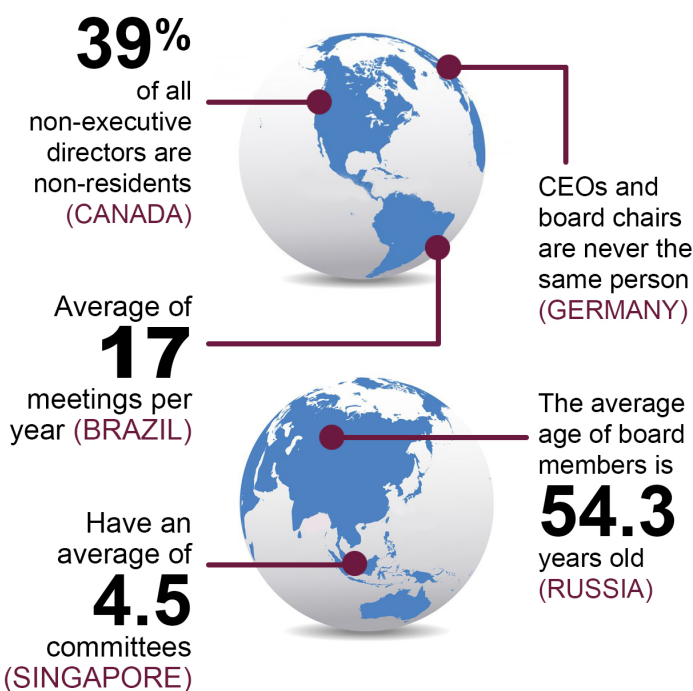


## PRIVATE BOARDS

**SIZE:** 9 (average)  
**TERM:** 3-6 years  
**FOCUS:** Improving risk management, and assessing new opportunities, challenges and corporate strategy

Private corporations are usually family-owned with boards slightly smaller than public ones and fewer independent directors. Some private organizations choose to have advisory boards instead of a board of directors, which are usually more informal and made up of individuals selected by the management. The company can use its own discretion in the information that they provide to the board and are not bound by Sarbanes-Oxley in the U.S. Private boards are typically more agile and able to focus on long-term strategy because they do not have investors to report to. Because family-owned businesses can be small with unique challenges and family dynamics, board members have to learn how to be a coach, mentor and sometimes even a mediator, especially when dealing with more sensitive issues such as succession planning and the dividend policy. While compensation is usually one half to one third of what it would be on a comparative public board, they also usually have a lower time commitment.

## Boards Around the World



See Acknowledgments on page 23.





# 03 Top Ten Ways to Leverage & Build Your Network

**W**hen a board is looking for a new director, often the first place they look for candidates is through a personal connection, then through an executive search firm. If you are not connected with recruiters and on the radar of those serving on or working with boards, finding a board seat will be an uphill battle.

It is best to have a strong network in place before you need to use it to find roles. And when we say a strong network, we don't simply mean the size of the network. It is best to focus on making meaningful connections with people that you enjoy staying in touch with, to make professional relationships that last and support both people. Here are our top ten tips for strengthening your current professional relationships and expanding your network for a more successful board director role search.

1

#### LOOK AT YOUR EXISTING NETWORK

Before making new contacts, look at your current circle. Be sure you keep in touch and sustain meaningful relationships with them before you try developing a larger professional circle.

2

#### TAKE STOCK OF PLACES YOU CAN FIND CONNECTIONS

Start by looking at networking opportunities with groups you're already a part of, such as alumni networks, industry groups, and volunteering events.

3

#### BE STRATEGIC

It is not possible for you to build a relationship with every introduction or person you meet. Instead, focus on people with capabilities, backgrounds, and character traits that are similar to yours or ones you hope to develop.

4

#### HAVE CONNECTIONS IN ACCOUNTING AND LEGAL FIELDS

If a board can't fill positions with those in their immediate network, they will often ask their accounting firm and attorneys if they have any recommendations for candidates.

5

#### KEEP YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE UP TO DATE

The first thing your connections, recruiters and organizations will check when your name comes up as a potential candidate is your LinkedIn profile, so make sure it is fully optimized.

6

#### BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH RECRUITERS

Executive recruiters like networking with leaders who could be great candidates or can introduce them to other potential candidates for searches, so start developing career-long relationships with them now.

7

#### DON'T UNDERVALUE IN-PERSON MEETINGS AND CALLS

Everyone enjoys the ease of networking online, but taking the time to meet with people in person or catching up over the phone is the best way to forge strong relationships.

8

#### CONSIDER JOINING BOARD ORGANIZATIONS

Joining organizations like NACD (National Association of Corporate Directors) and WCD (Women Corporate Directors) is a great way to connect with like-minded leaders and potential mentors.

9

#### TELL PEOPLE YOU'RE LOOKING

Your connections probably won't think of you as a recommendation for a board role if they don't know you're interested. Make sure those likely to be asked, like CEOs or board members in your circle, know that you're looking for a board seat.

10

#### RETURN THE FAVOR

It is important to lift others as you climb up the ladder of success. Don't forget to support those in your network and in their social circles as much as you ask for help yourself.





## READY TO GET THAT BOARD POSITION?

As you've learned throughout this guide, the best way to ensure your success during a board role search is to have a comprehensive set of career tools that will place you ahead of your competition, maximizing your unique skillset and unparalleled experience.

That's why BlueSteps created the Complete Board-Ready Package, containing everything you need to enhance your board candidate strategy, including:

- A FULLY-OPTIMIZED BOARD-SPECIFIC RESUME (optimizing your existing executive resume to focus on board opportunities)
- A BOARD-FOCUSED LINKEDIN PROFILE (vital for networking and catching the eye of recruiters)
- A UNIQUE BOARD BIO (to succinctly convey your value and leadership fit)
- FOUR INTENSIVE COACHING SESSIONS (including a board-readiness diagnostic, interview preparation and more)

All BlueSteps Board Advisors have extensive experience in a range of board environments and geographies, are currently serving on boards of directors, and have assisted hundreds of BlueSteps members in achieving their board goals already.

Purchase this package with the code **GUIDE500**  
to start today and receive a \$500 discount.  
Please contact Lisa Marsh at [lmash@aesc.org](mailto:lmash@aesc.org).

# 04

## The Executive Search Process for Board Roles

Looking for insider information? Here is a behind the scenes look at the executive search process and advice on how to stand out from AESC executive search consultants.

How can a board candidate best present themselves to get noticed by executive recruiters in today's marketplace?

- Executive recruiters are always looking for candidate suggestions for active search assignments. Be helpful. Return calls and suggest possible candidates. You will become known as a "helpful go-to person" and build a relationship with the partner(s).
- Executive recruiters are often connected with the Institute of Corporate Directors. Attend network events and galas. The same goes for directors education events put on by major accounting and law firms, Deloitte is a leader in this area—and network when you're there!
- Update your board bio annually (experience and functional skills) and circulate to partners of top executive search firms with whom you have built a relationship.
- Ask your friendly recruiter what else you should do to be considered for board roles.
- Remember "you are known by the company you keep." If you are on a tier III or dysfunctional board, don't expect to receive an offer to join a tier I board. Select each board position wisely.
- Recruiters become aware of top performers on a board and those that are dysfunctional. What is your reputation? This is weighted heavily if you are considered for other board positions.

Can you give any insight into the shortlisting and selection process for board roles?

- Reputation, experience and performance are everything when recruiters are making their decision.
- You may have been considered for a board role without knowing it. Board members most often do not like to be in a competition for a board role and then be rejected. Your experience, skills and attributes may have been discussed with a client without you knowing it. Only when the client is open to meeting you will you be made aware of the opportunity—and then it is most often about fit with the board.

# The Executive Search Process

## 1 HIRING ORGANIZATION'S EXPECTATIONS

The hiring organization reviews details of engagement letter including scope of services, timetable, fees, expenses, cancellation policy, and any restrictions or off-limit situations. Together, they agree on search strategy including target companies, candidate strategies and diversity goals. The hiring organization and executive recruiters discuss their ideal communication approach, priorities and expectations.

## 2 CORPORATE CULTURE AND CANDIDATE PROFILE

An executive search firm will take the time to thoroughly understand the board, its culture, the long-term and short-term strategies of the organization, and how the board helps to drive them. They will discuss key competitors and understand customer strategies as well as organization structure and current make-up of the board. After this assessment, the recruiting team develops the candidate profile considering responsibilities and cultural sensitivities and agree on search strategy.

## 3 THE SEARCH

After confirmation of the targets and search strategy from the hiring organization, thorough candidate research is done by the consultant or the firm's research staff. Throughout the process verbal and written reports on the progress, including scope of the research and feedback from the marketplace are given to the hiring organization. Types of research done include: targeted competitor market mapping, digital research, and sourcing calls.

## 4 CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT

In this iterative and open process, the executive search firm tests potential candidates against the preliminary requirements. They conduct preliminary interviews for high-level assessment, followed by a more comprehensive assessment with the high potential candidates. Written reports and evaluations prior to interviews are given to the hiring organization. In-depth personal interviews by the search consultant, verification of credentials, and an assessment of the individual's strengths and weaknesses with respect to how they would complement the rest of the board are also given.



## 7 ONBOARDING

The executive recruiter partners with the company and selected candidate after the start date to assist integration of the candidate into the new board role and the board's environment. This often includes meeting with the leadership team and other members of the board to better understand the dynamics of the board and get any pertinent information to prepare for the first board meeting.

## 6 NEGOTIATING TO A "YES"

The hiring organization selects their preferred candidate. While the executive recruiter provides insights and opinions, it is ultimately the decision of the company. The candidate is then contacted and active participation in the final negotiations between both parties ensure that the organization and candidate both have the best opportunity for success. These negotiations vary depending upon the type of board and include things like the amount of equity for the board member in private equity board negotiations.

## 5 BACKGROUND AND REFERENCE CHECKS

Prior to final selection, comprehensive reference checks for all the top candidates are done by the executive recruiting team. They work with the client to make sure they cover any immediate or potential issues or legal conflicts with in-depth background checks for lead candidate(s) to help to ensure "no surprises."



# 05

## What Recruiters Look for in Board Candidates

**W**ith so few board roles available each year, the first and most critical step is increasing your visibility and highlighting the skills that showcase you're ready for board service. While every organization has its unique qualifications for board members and skills required, there are a few common skills that make a board member successful. Here are the traits you need to highlight to stand out in the sea of executives vying for a board position:

### TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS



Boards are looking to recruit individuals who have experience and a proven track record of success. In the past, experience was equated to length of time in a certain field. While they prefer those with at least 20 years of experience, more and more recruiters are seeking candidates who can demonstrate they have successfully dealt with problems and added value throughout their career. Recruiters are looking for someone to help the company reach their goals whether it's a younger company seeking a board member with experience implementing rapid growth plans or a mature organization in need of audit experience. Regardless of your experience level, if you can demonstrate your past ability to achieve success you will show yourself as a valuable candidate.

### STRATEGIC THINKING



The ability to think strategically is a must on any board. Board members who can understand complex issues and make clear, objective decisions that aid the company in navigating new situations and an evolving business landscape. A recruiter wants to see that you can make sound decisions under the pressure of competing agendas. Further, the board is often responsible for advising the operating team in making management decisions, so being able to view a problem from all sides is crucial. One AESC member executive recruiter recommends candidates "demonstrate their mental agility to look at the same issues from a variety of views. A candidate has to demonstrate an ability to actively listen and interpret the views of others and connect the dots to deliver an opinion based on a more complete panorama of perspectives."

### CULTURE FIT



The ability to fit into the culture and community of the company is one of the most important aspects of being on a board. Nothing builds up an organization better than a strong culture. Recruiters try to find candidates whose values and interests align with those of the company. As a candidate, you need to be able to connect with the mission of the company in order to serve it and help them stay true to it as they grow. But remember, you cannot try to force fit and a recruiter will be able to tell if you are not being genuine. In the end, it is best to be honest to who you are as an executive when presenting yourself for a board seat in order to find the best opportunity for you in the long run.



## TEAM PLAYER



Boards follow the age old saying, ‘there is no I in team.’ Recruiters want you to show that you are the type of leader who is willing to put aside differences and work as a unit with the other board members to best serve the organization. While they want leaders that will ask the tough questions and engage in important debates, it is crucial to have a group of board members who listen as often as they speak and actively learn from each other. Being able to display your aptitude at working with a team, especially under difficult conditions, will show the recruiter that you will be able to work with the other members and stay focused on the issues facing the organization as opposed to getting distracted by personal gains.

## ENGAGEMENT



With more and more board members remaining actively employed while serving on a board, companies want to ensure that you can give the necessary time and attention. Consider your current commitments to make sure that you will be able to balance everything before you start looking for a board position. And because of the long tenure of most board members, recruiters want candidates who will stay engaged for the long haul. You will also need to take into consideration any future obligations, both personal and professional. On your career documents, highlight activities and work responsibilities that were time commitments and long-term initiatives that you led.

## Survey Results from AESC Recruiters

We surveyed executive recruiters from some of today’s top executive search firms and asked what the top traits and competencies are that they look for in potential board candidates.

### Top 3 Traits



STRATEGIC



ADAPTABLE



EMOTIONALLY  
INTELLIGENT

### Top 3 Competencies



FINANCIAL  
LITERACY



DIGITAL  
FLUENCY



COMMUNICATION  
SKILLS

# 06

# Increasing Diversity on Boards

As society places more importance on diversity, organizations and their boards are following suit. More and more organizations are trying to create diverse boards that question the norm, provide new viewpoints and are reflective of their target market. Boards with diverse members are more successful and better able to handle difficult problems faced by the organization. To truly capture different perspectives, boards are looking for candidates who are representative of all different types of people:



## RACE

The importance of minority directors has been a focus of boards in recent years. In the last five years, the number of minority directors has almost doubled and have brought fresh perspectives to the boardroom.

Boards prepare to continue this trend with over two-thirds of boards actively looking to recruit minority candidates.



## GENDER

Along with racial diversity, boards are focused on having more board seats filled by female directors. In 2017, almost half of all first-time directors were female. The number of female executives and particularly C-Suite level executives has increased drastically over the last ten years and boards are following suit by nominating more and more female directors. Recently, a law has been implemented in the state of California in the US requiring publicly traded companies to have at least one woman on their board by the end of 2019.



## EXPERTISE

Boards are always in need of individuals with financial and legal acumen and those who can fill in any gaps in the company's operating team. But they are looking for different types of expertise to help round out the board and meet new demands on the organization such as social media presence and cybersecurity.



## BACKGROUND

Historically, boards have been made up of similar people who too often come from the same network. Organizations are slowly beginning to add people from different backgrounds and experience to help find new, creative solutions to problems and better understand how a wider variety of people will respond to changes made by the organization.

For more boards, this need for diversity extends into a desire for diversity in thought. Want to show that you can look at the organization from a new vantage point? Here are some of the best ways to do that according to AESC member executive search consultants:

“Specific examples of accomplishments, experience of having served on many top tier boards, improved corporate performance under their leadership, and recognition by peers.”

“Global expertise and experience. Breadth of situational experience.”

“With Critical thinking and with a high-level of mental processing capability to always question and to bring out the less obvious perspectives to the table.”

“Highlight a breadth of management responsibilities and demonstrated ability to pivot from one scenario/sector to another.”



# ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN YOUR EXECUTIVE CAREER?

BlueSteps, the career management service of the Association of Executive Search and Leadership Consultants (AESC), provides executives with best-in-class career management solutions to assist them in planning their career, tracking their goals, and increasing their visibility to AESC member executive search firms in 70+ countries.

## BLUESTEPS GUIDES YOU THROUGH:

### EXECUTIVE JOB SEARCHES

Explore hundreds of executive jobs worldwide across industries and functions, many of which are exclusively shared with us by executive recruiters.

### CAREER ADVISING

Work one-on-one with our professional career coaches and resume writers to optimize your career documents, develop your personal brand, prepare for interviews and more.

### EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

BlueSteps profiles are visible to 9,000+ executive recruiters who use BlueSteps every day to find candidates. You can also research and connect with recruiters to grow your network.

### CAREER MANAGEMENT

Stay prepared for whatever opportunities lie ahead with our educational resources like webinars, guides, and exclusive reports and our MyGoals achievement tracker.



# 07 How to Optimize Your Resume/ CV for Your Board Search

**Y**ou would never set out on a camping trip without the proper gear: a tent, hiking boots, food and water. You should approach your board search the same way. You have to make sure that your career documents are ready for the journey ahead. To help you optimize your resume/CV and LinkedIn we asked BlueSteps Executive Career Services Advisors **Mike Lorelli** and **Dave Moran**, who both specialize in board searches, how candidates can prepare their career documents to put their best foot forward in their board search.

See page 9 for more information on BlueSteps Board Services.

## A Q&A WITH BLUESTEPS CAREER ADVISORS



### HOW IS A BOARD FOCUSED RESUME DIFFERENT THAN A TYPICAL EXECUTIVE RESUME?

**DM:** An executive resume is purely historic. A board focused resume should be forward looking, showing how capabilities can be applied to the future challenges the candidate may face.

**ML:** A typical executive resume talks about how many dragons the candidate has slayed, i.e. how much they reduced expenditures by or how many departments they eliminated. A board resume should discuss softer qualities such as their coaching achievements and their mentoring experience.



### SHOULD A CANDIDATE HIGHLIGHT DIFFERENT POSITIONS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, SPECIFIC SKILLS/CERTIFICATIONS, ETC. ON THEIR RESUME?

**DM:** A candidate should always try to differentiate themselves with the outcomes they have delivered, particularly in the difficult global economy. Simply listing skills is not enough, skills are too generic. But outcomes give the candidate definition and definition is key.

**ML:** As previously mentioned, make sure to highlight specific achievements that demonstrate the softer qualities you possess such as coaching accomplishments or success working on a difficult team. These are the traits that will be the most beneficial on a board so if you can showcase these skills early you will start your search in a good position.



### MOST PEOPLE THAT ARE LOOKING FOR BOARD SEATS HAVE HAD LONG CAREERS, WHAT SHOULD/SHOULDN'T THEY INCLUDE ON THEIR RESUME?

**DM:** They should include all elements of their career that form part of the sales pitch they are making for a board role. Any information that is not related to their board sales pitch should be discarded, it is simply noise and distracts the reader away from the board pitch.

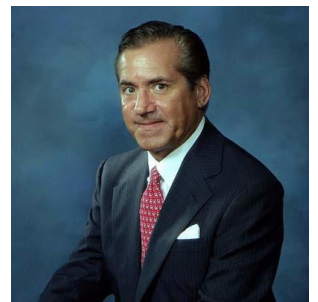
**ML:** Talk about your entire career but make sure your resume isn't too long. It should be no longer than two pages. And you want to be sure that you are highlighting the parts of your career that will be most relevant to board service.



### ARE DIFFERENT TRAITS NEEDED FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF BOARDS?

**DM:** Not really. The overall goal is the same for all kinds of boards, to prove and demonstrate capability.

**ML:** There isn't any big difference between the different kinds of boards, but candidates need to be aware what skills any type of board is looking for. I always recommend that candidates create their own skills map, which is a diagram that figures out what skills the board needs to be successful. Plug in the skills of the existing board members and identify the gaps, then find which gaps you can fill.



**Mike Lorelli**  
BlueSteps Executive Career  
Services Advisor



### HOW SHOULD SOMEONE INTERESTED IN A BOARD POSITION WRITE THEIR LINKEDIN PROFILE?

**DM:** LinkedIn is a chance to talk to the reader whereas a resume talks at them. They can use LinkedIn to support and augment their resume with additional information. Further, because there is no size constraint on a LinkedIn profile the writer can extemporize in the intro section and outline their interests and desires. LinkedIn profiles give the reader the opportunity to learn more about the candidate on a personal level.



**Dave Moran**  
BlueSteps Executive Career  
Services Advisor



### ANY ADDITIONAL INSIGHT YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT FOR A CANDIDATE TO KNOW?

**ML:** Having credentials is a huge plus; go through the governance training from a credible institution. Having the education about governance will give the candidate a huge leg up compared to those that have no training. Also, it's never too early to start the board search process, I always tell the people I coach that they should look to join their first board by 40. It doesn't matter what kind of board, public, non-profit, private, but having board experience of any kind will only help them as they go forward in their board careers.



# 08

## Preparing Your LinkedIn for the Board Search

**B**efore you look for any position, whether it be a new job or a board role, you need to make sure that your LinkedIn profile perfectly demonstrates who you are as an executive and exudes your personal brand. Luckily, you can easily do this by staying active on the platform and making consistent updates to highlight your latest achievement. Here is one of our favorite articles from the BlueSteps Career Insider blog on easy, effective changes you can do to leverage LinkedIn as a powerful board search tool.



### 5-MINUTE HACKS TO BOOST YOUR EXECUTIVE LINKEDIN PROFILE

As more senior-level executives are becoming active LinkedIn users, including a reported 80% of CEOs, recruiters are also tapping into LinkedIn's potential when researching new executive candidates for their searches. But with such time-demanding jobs, what can executives do to optimize their LinkedIn profiles to increase their visibility to search consultants?

There are many simple alterations that can be made to your LinkedIn profile that can have a considerable impact on your searchability to recruiters and only take a matter of minutes to achieve. Here are our top 6 LinkedIn hacks for busy executives:



#### OPTIMIZE YOUR NAME

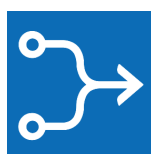
As simple as it may sound, your name can have a significant effect on your ability to be found online by recruiters. To strengthen your personal brand and make yourself more identifiable by those who are searching for you, you should ensure that you are using a consistent name across all professional platforms.

It's important to make a decision as to whether you will be using your full name, an abbreviated version, middle names, or even middle initial. This is particularly worthwhile to think about if you have a common name.



#### TARGETED HEADLINE

Your LinkedIn profile headline should be more targeted towards search by employing words that center around your career goals speciality and unique value proposition. The overall headline should encapsulate your career goals or your aspirational job title.



#### STREAMLINE AND FACT-FILL YOUR SUMMARY

Your summary can be instrumental in encouraging people to reach out to you with possible executive opportunities. Spend time in streamlining your summary section and give weight to your statements by adding measurable facts, figures and key metrics which showcase your professional performance. Keep your summary short but effective.



## ELEVATE YOUR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE SECTION

Your professional experience section can be enriched by writing 1-2 sentences which highlight your most important achievements in each job role. As with the summary, the goal of this section is to encourage the reader to contact you to find out more information, so try not to include too much detail but cultivate a sense of intrigue which can only be fulfilled by requesting your resume.



## ADD A PHOTO

It is widely reported that those who don't upload a photo are 14 times less likely to have their profile viewed, and it really is that important. Having a photo missing suggests that you are not up to speed with technology and social media, and also have not invested enough time and effort in your online appearance. Your photo should be professional, and ideally be in a workplace setting.



## REQUEST RECOMMENDATIONS

Nothing speaks louder in terms of endorsements than positive testimonials from those you have worked with in the past. In order to create a high-impact LinkedIn profile, you should make sure that part of your strategy involves requesting recommendations from past co-workers and employers. If you would like to encourage people to write testimonials for you, you can either send them a direct message request or write a testimonial for them in the hope they return the favor. With LinkedIn, you are able to write one new recommendation per day to a first-degree connection, so if you have a spare few minutes, it could be an excellent use of your time.

# 09

## Is This Board Role Right for You?

**C**ongratulations! After all your hard work optimizing your career documents and expanding your network, an executive recruiter reached out to you about a potential board position. It is often tempting to simply say yes, interview and accept an offer if it's given, but you need to do your due diligence to be confident that it's the right decision for you. If a recruiter is reaching out to you, they are taking serious consideration in offering you the position— you want to be sure you are doing the same. Do your research and consider whether the organization, board and culture are right for you.



### FIND THE PERFECT FIT

It is likely that before your interviews you researched the company; perhaps you looked at their stock performance or read news articles about the organization. While this kind of research gives you an overall picture of the organization, you must go deeper to discover whether or not this board will be a good fit for you. Look into the company culture, what they value and their mission. You may also want to talk to current board members to get an idea of the board dynamic. Make sure that you can see yourself successfully working with the other board members.

More than culture fit, you must understand what skills you are expected to bring to the table. BlueSteps Executive Career Coach Mike Lorelli recommends that candidates create a skills map which is “a diagram that figures out what skills the company needs to be successful in the marketplace. Plug in the skills of the existing board members and identify the gaps. Find the gaps that you can fill.” Talk to the recruiter and organization to understand what they are expecting you to bring to the board and make sure it aligns with the types of responsibilities you want to have.



### BE SURE OF THE TIME COMMITMENT

Given the demands of board service—20+ days a year for nine or more years plus independent research and work, make sure it is a role you will stay interested in and committed to. You will want to check with the company's leaders and those on the board to get a better estimate of the amount of time serving on their board necessitates. You may also want to check with the leadership at your current organization to ensure the time spent on the board won't interfere with any current or upcoming responsibilities.

It is also common for members to participate on sub committees which require additional time and energy. Understand that it is likely you will underestimate the amount of time required and be honest with yourself on whether you can balance your board role with your other responsibilities, specifically if you are actively employed at the same time. Try to get the most clarity on this as possible by asking when meetings are, their frequency, committees you will be requested to serve on, and the time commitment those committees require during the interview process.



### CHECK FOR LEGAL ISSUES AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

After looking at culture fit there are several other aspects for you to consider before you officially join a board. If you are currently employed, check with your legal team to be sure that there won't be a conflict of interest. Further, check with the board's legal team about what your legal liability is to the organization as a board member.

You will also be most comfortable going into the board if you understand the financials. Look at annual reports, financial records, or 990s depending on what type of organization they are. Also ask whether you will have financial liability or fiduciary responsibilities as a member of the board. For example, private equity organizations may require board members to invest in the organization and non-profit board members will frequently be large donors to their organizations.

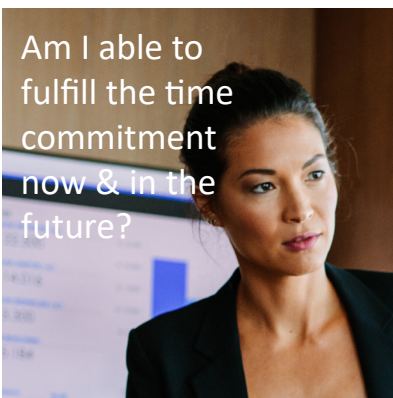




## DETERMINING FIT

Not sure where to start in assessing a board position? Here are some questions you should ask yourself to figure out if a board role will be the right fit for your needs:

Am I able to fulfill the time commitment now & in the future?



Who else is on the board? Are they people I will work well with?



What is the relationship between the board and management?



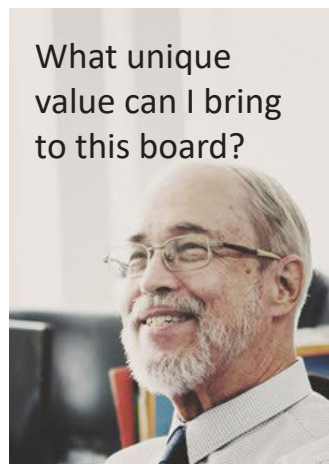
Do I believe in the business model & its goals?



Do I have any conflicts of interest?



What unique value can I bring to this board?



Am I comfortable with the needs this board has for me?



Will I have any financial or legal responsibilities?



How effective is this board? How effective will I be serving on it?



# 10

## A Complete To-Do List for Your First Board Meeting

**S**tarting a new role at an organization is always difficult. And your first board meeting can be particularly challenging because it is a different type of role and set of expectations than you are probably use to. But, like the old adage goes, good fortune often happens when opportunity meets preparation, so set yourself up for success and walk into your first meeting with confidence by doing these tasks to thoughtfully prepare:

### UTILIZE ONBOARDING SERVICES



Many organizations will have some sort of onboarding program, whether formal or informal. This process often includes meeting other board members, time with the CEO and exposure to the organization's financials. You will also be provided a board handbook and the organization's bylaws.

### MEET WITH OTHER BOARD MEMBERS



The other board members have all been in the same position you're in. Meet with a few of the members for a meal or to grab a cup of coffee. Not only will it help to develop positive working relationships, but they can also provide you with tips to start off on the right foot in your board role and even become a mentor in the long run.

### LOOK AT OLD MEETING MINUTES



Reviewing previous board papers and minutes will provide you with an idea of topics that have been the focus of the board. By reading the previous meeting minutes you will also know what the board has discussed several times before, ensuring that you do not bring up issues that have been discussed ad nauseum.

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK ON THE ORGANIZATION



You will have already done extensive research during the interview process, but it's time to do a deeper dive. Learn as much as you can about the organization, key products, long and short goals, the state of the industry or your own SWOT analysis to better understand where the company stands.

### ENGAGE WITH EMPLOYEES



Not only do you want to meet with the CEO before your first board meeting, but you should also try to meet with other members of senior management. Each one of them will be able to give you a more focused view of their area and have slightly different viewpoints on the organization and its needs.

**AT YOUR  
FIRST  
MEETING...**

**D**uring their first meeting, most new board members tend to be quieter. While it is important for you to listen to understand how the board operates, pick-up industry jargon, and learn the board dynamics, don't be afraid to share your thoughts. Before going into the meeting, review your board packet and identify one

or two areas where you know you will be able to make a strong contribution in the discussion. And if a conversation becomes nuanced or complex, don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Above all remember to trust your abilities, you were chosen because of your expertise and experience which will prove invaluable to any board.

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For more information on our Executive Career Services team and how they can help you with your Board of Directors role search, please visit: <https://www.bluesteps.com/content/executive-career-services>.

Data for the “Board Around the World” section on page seven is from Spencer Stuart’s collection of country Board Index Reports.





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