



**Board Direction**  
AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

# Board Search Resource Pack

**“DARE THEM NOT TO APPOINT YOU”**



**From Australia's Leading  
Board Career Expert**

# A WORD FROM THE CEO

Whilst the board appointment journey is undoubtedly competitive, thousands and thousands of people successfully gain new appointments annually, and you can too. The information in this pack is designed to give you some practical advice and guidance from which to start and guide you to a successful board appointment.

As a past board recruiter and now Non-Executive Director Career Coach, I must have reviewed well over 15,000 board applications, written over 5,000 board CVs, conducted thousands of board interviews, and taken briefs from hundreds of Chairs who instructed me on what they wanted to see in successful candidates.

Leveraging this experience fueled Board Direction's success. Operating for over a decade across Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and internationally, we have cemented our reputation as the world's leading NED career development and board vacancy advertising firm.

As such, the resources in this pack are not based on abstract ideas, narrow experience, or theory. Instead, they are grounded in proven, practical, and broad-ranging industry, sector, and scale expertise-experience that has helped thousands of people, regardless of their skills, experience, or board aspirations, find and gain board roles across the government, commercial, and for-purpose sectors - both paid and voluntary.

I hope you find these resources useful. Please [contact us](#) if you have any questions about finding or gaining a board appointment.



**David Schwarz**  
CEO, Board Direction



# THE VALUE OF A BOARD APPOINTMENT

A board appointment has the potential to be both life-changing and career-defining. It allows professionals to shift from operational leadership to strategic influence, opening doors to new opportunities and expanding professional networks.

In addition to career growth, board service provides a deeper sense of purpose. For some professionals, what begins as a single board role can evolve into a fulfilling and sustainable full-time career made up of multiple board appointments.

## THE BENEFITS OF BOARD ROLES

Studies show that individuals with board appointments gain a wide range of professional and personal advantages.

These roles are not only prestigious but also provide meaningful opportunities to develop professionally, broaden networks, increase influence, and support long-term career progression, personal growth, and lasting financial stability and resilience.

Commonly reported advantages include:

- Increased employability;
- Higher earnings over time;
- Reduced periods of unemployment;
- Expanded and higher-quality professional networks;
- Greater long-term career resilience and relevance;
- Continued engagement and value well into retirement.

## THE FACTS

- **44% more likely to be promoted**  
Executives with board experience significantly outperformed their peers in upward career mobility.
- **13% increase in annual compensation**  
Even without a promotion, those who served on boards earned substantially more.

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*"Given these significant and proven advantages, pursuing a board appointment should not be seen as an afterthought or side project. Instead, it should be recognized as a strategic and deliberate part of your career planning and professional development."*

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# YOUR STARTING POINT

**The bad news?** Gaining a board appointment is highly competitive. There are always more candidates than available board opportunities.

**The good news?** At least 50% of organisations with boards appoint a new board member each year. In Australia alone, that translates to over 90,000 non-executive director (NED) roles being filled annually. Here's where to begin if you aim to step into one of those roles.

## COMMUNICATE YOUR INTENTIONS

Begin by letting others know that you are actively seeking a board appointment. Sharing your intention helps open doors and invites opportunities through your network. However, you must be prepared to answer two subsequent questions:

1. **Why do you want to be a NED/want a board appointment?**
2. **Which organisations would you like to be on the board of?**

To secure your reputation and unlock and gain board opportunities, it is critical that you can answer both these questions compellingly. To do so, you need a simple and easy-to-implement framework.

## DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Most people use ineffective strategies when seeking a board appointment, repeating them despite failure, leading to frustration and giving up. **Successful NEDs take a different approach.**

### DEFINE THE DESIRED ROLE

Successful NEDs are clear about the role they want, including their scope, remuneration, preferred industries, and target organisations. Without this clarity, their approach becomes reactive and unstructured, and ultimately unsuccessful.

similar organisations, both verbally and on paper. This pitch differs from their executive one and takes practice to perfect.

### PLAN YOUR ACTIONS

Successful NEDs take strategic action, knowing there are four different ways to secure a board appointment. They recognize that some appointments are more desirable and harder to secure. They manage their time and efforts to match their aspirations and goals.

### ARTICULATE YOUR VALUE

They can articulate clearly what it is they offer their target's board or boards of

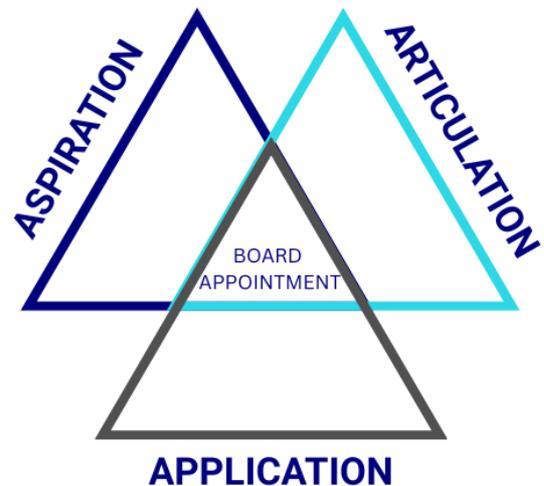


# THE THREE PILLARS OF SUCCESS

A successful board appointment is built on three essential pillars: **Aspiration**, **Articulation**, and **Application**.

At Board Direction, these pillars form the foundation of our approach. We believe that when individuals are clear about their aspirations, can effectively communicate their value, and strategically apply for the right roles, their chances of success greatly increase.

By mastering these elements, our members not only stand out from other candidates but also gain the confidence, direction, and momentum needed to navigate the board appointment process. This leads to a journey that is faster, more focused, fulfilling, and ultimately more successful.



## THE FOUR ROUTES TO FAILURE

If you're struggling to secure a Non-Executive Director (NED) appointment, you may be falling into one of four common traps:

1. Unclear on which organisations you're suited for or want to join.
2. Unable to deliver a strong, board-level pitch.
3. Overreliance on formal application processes.
4. Lacking a clear, effective strategy - or any strategy at all.

To succeed in landing a board role or building a board career, you need a more focused, strategic approach that reflects how appointments really happen.

## EXPLANATION OF TERMS

**Aspiration** - defining a list of your target organisations, i.e. the names of organisations you both want to be appointed to and could be appointed to. You should have between 6-12 of them. It is the non-negotiable and fundamental first step.

**Articulation** - understanding what a Chair wants in a successful candidate and be able to succinctly pitch this - whether in your board CV, application, interview, or a 'watercooler moment.' You should clearly articulate why you're the right choice for your target boards or similar organisations.

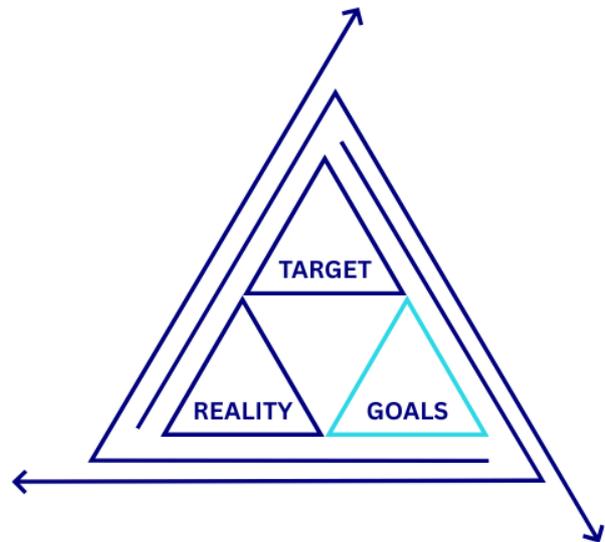
**Application** - using the knowledge of your targets and a compelling pitch for them, you must focus on the strategies and tasks that will get you the quickest result.



# WHAT ARE YOUR ASPIRATIONS?

Aspiration is the first pillar of a successful board appointment - because everything builds upon your ability to clearly identify your target organisations.

Not being able to define a list of realistic board targets will seriously undermine your chances of success. Without clarity on your long-term aspirations, it becomes nearly impossible to apply the right strategies and tactics needed to achieve them. You simply can't move forward with confidence if you don't know where you're headed.



## THE BENEFITS OF DEFINING YOUR TARGETS

Defining a list of realistic board target organisations significantly impacts your success:

- It helps you stay focused and specific in your efforts.
- It builds confidence in those who may support or advocate for you.
- With clarity, you'll be able to articulate your value at board-level more effectively.
- It allows you to present yourself with greater conviction.
- Ultimately, you'll come across as a stronger and more credible candidate.

## THE IMPACT OF UNCERTAINTY

If you can't name the organisations you want and can realistically be appointed to, you risk more than missed opportunities.

You damage your reputation by appearing unprepared, unclear about your value, and uncertain about which organisations would benefit from it.

This lack of direction makes it harder for others to refer or support you, as you may be seen as a reputational risk.

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*"That's why this step is so critical - everything else depends on your ability to clearly define your aspirations."*

*As a starting point, you should be able to confidently list at least **twelve target organisations** to form the foundation of your board appointment strategy."*

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# WHY SHOULD THEY APPOINT YOU?

No matter the size or nature of the organisation, Chairs and other decision-makers consistently look for five key qualities in a strong board candidate:

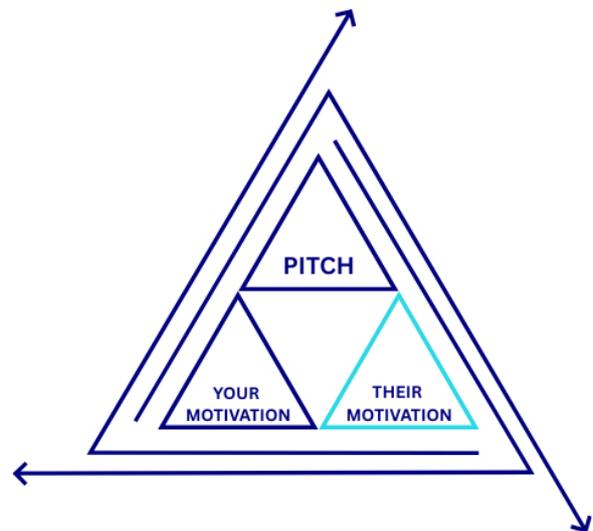
- Proven governance experience;
- A clearly defined skill set that adds strategic value at board level;
- Relevant industry experience and valuable connections;
- Genuine passion for the organisation's work or purpose;
- A strong cultural alignment with the board and its values.

## YOUR BOARD CV MATTERS

While a Board CV won't secure you a position on its own, submitting an executive-style CV - or a poorly written one - can quickly take you out of the running.

Often, the real value lies in the process of creating it. It forces you to think critically about your board-level experience, define the skills that truly matter in the boardroom, and identify which organisations will value what you bring. It's a strategic exercise that sharpens your focus and your message.

And when the opportunity arises - whether in a formal interview or an informal chat - you'll be ready to clearly articulate your value and answer the key question: Why should a board appoint or recommend you?



## THE BOARD-LEVEL PITCH

Your board pitch, CV, and interview responses must clearly address the core elements decision makers are looking for. A strong, board-focused narrative demonstrates your value and helps set you apart from other candidates - especially if you're seeking your first appointment.

Start by completing these two statements to shape your messaging:

**“At board-level, what I do is...”**

Highlight your most relevant board-level experience or transferable skills. If you haven't held a board role, focus on board-relevant work and measurable outcomes.

**“And I do this by... and here is an example.”**

Explain how you deliver value, using a clear, specific example to demonstrate your impact and credibility.



# HOW ARE YOU SPENDING YOUR TIME?

Securing a board role typically happens through one of four main pathways:

- Personal connections – Over 65% of appointments come through networks and referrals.
- Direct approach – Around 15% result from proactively reaching out to organisations with a clear offer of value.
- Recruiters – Fewer than 10% are secured through search firms.
- Advertised roles – Less than 10% come from responding to public listings.

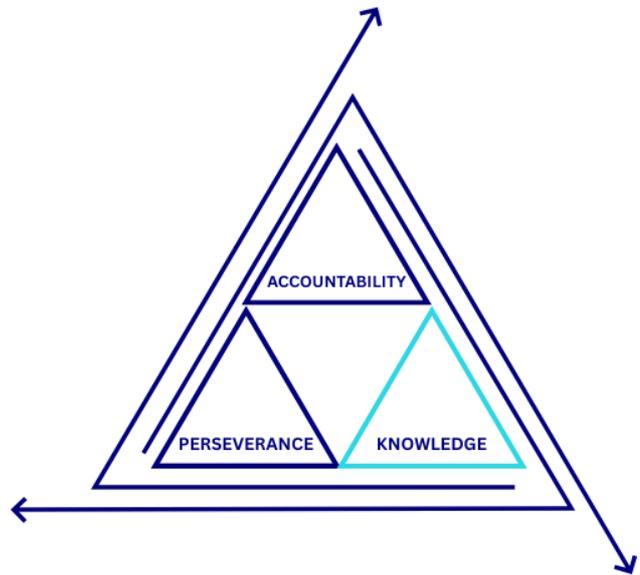
Knowing this helps you focus your efforts where they matter most.

## THE POWER OF WEAK TIES

These statistics may not surprise those actively pursuing board roles, but the details might. Nearly 80% of all board appointments happen informally, outside of formal recruitment channels.

Even more striking: of the 65% secured through personal connections, half come through people the candidate saw rarely, infrequently, or hadn't even met yet. These are known as "weak ties" and they're one of the most powerful assets in your board search.

Why? Because they're often easier to engage with, don't require networking events or business cards, and can open doors you didn't even know existed.



## ARE YOU SPENDING YOUR TIME STRATEGICALLY?

Take a moment to reflect on where you're focusing your efforts in your board search. If you're relying on recruiters or waiting for the perfect role to be advertised, you're doing yourself a real disservice.

Not only are you limiting your opportunities, but you're placing yourself in the most competitive and least effective part of the process. Advertised roles attract a high volume of qualified candidates, making it harder to stand out. Likewise, recruiters fill fewer than 10% of board positions.

To increase your chances, you need to be proactive - build relationships, tap into your network (especially weak ties), and focus your efforts where opportunities are created, not just posted. That's how successful board candidates spend their time.



# YOUR BOARD CV – KEY GUIDELINES

A **Board CV** is fundamentally different from an **executive CV** and it's the best place to start when pursuing your first or next board role. While there's no universal template for its style or structure, your Board CV must answer the one question every Chair or selection panel is asking: *“Why should we appoint you?”*.

**LENGTH:** In most cases, the length of your CV doesn't matter. While some Executive Search Firms may prefer a two-page limit, many don't, and neither should you.

**PHOTO:** Including a photo is acceptable but may lead to discrimination based on age, gender, disability, or race. It's best to avoid it.

**BOARD PROFILE:** Start with a concise board profile. It should never be aspirational. It should pitch you at the board level, focusing on your relevant board experience - whether formal appointments or other leadership roles. Writing in the first person is acceptable. Keep it to one paragraph and highlight the key qualities chairs seek in candidates.

**BOARD & EXECUTIVE SUCCESS:** Showcase your governance and strategic achievements, particularly those you're proud of. Be specific and include measurable results where possible.

**NON-EXECUTIVE & COMMITTEE EXPERIENCE:** Place this section before your executive career details. List current and past non-executive or committee roles in chronological order, including any sub-committees or executive committees you've been part of.

**EXECUTIVE BOARD EXPERIENCE:** Detail any committees or board roles from your executive career here.

**EXECUTIVE CAREER:** This section summarises your executive resume but is more concise. Focus on headline achievements, especially strategic ones, and include company scale and your level of responsibility.

**QUALIFICATIONS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** This mirrors your executive resume content.

**EXTRA-PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS:** Include activities or interests not covered elsewhere, such as languages, awards, charity work, or memberships.

**REFEREES:** List high-level, credible referees (without contact details), as selection committees often check this section first.



# YOUR BOARD APPOINTMENT PLAN

People tend to form quick judgments based on immediately visible facts, often without understanding the full context or while holding conflicting perceptions. If you don't clearly communicate that you're seeking a board appointment, others will define you by something else—and miss the opportunity to help. Success starts with knowing which boards to pursue, why you're the right fit, and the steps to secure your appointment.

## YOUR PLAN BEGINS TODAY

There's no perfect time to start your board career - so begin now. If you're serious about gaining a board appointment, you need a simple, sustainable plan built around the three Core Pillars. Here's how to get started:

### Schedule Time

Block out at least one hour a month to focus on your board appointment strategy. Without this, life will get in the way.

### Tell People You're Looking

No one can help if they don't know. Be clear and vocal about your board ambitions.

### Define Your Targets

List the organisations you want - and could realistically - be appointed to. Focus creates opportunity.

### Articulate Your Value

Be able to clearly explain the value you offer at board-level, not just in executive terms.

### Know the Appointment Process

Most appointments come through connections. Don't rely solely on recruiters or advertised roles.

### Write a Board CV

It's different from your executive resume. Writing one sharpens your strategy and sets you apart. Remember to be specific and 'dare them not to appoint you'.

## 12 MONTHS TO APPOINTMENT

Focus on the three core pillars to uncover board roles others miss, target positions aligned with your strengths, and create standout applications.

You'll reduce risk, boost your chances, and use your time more effectively, often securing a role sooner. Whether it's your first board position or a senior paid role, a clear, proven plan can lead to success, often within 12 months or less.

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*“In the meantime, telling people about your board aspirations requires little effort or planning.*

*It is easy to do, and you will be surprised where each conversation can lead.”*

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# GET APPOINTED WITH BOARD DIRECTION

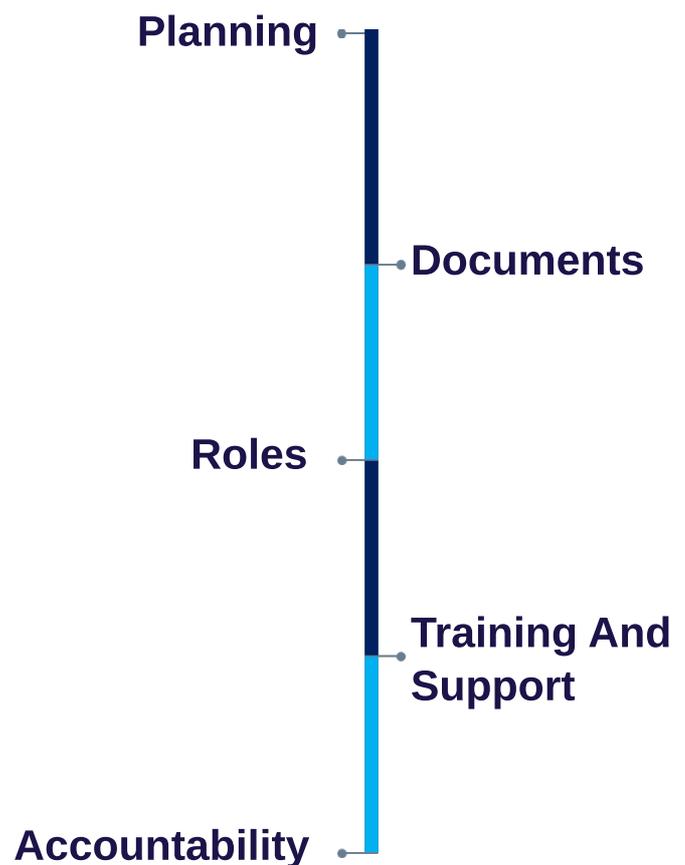
Our success stems from remaining laser-focused on helping people find and gain board appointments. This focus, together with deep industry experience, a proven process, and practical support, means that we can help you turn your board aspirations into reality, just as we have done for thousands of our clients. This approach works whether you're seeking your first board role or aiming for your next big step - across paid, voluntary, commercial, government, or not-for-profit sectors.

## A PRACTICAL APPROACH

What we do is simple - but highly effective. We've developed a practical, easy-to-follow **three-step process** that's sustainable and proven to work, no matter your background or board aspirations - whether paid, unpaid, commercial, government, or NfP.

Our unique **5-Step Board Appointment Plan** walks members through every stage of the appointment process, providing the templates, tools, and tactics needed to stand out and get appointed - faster.

With decades of experience and thousands of successful appointments, we know what works. And we make sure our members do too.



### Our proven process is designed to help you:

- Access exclusive board opportunities that others can't see or reach,
- Identify roles that truly align with your strengths, values, and goals,
- Stand out from the competition with a compelling personal brand,
- De-risk your appointment, making you a safer, more attractive choice,
- Maximise your return on time and effort by increasing your chances of appointment,
- **Dare them not to appoint you.**



# MEMBERS' SUCCESS STORIES

Our members come from all stages in their professional lives - some new to boards, others aiming higher. But many say the same: the framework and support provided by Board Direction gave them clarity, helped them stand out, and built their confidence. With a clear plan and the right support, they often found the right role faster than expected.

## Anthony B - Executive Member

"I had been planning my transition from an executive to a non-executive role for some time, but was not sure how to put my ideas into action. I signed up and was very happy with the practical tips and skills, and felt more confident when applying and interviewing for Director roles. This resulted in an appointment to a Board that greatly aligned with my skills, interests and values.

## Simon R - Executive Member

"Having been a non-executive director for nearly a decade, I became a member of Board Direction to see how I could gain further board appointments. After 6 months, I have gained one such appointment, and the process from David and his team has been great. Of most benefit has been how to do research on target organisations in an authentic way that displays a passion for the organisation and their purpose."

## Brett S - Executive Member

"I signed up for Board Directions last year and wanted to let you know that, after applying for sixteen positions, I have been successful first in two. The first appointment is on an advisory board, and the second is as Chairman. I just wanted to let you know that I have found your advice to be really valuable and the advertised positions an excellent source of genuine opportunities."

## Tracey S - Executive Member

"The training, guidance and CV preparation was enormously helpful and valuable. Most importantly the assistance in preparing the cover letter and interview insights to a successful interview contributed to my success in my first board appointment. Thank you to David!"

## START A CONVERSATION

Whether you're looking for your first board role or aiming for a more senior appointment, If you'd like the same sort of results our members above have experienced, we'd love to hear from you. **Email us requesting a confidential discussion to see if and how we might be able to help.**

