

A resource sheet for women

Getting on board: What should I do?

Have you ever wondered how you could further your career and build new networks by being part of a board? The following tips and strategies will help you build your confidence in successfully nominating for a board.

- ✓ Be confident – know how to sell yourself, your skills and knowledge.
- ✓ Know why you want to be on a board, what you have to offer, and where you can add value. How would a board appointment complement and extend your personal and professional development?
- ✓ Be strategic: know where you can make a difference to the organisation, and how you would go about doing this.
- ✓ Raise your profile – network, join relevant organisations and groups.
- ✓ Make sure you have the necessary skills to contribute effectively to a board. If you don't have them yet, identify how you will obtain these skills through your career or other professional development opportunities.
- ✓ Know what is required of a director. (The technical and personal qualities outlined in the adjacent column will help you identify any career or skill gaps.)
- ✓ Get board experience – volunteer for committees, sit on not-for-profit and community boards. Gain experience in governance issues, strategic management and the various issues that face boards.
- ✓ Obtain leadership experience in your own industry or sector.
- ✓ Work with a mentor to establish short and long-term goals, to identify your strengths and weaknesses, and future career moves and development.
- ✓ Make sure your CV reflects the skills and attributes required of a director, lists your board or committee experience, your leadership roles, and your career history. Keep it updated.
- ✓ Persevere.

Anybody wishing to serve on a company board must have a combination of personal qualities and basic technical and interpersonal skills. One without the other is not enough.

The technical requirements relate to:

- corporate strategy and development – understanding what drives a commercial business, and the principles of risk management and strategic change;
- legal, regulatory and corporate governance requirements and the personal and collective responsibilities of directors to the company and to shareholders; and
- principles of financial management and corporate accounting and the drivers of shareholder value.

The personal requirements are:

- integrity – honesty, credibility and the capacity for independent thought;
- leadership qualities – the ability to command respect of others, provide feedback and intervene at appropriate times, displaying judgement and courage;
- strategic perception – the capacity to put a company's strengths and weaknesses and the potential impact of particular proposals into broad context, offer different perspectives and identify potential opportunities and threats;
- analytical skills – and the capacity to use them under pressure;
- commitment – to the business and to acting in the best interests of shareholders; and
- the ability and flexibility to work with others as a team – requiring both listening and influencing skills and personal awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses.

From the Department of Trade and Industry (UK) report *Building Better Boards* (2004).

More information on the *Women on Boards* Strategy can be found on the Office for Women's website. Visit www.women.qld.gov.au/womenonboards or call 1800 177 577 between 8.00am and 6.00pm.