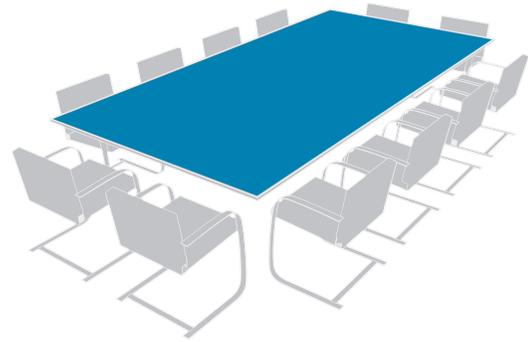


SO YOU WANT TO JOIN A BOARD...



STEP 1

ASSESS YOUR READINESS FOR BOARD SERVICE

What experiences and roles have you had that would enable you to make a substantive contribution to a board? Your strong suit could be a combination of any number of things: great depth in a particular business function, international experience in a key region, expertise in an area like cybersecurity or digital marketing that is critical for a company, or the kind of general management experience that makes CEOs such highly sought-after director candidates.

STEP 2

DON'T RELY SOLELY ON SELF-ASSESSMENT

Seek out peers who are already on boards; if you're a CMO, for example, talk with fellow CMOs who are directors. Discuss your resume and your career with them. Ask for advice about how you might fit on a board and seek a frank assessment of your readiness. They may point out weaknesses you have underestimated as well as strengths you were unaware of. With the permission of your CEO, talk to a director on your company's board for additional perspective and coaching. If you (and others) conclude that there is a strong case for your readiness, then and only then should you go forward. And if you have key deficits in your readiness, develop a game plan to address them.

STEP 3

APPROACH YOUR "BOARD SEARCH" AS YOU WOULD A JOB SEARCH

Bring to the task the same due diligence you would bring to any career move. Ask yourself what industry sector best suits your talents and interests. Consider also what type of company appeals to you: public, PE-backed, venture-backed, family-controlled? The cultures, dynamics, and approaches to governance of their boards can differ greatly. So can the cultures of the companies themselves, ranging from the highly traditional to the entrepreneurial and innovative. Once you've zeroed in on what really excites you, use your network to research companies that fit the bill. Consider how you might customize the case for your readiness in various instances and begin to develop a list of people you know who might have connections to the sector or to companies that intrigue you.

STEP 4

DEVELOP YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Compose a statement that succinctly touches on your interest in board service and the unique contributions you might bring to it. Test your story with a board member you know well and fine-tune it accordingly. And be prepared to adapt it to the occasions where you will use it and to the people who will hear it. Remember, your intent isn't to buttonhole people as an aggressive salesperson would — in casual settings where you may have the opportunity to share your story, such aggressiveness is unwelcome. Furthermore, the people you'll be speaking with are themselves highly accomplished and likely averse to unvarnished self-promotion.

STEP 5

NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK

According to a survey by the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD), nearly 70% of directors surveyed said that their board had used personal networking or word of mouth to identify the pool of candidates from which their most recently nominated director was chosen. You should therefore network not only with board members but also with others who have relationships with boards: auditors, lawyers, and leadership or search consultants in your network. They can help get your name in circulation and act as powerful advocates for you.

STEP 6

GET YOUR START / SEEK SOME PRELIMINARY EXPERIENCE ON A NOT-FOR-PROFIT BOARD

Many large, not-for-profit organizations offer opportunities for board service. Many of these organizations exercise governance with the same rigor that major public companies do. If you have had little exposure to your company's board, service on these boards can introduce you to governance practices, boardroom dynamics, and the differences between managing an organization and overseeing it. But before seeking or accepting a seat on one of these boards, make sure that it will give you experience that is demonstrably relevant to a public company board and, most important, be sure that it is a cause you are passionate about.