

BOARD READINESS

Writing a resume for a board candidacy

Here is what differentiates a job resume from a director resume

BY MADELEINE CONDIT AND CHRISTINE EDWARDS

Too often, highly qualified board of director candidates assume that their most recent job resume is perfectly acceptable to submit as a board candidate resume. And why not? It's easy to pull out a current resume and click the "send" button.

But with all the federal, regulatory and court changes taking place that will impact proxy access for board candidates, director standards will be more rigorous and candidates will be better aligned with the strategic goals of the company than in the past.

Because a candidate's board resume is frequently the differentiating factor in determining who will be interviewed by the nominating and governance committee, it is an important component of the board recruitment process for candidates.

What differentiates a job resume from a director resume?

A job resume focuses on how a person has managed and motivated employees within financial parameters as well as worked with other senior management to accomplish business objectives. But those considerations place the candidate in the context of what is generally a hierarchical environment and one where there is a clear reporting relationship and job deliverables.

Boards are comprised of individuals who bring relevant expertise to a company. Directors discuss and deliberate issues to understand their significance to shareholders and arrive at decisions in a collaborative and consensus process. And, while all boards are unique and have their own character, the process is basically the same. Commentators describe the way boards carry out their fiduciary obligations as oversight with a heavy emphasis on probing questions and keen follow up. In a phrase: management "does" and the board "oversees."

So, what focus does that suggest to director candidates in drafting their board resume? We recommend the following:

First, start with a fresh perspective. Cutting and pasting from a job resume forces you into certain conventions and may limit your end product.

Second, draft a three sentence "Board Profile," which is a descrip-

tion of you as a director candidate, focusing on you as a leader, strategic adviser, collaborator, and industry expert. This is the most important "geography" on a resume. It speaks to the reader of who you are and what you will bring to a board. For example, while a job resume may highlight specific goals achieved, such as increased profits, revenues, and number of employees managed, a Board Profile should describe leadership qualities of the candidate in identifying goals and achieving consensus on steps to address and overcome obstacles.

Similarly, if you have experience as a public, private, or not-for-profit board member, take the time to briefly describe that experience, your role, and how it has shaped your candidacy.

Third, describe your career in large segments of time, providing high-level descriptions for your responsibilities with an emphasis on pointing out progressive leadership and oversight. Characterize your career in phrases like: "Began as Controller and assumed positions of greater leadership and responsibility, culminating in being appointed CFO with responsibilities to report the financials to the Board of Directors." This is an opportunity to describe why you may have tried different career paths or assumed nontraditional roles which have impacted the position you hold today.

Fourth, provide a short, succinct description of outside activities that you believe will demonstrate your leadership skills, articles that have achieved broad or national recognition, or awards that highlight your accomplishments.

All of this information should be in no more than two or three pages.

Finally, it is always prudent to have an outside professional or colleague take a critical look at the resume to ensure you have described yourself accurately and for the role of a director.



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