

## ***DIVERSITY IN GOVERNANCE: 6 Top Tips for Aspiring Directors and Trustees.***

July 2012 Sina Wendt - Moore

### **Diversity in governance is a very hot topic!**

There is growing recognition today of the value that diversity brings to a board table and the positive impact that can have on an organization's performance. In my view, we need to build boards that are diverse, connected and passionate; that lead with integrity, purpose and creativity. Strong governance requires people that bring unique lenses and mindsets to building robust and strong enterprises.

Across the various worlds I engage in, I'm increasingly being asked by aspiring directors and people seeking governance roles, "How do I go about developing my career in governance?" Conversely, from Chairs and boards interested in diversifying the talent around their board tables, "how can we identify and recruit skilled and talented people from a more diverse pool of experienced managers, executives, practitioners across society to take up governance roles?"

As part of my ongoing commitment to growing a new generation of authentic and ethical leaders, and increasing diversity on New Zealand boards here are my Top 6 Tips that will help you kick-start or develop your governance career. Based on my own experience, research, networks and connections I have made - there are some fundamental things you need to do if you are serious about taking on governance roles.

- Be an active architect of your governance career – you can't just put your name on a database somewhere and hope you get 'discovered' or that roles find you.
- Self-Assessment - Do you know what boards are out there? Have you thought about the types of organisations, boards you want to be part of? Do they align with your values, goals, interests? Have you done an assessment of your own skills and what you can bring to a board?
- Learn about governance – do you understand what governance is? Are you ready for the change in leadership required and collective decision making process that occurs around a board table?
- Get some real-life experience – if you have never been on a board before then look for opportunities to contribute your skills to a community, social-profit organisations, NGO, or small to medium enterprise boards;
- Network and connect - with organisations and people who are interested in, focussed on building governance capability, through which you can learn about governance from experienced directors, find mentors and sponsors who will assist you with your governance aspirations.

There are a number of key initiatives, organizations, resources and networks out there actively focussed on growing the governance pipeline, and building up a much more diverse pool of potential directors and trustees, that you can tap into that will 'help you help yourself'.

**1. Springboard NZ** ([www.springboardnz.org](http://www.springboardnz.org)) is focussed on encouraging and developing the next generation of New Zealand's directors and trustees. **Join the Springboard Linked In group.**

If you are a younger director or trustee this is a great way to grow your governance skills and knowledge, share ideas and experience, and promote yourself for appointment to other governance positions. To join Springboard they request you: are aged 45 years or under, and have experience as a director, trustee or board appointee of a company, trust or Not For Profit, and reside in New Zealand.

They currently meet every second month in Auckland, Wellington & Christchurch with lively discussion from high quality speakers – generally very experienced directors and governance experts who share 'real work stories' about governance in NZ. *Cost is a koha of \$10 cash on the night.*

**On Board**, their practical governance training is held four times a year, and tailored to cater for beginners through to intermediate & above levels of experience. Check out the professional development dates – led by Graeme Nahkies of BoardWorks International these are very reasonably priced and very practical. Workshops cost around \$500.

**2. appoint better boards** [www.appointbetterboards.co.nz](http://www.appointbetterboards.co.nz)

If you are looking for a governance role (or seeking directors & trustees for your organisation), then check out the website & **register yourself as a potential director – registration is free.** I am on the Advisory Board for appoint. appoint has strong principles around

- Diversity - we believe that diverse boards are better boards and we strive to ensure our pool of potential directors reflects the make up of our community.
- Transparency - we believe it's in an organization's best interest to promote its governance roles to a broad pool of potential directors.
- Community - we are passionate about Aotearoa and helping our country succeed through stronger business and social enterprises.

**appoint** allows organisations and directors to easily connect, recruit and build better boards. Our **1011** registered directors & trustees are: **47%** female, **48%** under 45, **19%** non NZ European and total **7111** years of governance experience. (Statistics as at 03/07/2012)

**3. Ministry of Women's Affairs – *women on boards* website:**  
**[www.mwa.govt.nz/women-on-boards](http://www.mwa.govt.nz/women-on-boards)**

For all you talented wahine toa – this is a fabulous resource... everything you ever wanted to know about being on a board in Aotearoa, including

- Information about all the different types of boards,
- A governance map
- Tips on how to get into governance roles, including real stories from experienced women directors,
- A self assessment tool (*my board strengths*) that lets you figure out what your current experience prepares you for as well as development areas. I used the *my board strengths* tool and it really helped me clarify the types of boards I was suited for and the ones that actually fit in with my goals, interests.
- How to create a Governance CV
- A nominations service that you can then register with – so once you're ready, get on their database!

**4. Women on Boards NZ [www.wobn.org.nz](http://www.wobn.org.nz)**

Lesley White (CEO) says WOBNZ aims to be the nationwide group advocating for increasing the numbers of women on boards of directors. They believe that the boards of all companies, large and small as well as the not-for-profit sector will benefit from the diversity that a gender-balanced board will bring. Using social media, they aim to provide the tools and network contacts to empower all women directors to fulfill board roles at all levels. They focus on developing the leadership skills of professional women to position them for future governance roles, with the aim to be the premier 'go to' organisation for chairs and executive search organisations seeking independent women directors offering unique skills.

They too have a Linked In group you can join. WOBNZ is also inclusive of men who support and are interested in greater diversity on boards. They host bi-monthly meetings in Auckland Wellington and Christchurch which combine networking and learning opportunities. The launch meeting in Auckland in March was fantastic. And the LinkedIn group is great for picking up knowledge, research, latest writing on women in governance and leadership – Lesley regularly posts up to date articles, and links to blogs that are very interesting and relevant.

**5. EEO Trust [www.eeotrust.org.nz](http://www.eeotrust.org.nz)**

The EEO Trust is one of Aotearoa's premier advocates for the benefits of diversity in business, and they also promote greater diversity on boards.

***A Place At The Table*** aims to improve the diversity of boards of directors in New Zealand. A partnership between the New Zealand Human Rights Commission and the EEO Trust, this long-term project aims to boost the numbers of women and others in governance positions. The website provides excellent resources, articles, links to forums and workshops.

[http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/a\\_place\\_at\\_the\\_table/](http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/a_place_at_the_table/)

They deliver one day workshops for women – **Introduction to Governance** (in association with

the Auckland Chamber of Commerce) **excellent value at \$350+GST, delivered by Janine Smith of The Boardroom Practice** - relevant to women currently seeking directorships and women reflecting on how to plan their careers to position themselves for directorships in the future.

## 6. Institute of Directors [www.iod.co.nz](http://www.iod.co.nz)

For those of you just starting out, joining the IOD and/or doing their governance programmes can be costly and over the top to start with. These are skewed very much to the corporate and commercial sector, so if you are looking to start your governance career in not for profit roles and don't have a huge personal development budget, I would suggest you link in to the other groups suggested above as a starting point.

The IOD does have a very useful website **FirstBoards/FirstDirectors** which anyone can access that gives very good information about directorships, boards, good governance principles and best practice. [www.iod.org.nz/FirstBoardsFirstDirectors/FirstDirectors.aspx](http://www.iod.org.nz/FirstBoardsFirstDirectors/FirstDirectors.aspx)  
The IOD also runs a one day Not For Profit Governance course which costs just over \$900.

Those of you more experienced trustees, board members considering moving from the NFP, NGO sector into larger public sector boards, commercial/corporate role, IOD membership is very useful. Their breakfasts and lunches are invaluable ways to network and connect with other IOD members and senior directors, and the professional development programmes and workshops are excellent if you have the budget. *The Principles of Best Practice for New Zealand Directors: The Four Pillars of Effective Board Governance*, document covers four fundamental areas relating to corporate governance: determination of purpose, an effective governance culture, holding to account and effective compliance. The IOD also provides a very practical guide to creating a Governance CV. If you are a member you can upload your CV on their database as well as get access to NFP director roles advertised.

Governance Books: to bone up on what it means to be a director or trustee read the following two books: *The Complete Guide on Good Governance in Organisations and Companies* written by Doug Matheson, and experienced and long serving New Zealand director, and/or his shorter handbook *Great Governance: How the Best Boards Work*. They are invaluable and I refer to them constantly. (see [www.management.co.nz](http://www.management.co.nz))

Finally, any of you serious about networking and connecting must get on Linked In ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)). All of the organisations listed above have active groups on LinkedIn that will assist you to learn, connect and contribute to the governance conversation.

Good luck on your governance journey – I'd love to hear about your experiences, successes, challenges and if this information has been useful.

Soifua ma manuia,

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