

TOP TAKEAWAYS

So, You Want to Join a Board?

1. **Be the very best at what you are doing right now.** You never know who is watching, noticing and keeping you in mind.
2. **Prepare.** Whether it be for the process in finding a board seat or for decisions and events once you are in the boardroom, preparation is key.
3. **Find a champion or sponsor.** Self-promotion can only get you so far, and too much may end up turning some people off. Having someone to champion you, your skills and your fit will speak volumes about you and your qualifications that you may not be able to speak yourself.
4. **Make it easy for your sponsor to sponsor you.** Understand your strengths, your target industries or positions, and how and where you fit best and communicate those to your sponsor. Your sponsor will have a much easier time recommending you when he or she knows what positions to recommend you for and why.
5. **Be patient.** The right board seat for you may not appear for months or years. Be sure to maintain your networks and connections in the meantime so that the right people have you “top of mind” when it matters.
6. **Have an online presence.** Join LinkedIn, and make sure your profile matches your executive profile. Having a pervasive, consistent personal profile and message will help keep you “top of mind.”
7. **Focus on what you’re good at, not just “what you do.”** Just because you work in a certain position or profession does not necessarily mean that your skills and knowledge are limited to those traditionally found in such positions or professions.
8. **Understand the difference between public, private and non-profit company boards.** Public company board service requires you to act in the best interests of a large number of shareholders, most of whom you will likely never meet, and requires you to be aware of certain environments, like proxy trends. Private company board service can often require a deeper knowledge of operations, but your shareholders are likely more known to you and can often be sitting with you in the board room.
9. **The board functions and contributes as a whole, rather than as individual members.** Therefore, your individual ideas, comments and suggestions as a board member may not always carry the day, and that’s ok. Your value on a board is from your unique perspective and contributions you make to the conversation. Your suggestion may not always be the path ultimately chosen, but your contribution is still valuable and important.
10. **In searching for board members, you can’t always “get” the CEO.** There are a limited number of CEOs, and not every board can be full of them. There is a wide variety of candidates with points of view that can be equally valuable; don’t count them out just because they aren’t the CEO.

For more information

For more information on So, You Want to Join a Board?, please feel free to contact the moderator directly:

Steven R. Barth
Foley & Lardner LLP
sbarth@foley.com