



Becoming a Non-Exec Director

There is a growing awareness of the NED role. For many organisations, large and small, appointing NEDs has now become standard practice. The role of the NED is also diversifying. With the pressure on organisations to deal with digital transformation, skills and expertise of technologists are needed at board level.

On 7 December 2018, CITF held an evening for industry leaders to learn more about how to become a non-executive director.



Top Tips:



1.

Follow your passion

Finding a particular area where you feel you can make a positive contribution will mean that your role will provide you with more satisfaction and enjoyment. Consider charities and educational sector. Our panel of NEDs was unequivocal that a non-exec role is not about the money. Rather, this is an opportunity to give back by supporting and improving businesses and organisations.



2.

Prepare your CV

Head-hunters will be firstly screening your CV looking for clear evidence of how you will add value to the board. Your CV most likely needs to be adapted to suit NED role. Focus on your leadership skills and the relevant for the role experience.



3.

Utilise your network to seek non-exec opportunities

Many roles are not advertised. The most effective route to become a NED is through your network and your wider industry presence. Meeting people at events provides opportunities to build relationships over time and to be informed and considered for a relevant role.



4.

Immerse yourself in the nature of the business

Do your homework- a non-exec needs to truly understand the business to ensure they create a positive impact. Make sure you read all the board reports. Site visits can be useful to get a picture of the company beyond the board meetings. You might want to get some insights by asking employees:

- Do you understand the organisation's strategy?
- Do you understand your role in that, how is your success measured?
- Does someone care about you within the organisation?





5.

Plan your time

NEDs can expect at least a monthly commitment to attend meetings (having read the necessary board reports) They may be required to be present at public events, and some boards also provide training that will require a time commitment.

One panellist estimated his non-exec work in the education sector at 90-100 hours per annum. You can avoid conflict with the day job by getting in your diary advance board dates, and by being upfront with your CEO and chairman about the commitment level. Indeed, many companies now encourage execs to pursue non-exec roles, recognising the value for the company, as well as you, in taking the position.



6.

Be diplomatic

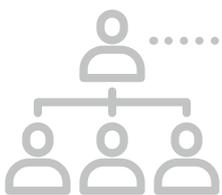
Execs are there to run the business. Enter the board with a mindset to coach, encourage, and elevate the organisation. New non-executive directors often find this quite difficult, because your conditioning as an executive is to try and leap in and fix problems when they are identified.



7.

Be careful how you deploy your tech expertise at board meetings

Boards are looking for knowledge and expertise on emerging tech like AI. Be aware though that the CIO may see your expertise as a threat to their position. Pre-meetings are essential here to clearly communicate about the purpose of your role and resolve any issues before the board meeting itself.



8.

Be fully aware of risk and responsibilities

As a non-exec you are as legally responsible as any other members of the board. Before you take a position, look at the integrity of every level of the business – your reputation could be damaged if the board is poor. Also check for any conflicts of interest between your current organisation and the one for the non-exec role. Be sure that you are satisfied with the integrity of financial information.

We will also continue to provide events that speak to this topic, including a February webinar follow-up on the legal side of becoming a non-executive director.

