

How to write a board CV

Part of IoD Ireland's Director Development Toolkit

Introduction

Undoubtedly, a good, well-written board CV can improve your prospects of moving from Executive to Board-level. We hope this guide will help you ask the right questions and express the relevant aspects of your experience, in the most convincing way when it comes to writing your board CV.

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How to write a board CV

A well-written CV that highlights accomplishments, experiences, and specialised skills is essential for all professionals.

While a well-crafted CV can often be versatile and applicable in various professional contexts, it is far more advantageous to tailor it specifically for the boardroom. By viewing your CV through the lens of a director, you can emphasise your skills and experiences that are most valuable in the boardroom, thereby increasing your chances of being considered.

One of the hardest tasks in embarking on a non-executive director career path is putting pen to paper on crafting a board CV. This guide will help you break this task down into manageable steps and provide clarity on what makes a strong board CV.

A considered, consistent approach will enhance your chances of success. Before you start to type a single letter there is a lot of thinking and planning to do. Make sure you allocate sufficient time — the investment you put into crafting your board CV and translating this across to your online presence, e.g. LinkedIn profile, is instrumental in helping you to make a lasting first impression and thus enhancing your likelihood of being shortlisted in the selection process.

Step 1: Research & preparation

Invest time in preparing your board CV before you are ready to apply for board roles.

There are normally tight application deadlines for board roles and the task of writing your board CV should not be rushed. Having a board CV ready to be tailored to a specific opportunity will make the application process much smoother.

To be considered for appointment to a board, you need to stand out for the selection panel as an individual that will add value to the collective strength of the board.

- What makes you different to other prospective board members?
- What is your unique combination of skills, experiences, and way of operating that this board should be interested in?

Defining your board value add is a critical first step before writing your CV. Invest time in reflecting on your career history, board experience, accomplishments and gather feedback from colleagues and friends on what you are best known for. Understand the key skills the board require and how you meet those needs. Think about what transferable skills you have and how you would add value to this board.

Remember the skills required to be a non-executive director are different to those required to be an executive director. Demonstrate your understanding of this and highlight the key skills the board require, for example:

- Your ability to remain independent, listen, question and challenge rather than deciding and instructing the business should do something.
- Your strategic thinking, ability to grasp external factors and the competitive landscape and the potential impact on the business rather than diving deep into operational matters.
- Your vital role in shaping strategic decisions and ensuring financial performance and risk management are closely monitored.
- How your professional achievements, demonstrated leadership skills, and specialised knowledge contribute to strategic decision-making, good corporate culture and risk management.



Step 1: Research & preparation continued

Here's some ideas to conduct your research:

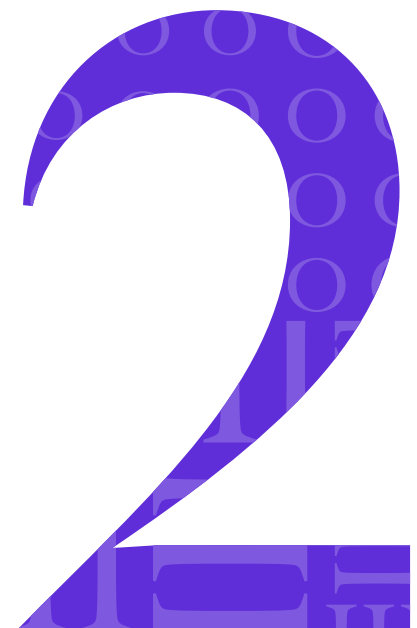
- **Study the Company:** thoroughly research the company's background, use recent news articles, press releases, and company publications to understand its current standing and direction.
- **Review Financial Performance:** Analyse the company's financial reports, if available, to gain insights into its profitability, revenue trends, and financial health. Understanding the financial performance will help you assess the organisation's stability and potential for growth.
- **Explore the Board of Directors:** Familiarise yourself with the current board of directors, their backgrounds, expertise, and tenure. This information will help you understand the composition of the board and identify any gaps where your skills and experience could be valuable.
- **Understand the Industry and Market:** Research the industry and market in which the company operates. Identify competitors, market trends, challenges, and opportunities. Understanding the broader industry landscape will enable you to provide informed perspectives during potential discussions.
- **Assess Governance Structures:** Evaluate the company's governance structure. Look for information on board committees, board meeting frequency, and regulatory compliance. Understanding the governance landscape will help you assess your potential role and responsibilities as a non-executive director.
- **By conducting comprehensive research,** you'll be well-equipped to tailor your CV, demonstrate your understanding of the organisation, and articulate how you can contribute as a non-executive director.
- **This research will also help you identify queries** you would like to raise during the interview process.

Step 2: Skills & experience mapping

Invest time in cataloguing the skills and experiences you have that are relevant to a prospective board.

In order to assist with this task, take a look at the **Skills you need to succeed** that boards typically look for. Spend time understanding the skills and experience required for the board position you are applying for. Review the role specification and consider speaking in confidence to peers to gather additional information. Map the evidence of your skills and experience to what they are looking for. Distil the top 3-5 key areas of focus that will make you the ideal board member for this opportunity.

Think about your strengths and experiences and think about the specific role you are applying for. How do your strengths meet their needs?



Step 3: The task itself

Your board CV must demonstrate your success at board level, be succinct, look professional and showcase your unique board value add.

The ideal board CV should be 2 pages maximum.

The layout can vary according to your personal style, but should contain the following sections:

Contact Details:

Include name, email, mobile number, location, and link to your LinkedIn profile or personal website. Consistency across your board CV and LinkedIn profile is important. Including a photo is optional; personal details such as date of birth and relationship status are not required.

Executive Summary:

This is the most important section of your CV. Here you need to engage the reader's attention, leaving them wanting to find out more. It needs to be strong and succinct in one clear paragraph showcasing you at your best.

The executive summary should reflect the seniority and breadth of experience you can bring. Include what makes you unique and a valuable asset to the specific board you are applying to.

Showcase the personal qualities and attributes that you have that would make you a great addition to the board. Include relevant subject matter expertise, key skills and sectoral experience as well as your style of operating that you can bring to this board.

Are you experienced in risk, strategy, marketing, cybersecurity, sustainability, policy, diversity, talent, compensation, or audit? Do you have international, regulated, government, or private sector experience? Think broadly about your experience and what the top 3-5 key areas of focus are that you want to be known for.

This is the section of your CV you will tailor the most to fit different board roles that you apply for. Think of this section as your board value proposition. This section should answer the question 'Why you?'.

Board Experience:

Highlight your board experience, starting with the most recent and including the dates you served. Provide a brief description of each organisation, specifying whether it is public, private, or non-profit. List the committees you have served on (such as audit, risk, nomination, ESG) and any board leadership roles you have held (such as committee chair or independent chair). If the board requires specific experience such as CEO recruitment, development of policies, business turnaround, or committee chair, align your experience to these needs.

Aspiring board members should showcase any governance experience, board advisory work, executive roles presenting to the board, committee work, and qualifications achieved (Chartered Director and Institute of Director courses are all relevant).

Remember, experience gained on the boards of schools, charities, and sports clubs are all relevant governance experience and can be included here. If you have none of this experience, think about the skills required by boards and how your career experience demonstrates evidence of those transferable skills. Different types of boards such as a publicly listed company will require particular skills that will differ from a non-profit board, so tailor your experience to best fit the board you are applying for.



Step 3: The task itself continued

Executive Experience:

This section needs to be much shorter than an executive CV and highlight the key executive roles you held including strategic accomplishments and demonstrating size, scale and challenges addressed. For example, corporate culture creation, market share growth, acquisition of a business, disposal of a division of a business or successful IPO of a business, significant policy development, exceptional delivery of efficient and effective public services, and implementation of government policy. This section should include your value add and evidence of key board relevant skills.

Consider using a model such as **Challenge, Action, Result** to demonstrate impact. For example:

- 'Led the turnaround and digital transformation of a publicly listed company as CEO and COO, tripling profitability by redefining the customer proposition.'
- 'As CEO, led a strategic overhaul that boosted revenues by 50%, expanded market share by 20%, and increased employee engagement by 30%.'

Include achievements rather than responsibilities and include key data points such as scale of P&L responsibility, size of team etc. Include role title, company, and dates.

The ideal board CV is a maximum of 2 pages therefore this executive section is much shorter than for an executive CV. As you gain board experience the executive section becomes shorter replaced by a longer board experience section. Consider focusing on 2-3 most recent executive roles and summarising prior experience.

Qualifications and Education:

Focus on main degree (or equivalent experiential route), post-graduate and board relevant qualifications. Include relevant courses such as governance training, director development training, non-executive director certification, sustainability, cyber security etc. List relevant awards, keynote speeches and publications.

Interests and Memberships:

This section enables your personal brand to shine through demonstrating your passions, interests and perhaps aligned to the purpose of the organisation you are applying to. Include membership/roles in professional networks such as Institute of Directors Ireland. Include memberships of sports clubs, networking groups, charity work.

References:

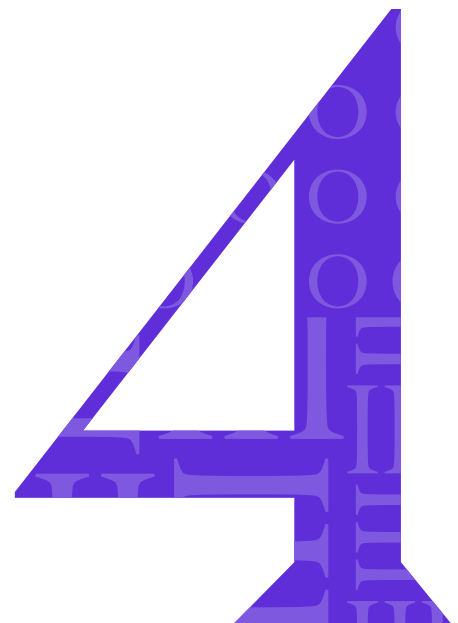
If you have space in the 2 pages include the highest-level reference you have, especially if they are high profile or relevant to the organisation you are applying to. If you don't have space, include this in your biography instead.

Step 4: Review & refine

Remember, your aim is to convey the value you will add in the boardroom and not everything you have done in your career. Being focused, concise and targeted is key to your success.

Before finalising your board CV ask some trusted colleagues, friends, family and ideally someone with board experience to review it and provide feedback. Does your board CV reflect you accurately and convey your expertise? Sometimes we can undersell ourselves. You have one chance to present yourself in the best possible light.

Your board CV is a living document that should be refreshed at least annually and before applying for specific board roles. Tailoring your board CV to your audiences' needs will maximise your success.



Step 5: The small details

- Use a regular font type and ensure the font size is at least 11pt.

- Make it easy for the reader to contact you — perhaps include your contact details in a footer on each page.

- The layout of the CV should be clear, easy to read and consistent – check bolding, font type and size.

- Organise role experience in reverse chronological order.

- You can write your personal statement in the first person (“I have”) or the third person (“he/she has”). However, you do not need to use ‘I’, ‘he’ or ‘she’ in a CV because its use is implied.

- Align your LinkedIn profile with your CV, your online profile plays an important role too — they don’t need to be the same, but the impression of you must be consistent.

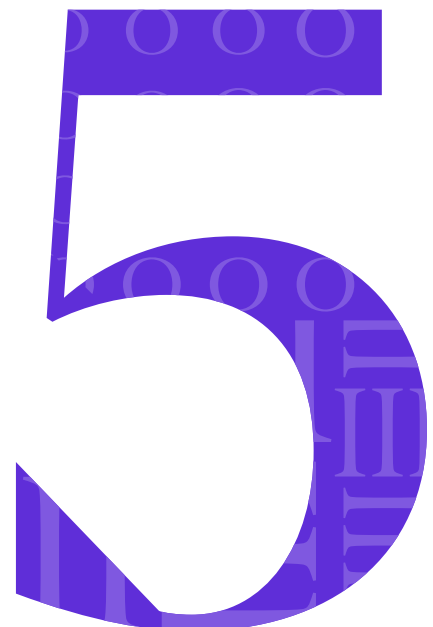
- Avoid acronyms and jargon — use the lens of ‘could anyone outside my sector understand my CV?’

- Use non-executive director vocabulary and reflect the vocabulary / keywords used in the role specification.

- Label the name of the file professionally e.g. ‘Diane Dundon CV’.

- Before hitting send on an email application double check you have the right files attached — you don’t get a second chance to make a great first impression.

- Check all spelling.



CV example 1

The following CV example is across two pages and follows the steps outlined in our guide.

Contact details

Executive summary

Board and committee experience

John Jones

Tel: 085 222 2222
5 The Rise, Sandyford, Co.Dublin

Email: john@johnjones.com
LinkedIn URL:

PROFILE:

Institute of Directors member, experienced global C-Suite leader, former MD of XYZ EMEA Operations and Global Strategic Outsourcing, financial services COO, PCF42 (COO) approved by the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI). A senior leader with diverse industry experience and a proven track record of overseeing and leading large-scale organisation transformation, operational resilience, and revenue growth securing additional multimillion revenue streams and strategic partnerships. Successful at reinventing organisations, building capability and scale, a purpose driven culture and the next generation of leaders.

- **INED Board Experience** – Currently serving as an Independent Non-Executive Director (INED) at XYZ, also Chairing the Audit and Risk Committee. Previously, held a seven-year tenure on the Audit & Risk Committee and served on the XYZ Global Leadership Committee. Possess over a decade of experience collaborating with C-Suites and Boards, providing strategic counsel and overseeing large-scale complex transformations.
- **Fitness and Probity** – Central Bank of Ireland approved PCF42 (COO) for COO roles XYZ and ABC.
- **Leadership Experience** – COO for multiple private equity-backed firms in the Financial Services sector. Longstanding member of the XYZ Global Leadership Team. Previously held the role of Managing Director at XYZ, overseeing Global Strategic Outsourcing. Before that, served as MD of XYZ EMEA Commercial Operations, where I successfully scaled operations from €50 million to over €100 million.
- **Key Skillset** – Strategy, purpose, culture; Governance, risk, compliance; People capability; Customer focused; Stakeholder management; Operational excellence and resilience; Commercial acumen; Building capability, scale, and growth.
- **Core Values** – Transparency, integrity, organisation development, delivering excellence, taking on big challenges and winning.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE EXPERIENCE:

- INED and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, xyz date to date
Oversee the committee's functions, ensuring effective risk management, compliance with regulations, and the integrity of financial reporting.
- XYZ Global Leadership Committee date to date
Member of XYZ Global Leadership Committee, the governing body accountable to stakeholders for organisation oversight, mission, visions, values, and strategy.

CV example 1 continued

Executive experience

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Company, Role, date to date
Brief Description
Highlight achievements and board transferable skills.

Company, Role, date to date
Brief Description
Highlight achievements and board transferable skills.

Company, Role, date to date
Brief Description
Highlight achievements and board transferable skills.

Company, Role, date to date
Brief Description
Highlight achievements and board transferable skills.

Education and qualifications

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS / DESIGNATIONS:

- Chartered Director Programme — Institute of Directors Ireland
- Diploma in Risk Management, Internal Audit and Compliance — Chartered Accountants Ireland
- Fitness and Probity (PCF42) — Central Bank of Ireland
- BSc Honours Business & Economics — Trinity College Dublin
- Executive Education — Strategy, Leadership, Finance, Marketing, Value Based Leadership.

Interests and memberships

INTERESTS:

Volunteer with Special Olympics Ireland; coach with Local GAA Club; supporting and mentoring talent; family, health, and fitness.

CV example 2

The following CV example is across two pages and follows the steps outlined in our guide.

Executive summary

Board and committee experience

Contact details

Joan Jones – Board Profile

TECHNOLOGY - GOVERNANCE - TALENT

Experienced board member and Chair with extensive technology and governance experience in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Combines strategic, commercial and digital experience with a solid understanding of financial oversight, risk management, diversity and culture.

Broad international commercial experience in the technology industry spanning Europe, the USA and Asia Pacific, with a record of delivering growth at the leading edge of digital services whilst maintaining bottom line results. Experienced business leader with a focus on building customer loyalty and effective and resilient teams. Experience on both sides of M&A transactions in the technology sector and in managing growth, change and cross-cultural integration. An accomplished relationship builder through strong listening and influencing skills with a broad, international network.

- Growth Strategy - Culture & Diversity - Governance - Digital Technology - Financial Oversight - Stakeholder Relationships

BOARD AND COMMITTEE EXPERIENCE

Organisation A: Chair **2017 to present**
Description of what the organisation does in 2 lines maximum

- As chair led the development of **strategic plan** to deliver profit increase of 20% and established a new business unit
- Established and chaired a **Remuneration Committee**

Organisation B: Non-Executive Director **2018 to present**
Description of what the organisation does in 2 lines maximum

- Member of the **Audit Committee** with oversight of internal controls, systems and processes. Appointed new external auditor.

Organisation C: Non-Executive Director **2018 to 2020**

Description of what the organisation does in 2 lines maximum

- As **Chair of the Risk Committee**, provided oversight & challenge on establishment of a robust risk management framework and embedded risk culture across organisation.

School D: Trustee **2017 to 2020**

2 lines maximum about the school and the role you played as a Trustee e.g. oversaw the appointment of a new principal, established cyberbullying policy and child protection policies.

Joan Jones | Phone: +353 85 222 2222 | Email: joan@joanjoness.com

CV example 2 continued

Charity E: Chair

2008 to 2013

Description of what the charity does in 2 lines maximum

- Built the board and steered early strategy development within a complex stakeholder ecosystem. Established compliance with Charities Code of Governance. Raised €2m in funds for investment in a new centre.

EXECUTIVE EXPERIENCE

From 2014 to 2020, as CEO of **ABC Ltd** led strategy development, P&I ownership, digital transformation and cultural change. ABC Ltd is a private company delivering data protection technology solutions across all sectors in UK and Ireland.

- Key Achievement 1
- Key Achievement 2

From 2006 to 2014, CTO at DEF Ltd. providing technology advisory services to commercial organisations in the USA, Africa and Europe including **LMN, BDE** and **FGH Inc.**

- Key Achievement 1
- Key Achievement 2

From 2000 to 2006, COO of the services division of **Expert Communications**, a first-mover US data centre company, oversaw rapid worldwide growth whilst maintaining profitability:

- Built the services division from 200 to 600 professionals in 15 months & integrated acquisitions in the US, UK and China, to keep pace with the rapid build-out of data centres around the world.
- Achieved annual services revenue growth of 40% pa (to US\$150m), whilst delivering divisional operating income of 15%.
- Designed & implemented the strategy to merge the professional and managed services teams into a single international services division (1600 staff), to enhance talent retention & profitability.

EARLY CAREER

Include a couple of lines on your early career key roles, organisations and timeframe and any notable achievements.

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

- Leading from the Chair, INSEAD, 2019
- MIT Sloan Masters MSc Management, 2000
- Diploma in Accounting and Finance, Chartered Accountants Ireland, 1988
- Bachelor of Business Studies, ABC University, 1981

INTERESTS

- Member of the 30% Club, avid supporter of female leadership development
- Keen sailor and completed cross channel challenge and marathon runner

Joan Jones | Phone: +353 85 222 2222| Email: joan@ioaniones.com

Executive experience

Education and qualifications

Interests and memberships



Institute of Directors Ireland
Indigo Building, Whitaker Square,
Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2, D02 P2X8

+353 (0) 1 411 0010
info@iodireland.ie
iodireland.ie