



From executive CV to board value proposition

A practical guide for senior executives moving into board roles.

An executive CV shows what you did. A board CV shows what a board gains by having you in the room.

Move to the Board. Move the Board.

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BOARD MOVE

Most senior executives start their first board search with the document they already have: a strong executive CV. That instinct is the most common reason capable people fail to be taken seriously for a mandate. An executive CV answers a different question from the one a board asks.

This guide sets out how to make the shift. It draws on the positioning work and document reviews of around twenty senior candidates, and the patterns below repeated across almost every profile, regardless of sector or seniority.

The one shift that matters

An executive CV shows what you did: results, numbers, projects you led, teams you ran. A board CV shows what a board gains by having you in the room: your ability to oversee, challenge and give direction to a management team you do not run. A good executive CV reads like the trailer to an action film, fast and full of highlights. A board CV reads like a good documentary: considered, reflective, strategic.

The board member sits one step removed from execution. The reader of your materials, a chair, a nomination committee or a headhunter, asks one question throughout: what does this person add to our governance that we do not already have? Every line should help answer it. The most common weakness observed was materials that stayed in the sender's perspective (what I have done) instead of the addressee's (what a board gets). That single reframing, from sender to addressee, is what turns an executive profile into a board profile.

A board CV should make five things visible:

- Independent and critical thinking
- Experience across different company phases and situations
- The ability to work with very different people
- Personal integrity
- Working knowledge of corporate governance

The Board Value Proposition: purpose and test

The board search is helped by three documents with distinct jobs:

- **Board Value Proposition (BVP).** Your positioning. A working document where you work out, and then state, what you bring to a board and why it matters. It is the thinking everything else rests on. It is usually not shared in full; it feeds the other two.
- **Board CV.** The evidence. Maximum two pages, reverse chronological, opening with a short profile.
- **One-pager or profile page.** The teaser.

They must be consistent, but they are not the same document and should not be copied across. In review after review, the standalone BVP was sharper than the version that reached the CV or the profile page. Bring all three to the level of the best one.

The test a BVP must pass is simple. Not what have I done but why me, and why does a board need this? A proposition that only lists achievements fails the test. So does one that twenty other candidates could have written. Specific beats generic, and sharp beats broad.

Four failure modes came up again and again:

- **Operational language.** I drive growth through innovation describes what you do, not what a board gains. The same experience from the oversight angle, I help a board judge whether a digital strategy is sound and whether the organisation can actually deliver it, is far stronger.
- **Too long.** A proposition nobody finishes reading does not do its job. Three to four points beat eight.
- **Too broad.** Standing for everything means standing for nothing a selector can place.
- **Mixed structure.** Value and targeting blurred together. Put what you bring first, then where you add it, then what you are looking for.

Building the BVP, step by step

A sequence that works from experience:

- **Translate each station.** Go through your career and, for every role, ask one question: what did I learn here that a board needs? Not what did I achieve. A CFO seat is not a credential in itself; the credential is the judgement about financial risk and realism it gave you. Do this before you write a word of the proposition.
- **Find your edge.** Identify the one thing that is true of you and few others. The strongest propositions came from an honest, specific edge: deep knowledge of one industry in real change; having achieved the same result in fundamentally different organisational realities; knowing how a board actually works from the inside. Breadth is not an edge. Depth is.
- **Write three to four distinct pillars of board value.** Each should name something a board gains, stand clearly apart from the others (overlapping points read as padding), and be backed by evidence. Six diluted points are weaker than three clear ones.
- **Define where you add the most value, and your target picture.** Name the sectors, company types, sizes and situations where your experience pays off most. Then state what you are actually looking for: how many mandates, what kind of board, what you would decline. Without a clear target picture, the search stays undirected and no headhunter can act on it.
- **Say how you work on a board.** A short, self-aware note on your style in the room, a challenger who builds consensus, a structure-giver, the member who calls the CEO before the meeting, makes your contribution easy to picture and is rare enough to set you apart.

From the BVP to the Board CV

Once the proposition is clear, the CV is largely a matter of evidence and discipline.

- **Two pages, reverse chronology.** Newest experience first. Open with a short profile or competency block taken directly from the BVP, not a generic summary of key strengths.
- **Carry the translation through the whole document.** A strong opening followed by an operational career list is the most common half-finished CV. Every station should show its board relevance, not only the intro.
- **Be specific and quantify.** Put size on things: P&L, budget, assets under management, headcount, deal value. Give one line of context for companies a selector outside your industry will not know. Generic self-description (independent thinker trusted in complex environments) is what everyone writes; evidence is what few can show.
- **Fewer words, higher impact.** Trim roles more than ten years back hard, keep roughly three bullets per recent station, and cut detail that belongs in an academic or operational CV. Watch the opposite extreme too: a CV so dense with product names and percentages that the board relevance disappears is as unhelpful as one that is too thin.

Governance experience: be honest, and surface what is hidden

Two recurring patterns. First, do not present operational achievements as board-level impact. A turnaround you led as a manager is an executive accomplishment, not governance experience. Selectors see the difference at once, and the inflation costs you credibility. Where a candidate had no formal mandate yet, the stronger move was to say so plainly and frame a first advisory or Beirat role as a deliberate first step. One candidate relabelled governance experience as board-adjacent experience, and it read as more credible, not less.

Second, many candidates undersold real credentials they already held. Look for these and name them explicitly:

- Committee work (audit, risk, nomination, remuneration), with what you contributed
- Advisory and senior-advisor roles, where you influence without formal authority: convince rather than instruct, which is exactly how a supervisory board works
- Fiduciary roles (pension or benefit trusts, foundation boards)
- Governance of legally independent units without direct authority (franchise systems, federated structures), which is structurally close to supervisory work
- Working with the management and supervisory board from inside a group, which gives you a feel for the power and decision dynamics few outsiders have

For each, state what you took from it that transfers, not just that you held the position.

Pre-empt the selector's questions

Experienced selectors ask the same hard questions. Answer them in the materials before they are raised.

- **Capacity and over-boarding.** If you already hold several mandates or a demanding executive role, say why there is room for another, and where.
- **Timing and transition.** A sitting executive will be asked when a move is realistic. Address it with confidence.
- **Approval and conflicts.** Employer sign-off for an external mandate, and any sector conflict your current role creates. Naming the sectors you target also signals, by implication, what you would exclude.
- **Short stints and dependent mandates.** A run of brief roles, or a mandate held by virtue of your employer, invites questions. A brief, proactive explanation is worth more than the line it explains.

Consistency and craft

At board level, care shows, and so does its absence.

- Keep the numbers identical across every document. Inconsistent figures or mandate counts undermine trust.
- Maintain one version. Near-duplicate files with small differences create doubt about which is current.
- Keep one voice and one person throughout. First person usually reads with the most directness.
- Proofread. Typos in board materials read as carelessness, fairly or not.

Board-readiness checklist

A profile is board-ready when:

- Every section answers what does a board gain, not what did I do
- The proposition has three to four distinct, evidenced pillars and a clear edge
- The target picture names sectors, company types and situations
- The CV is maximum two pages, reverse chronological, with a profile taken from the BVP
- Real governance credentials are surfaced and translated; gaps are addressed honestly
- The obvious selector questions are answered before they are asked
- Numbers, version and voice are consistent, and the documents are clean

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