



**CORVUS
PEOPLE**



NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GUIDE

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION



INTRODUCTION

Are you considering applying for a non-executive director (NED) role? There are a range of benefits to becoming a non-executive director - perhaps you are seeking a new challenge or hoping to expand your professional network. Or maybe you are interested in a particular sector or organisation and would like to contribute your skills and experience to help drive the business forward.

Non-executive directors are crucial to providing an independent perspective and challenging the board to make the right decisions for the company. It also provides you with opportunities to use your strategic and leadership skills and gain exposure to different areas of a business. Ultimately, the decision to apply for a non-executive director role will depend on your personal and professional goals, as well as your qualifications and experience.

In this guide we will walk you through the steps of preparing a compelling application, including what to research, tips for competency questions, writing your cover letter and creating an effective CV. We hope you find it useful.



WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR APPLICATION

First, you will need a ‘NED CV’ and a Cover letter. This will differ from a “normal” CV as the role of a non-exec is different, so this should be reflected in your documents.

YOU’VE GOT THREE BIG QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. How can you show you are ready for a non-executive board role?
2. What skills, experience, and perspective will you bring to the role, and do they match what the organisation is looking for?
3. What interests you about the organisation?

When you’re writing your application, you need to make sure your CV and cover letter include all three, that you showcase your personality and character, and come across as professional, competent and a good communicator.





HOW TO CREATE AN APPLICATION

STEP 1

Research

Get to know the organisation and what they're looking for. If it is a specific position, read everything in the advert thoroughly, including the candidate pack and any other information/ links provided. Do your research on the organisation: look them up on Companies House and read their annual accounts. Talk to anyone you know who might know about them, read their blogs, read news articles about them, and check out their social media. If possible, look at the skills, experiences and perspectives of the existing board members (you can often find this on their website). Find out what you can about the market they operate in. Make sure you understand the role and what they're looking for: is it a director, advisor or committee member?

STEP 2

Brainstorm your answers to the three big questions

Be honest with yourself. Give this time, it will make writing your CV and cover letter much easier. Talk it through with someone who knows you well, they may be able to remind you of things you've forgotten.

STEP 3

Get in contact

If an informal conversation with a board member or recruiter is offered, use this as another opportunity to really get to know the organisation and what they're looking for. You can also ask questions to make sure the role is right for you.

STEP 4

Write your CV and cover letter

In this document, we have provided some suggestions of what to include. However, before you start, double-check what the advert and guidance say. Sometimes they ask you to keep your CV to a certain number of pages or to answer specific questions in your supporting statement.

STEP 5

Find someone who can review it for you.

If you know someone with board experience, ask them. If you can ask someone who knows you well and can make sure you are drawing out all of your skills, even better. Don't be afraid of feedback.



THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR NED CV

A SUMMARY OF WHO YOU ARE AND YOUR CAREER OR EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- Summarise your key skills (e.g., strategy, marketing), sectors you have experience in (e.g., fintech, medical devices etc.), qualifications (e.g., chartered accountant), and the markets you've worked in (e.g., FTSE, AIM, Housing Associations, VC, start-ups...)
- Highlight big achievements (e.g., increased revenue from X to Y, leading a team certain team size, budgetary management, winner of ** award...), and experiences (e.g., turn around, IPO, raising seed investment round).
- If they didn't read on, would they know enough about you to spark their interest?
- Show you understand what the most important skills are for a Non-Executive Director role and highlight that you have those skills. E.g., risk management and mitigation, succession planning, corporate governance, shareholder and stakeholder engagement, performance monitoring, and growth.
- It's not the time to be humble. But it also isn't the time to brag with vague statements like "Excellent at Press and Comms". Be clear and precise with your language e.g., "Nine years as Head of Comms at two UK SMEs, both in the manufacturing and industrial sectors".
- Mention your soft skills too. Things like analytical skills, interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, leadership style, problem-solving, and diplomacy.

YOUR BOARD EXPERIENCES

- Note – this is probably the biggest change from your 'normal' CV. Your 'board experience' section should come before your chronological career experience.
- What board, or board-like, experiences have you had? This could include executive or non-executive roles on a board, company secretariat, observer seats on a board, experience near board level (exec minus one) should also be mentioned, pitching to the board, consulting to the board or attending board meetings, charity trustee roles, start-up boards etc. Have you been on any subcommittees? E.g., Audit, Risk, Remuneration. Be clear about what your role was and whether it was a 'director' role or not.
- In each instance, share an insight into what value you brought to that board. What difference did you make?
- Remember that whilst you may be emphasising the 'technology' skills that you bring to the board, you will be expected to speak into multiple areas of the organisation. So perhaps mention other things you've influenced e.g., finance, governance etc. Give evidence for the soft skills you mentioned in the summary.
- If you haven't had board experience then emphasise how your experience connects to a board environment, and what makes you want to join a board. Don't worry we all have to start somewhere!

YOUR CAREER EXPERIENCES

- This is the more traditional CV section: include where you have worked, what were you responsible for, and what you achieved. Be as specific as possible. Don't forget voluntary roles, too.
- Revisit your "normal" CV and focus it more on high-level, strategic and board skills and experience.
- Make sure this section chimes with what you said in the opening paragraph. Draw out evidence of those skills and experiences in your career experience to date.

YOUR EDUCATION, QUALIFICATIONS, AND AWARDS

- Education: include any degree level qualifications or equivalent.
- Professional qualifications and certifications.
- Relevant training: e.g., non-executive director training or governance training you have had (not necessarily a requirement).
- Awards: relevant professional awards, with details as to what you won them for.
- Regulatory positions
- Memberships to professional bodies or relevant organisations.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

- We're all humans, show that here! Let them know something about what you enjoy outside of work, especially if it's relevant to the organisation. Keep it short.

REFERENCES (IF REQUIRED)

- Some organisations request that you state two or more referees.
- If you choose to do this, only do so with the referee's permission, and share their name, title, and when you worked together. Don't provide their contact details; wait till they ask you for those at the interview stage.

DON'T FORGET THE CV BASICS:

- Good spelling, grammar and a clear layout! Font size – minimum 11, ideally 12.
- Spell out any acronyms or jargon: don't assume the person reading it will know them.
- Include the basics at the top: Full name, Email address, Phone number, Location – e.g., Greater Belfast (doesn't need to be the full address), LinkedIn URL (visit your own page on LinkedIn, and copy and paste the URL that appears e.g. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ianweatherup/>).
- When you mention an organisation, you've worked with or for, indicate its turnover or number of employees, to give an idea of scale.
- For specific roles, ensure you include formal organisation names, role titles, and dates of where you worked when. And put the most recent roles at the top. For education and training include dates.
- Length – it's debatable, some recommend 2 pages, and some say max 4 pages. We'd recommend 2 pages.
- PDF or Word version? We'd recommend sending it as a PDF unless they've asked for it in Word, as that way you can be certain they will view your CV in the formatting you set out.
- Don't write 'CV' at the top, just write your name in big letters. They know what it is, make your name stand out!
- Always save the file name as your 'name', 'CV', and the 'role' you are applying for.



THINGS TO DEMONSTRATE IN YOUR COVER LETTER

TOP THINGS TO DEMONSTRATE

- Your interest in the organisation. Link your personal interest to their specific mission/purpose. Look back at your brainstorming notes and be honest about what interests you about the organisation and why.
 - You understand why you are a good candidate for the role. Reflect back to the advert or brief: what skills and experience did they say they are looking for? Make sure you have highlighted your experience in those areas. If you think you have other skills, experiences or a perspective that will add to the mix on their board in a way that they didn't specifically state that they require, this is the time to get that across.
 - You are ready for a non-executive role. If this is your first board role, show that you appreciate the difference between exec and non-exec roles. As with the CV, consider board or board-like experience, show that you see the difference, but don't let titles hold you back from explaining the relevant experience you have. If you already have board experience, highlight what you've learned and have been able to contribute.
 - You recognise the context of 'now'. Show you understand the strategic moment in time that the organisation is facing, its goals and ambitions, and how your skills/experience can help them with that.
 - You have done your research on the organisation. Share the insights you have gained through that research.
 - Your skills, experience, perspective, training, and achievements. Are there any big obvious things you want to make sure they know about you? Don't just leave it to chance as to whether they spotted them in your CV, mention it here too.
- You are aware of any concerns they may have about appointing you e.g., you have no prior board experience, you are young, have no higher-level qualifications, don't live near the office, have a full-time role alongside this etc. Tell them why that issue will not be a problem, and even how it gives you a fresh perspective on the role. Address any significant gaps in your CV if applicable. Don't let the elephant in the room take your seat.

DON'T FORGET THE COVER LETTER BASICS:

- Check if they have asked you to address any specific points in your cover letter.
- Address your cover letter to the current chair of the board, unless you specifically know the application will be considered by someone else.
- Keep it to no more than two pages (unless they've told you otherwise).
- Always save your cover letter file name as your 'name', 'Cover letter', and the 'role' you are applying for.

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GET IN TOUCH TODAY

We hope this helps to get your application process off the ground. For more information on Corvus People, or for a consultation with one of our advisors, please contact us at hello@corvuspeople.com.



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