



Board Diversity Playbook

inclusiveboards.stanford.edu



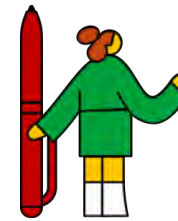
BOARD DIVERSITY PLAYBOOK

A playbook for visionary companies that are changing the world, created by the California Partners Project and the Stanford VMware Women's Leadership Innovation Lab.

[Learn more about the collaboration >](#)

Are you ready to build a transformative board that will become a powerful strategic asset?

Achieve an effective search process to add new talent and perspectives to your board. Take these four empirically sound, community-sourced steps to find a broad range of talented women leaders who can provide insights and skills to enhance your board's performance and success. For each step, we provide tactics and tools to improve your process.



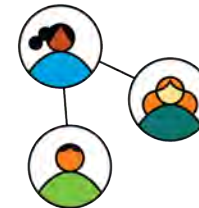
STEP 1: Find the Gaps

[Go to Step >](#)



STEP 2: Expand Your Networks

[Go to Step >](#)



STEP 3: Create an Equitable Interview Process

[Go to Step >](#)



STEP 4: Onboard Intentionally

[Go to Step >](#)

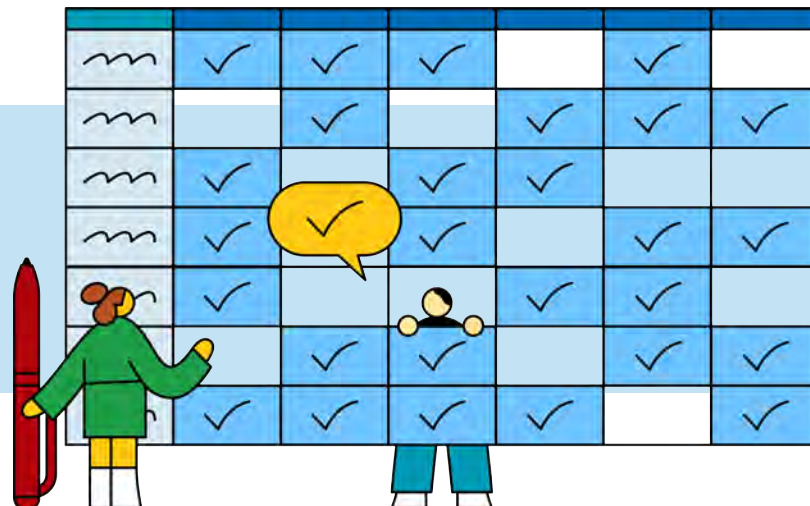
STEP 1:

Find the Gaps

Update and Use a Board Matrix

The Aim

Write a robust, forward-looking description of the expertise and demographic characteristics needed in new members to build a diverse and strong board.



Take Action

- ✓ Create or update a board matrix describing the skills, experiences, and demographics of current directors.
- ✓ Use the matrix to conduct a gap analysis to identify additional skills, experiences, and demographics that would support the company's current strategy and future vision, which will reveal opportunities for diversifying.
- ✓ Clarify the criteria for new candidates, thus creating a robust job description.
- ✓ Use the board matrix to help you articulate to the candidate why you want them to join the board based on their expertise and lived experience, not solely because of their demographic profile.

Benefits

The process will allow you to evaluate each director candidate in the context of the existing board and how they will enhance its overall performance and balance familiar experiences with new perspectives. Diversity fosters healthy board discussions and debates.

Why it matters

This process is intended to mitigate affinity bias and other dynamics that may unconsciously prevent you from recognizing visionary leaders who could increase your board's effectiveness.



Tools

Start with these free tools

[Go to Tools >](#)



In the Words of Experts

Directors' suggestions

[Get Inspired >](#)



Insights

Additional resources and references

[Go to Insights >](#)

USER TIP: Consider interviewing each board member to create an accurate assessment of your board.



Find the Gaps: Tools



Utilizing a board matrix can identify and concretize what skills, experiences, and/or perspectives you are looking to add to your board while taking into consideration what attributes and demographics already exist. Creating a board matrix can help to make the process as unbiased as possible by sticking with the facts rather than relying on “feel,” which can often lead to homogenous groups.

About Board Matrices

A board matrix is essential to visualizing how to mold your board’s composition to address current and future company needs. The purpose of a matrix is to decipher what skillsets, experiences, and demographics are represented on your board, and the gaps which need to be filled. In order to properly assess your board (and its needs), prioritize creating a matrix which is in alignment with the organization’s strategy. If these are out of alignment, then your board will be out of alignment with the goals your organization is working towards.

Using Assessments to Build Your Matrix

While many boards use self-assessments to fill out their matrix, you may want to try to interview all directors or, resources- and time-permitting, hire a third-party consultant to do so. This process helps to ensure that the competencies (categorization, recency, scope and impact) and characteristics of the current directors are filled out consistently and objectively. Going through this process will help you to write a robust job description for new directors - a crucial step in building a visionary board.

What to Include in Your Matrix

- Use [these Nasdaq instructions](#) to know what to include in your board matrix.
- Download our sample list of competencies, experiences and demographic characteristics below to design and fill out your board matrix.

Board Matrix Example

We have created an example board matrix (image preview here and Excel file available for download below) that you can customize and apply to your own board assessment and gap analysis. In the template, there are spaces open for you to fill in as you see fit, based on the needs of your organization and your board.

	Director Name 1	Director Name 2	Director Name 3
Skills & Experience			
Relevant skills and experiences based on company-specific needs and strategy such as: international experience, public policy, marketing/sales, audit committee financial expert, human capital management, governance, risk management etc.			
Demographic Background			
Board Tenure			
Sexual Orientation (voluntary)			
Gender Identity (voluntary)			
Age (indicate years old)			
Race/Ethnicity (voluntary)			
Veteran Status (voluntary)			
Disability Status (voluntary)			

Additional Examples to Help Get You Started on Developing Your Matrix

Example from the [Office of New York City Comptroller](#)

Examples of [standard board matrices from Nasdaq](#)

[DOWNLOAD BOARD COMPETENCIES GUIDE](#)[DOWNLOAD BOARD MATRIX TEMPLATE](#)



Find the Gaps: In the Words of Experts



We asked experts how they leveraged board matrices to shape better boards.

“

*The Board Skills Matrix is a critical component of understanding knowledge and experience gaps the board may have in support of the company’s strategy. To get the most out of a matrix, you need to first **overcome the challenge that comes with any self-assessment**. Some directors will over- or under-evaluate themselves. Ideas to make the process more consistent include: conducting 1:1 interviews to objectively assess skill level, providing examples of ratings, and offering general guidance on how to really differentiate strengths.*



Mari Baker

Co-founder, Stanford VMware Women’s Leadership Innovation Lab | Board Member, Blue Shield of California, GoShip, John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

“

*I’ve served on a board where each board member was asked to individually review the board matrix and suggest any further skills, experiences, and demographics that would address our needs as a board. We then **shared the matrix with key senior executives and invited them to identify their additional business needs**. The end result was a comprehensive, strategic board matrix that helped us bring in new board members with skills, perspectives, and ideas to fill in gaps and strengthen the board overall.*



Adriane Brown

Managing Partner, Flying Fish Ventures | Board Member, American Airlines Group Inc., Axon Enterprise, Inc., eBay Inc., KKR & Co., Inc



Find the Gaps: Insights



This is a compilation of resources on the value of board matrices and on-the-ground examples of how and why they work.

[Matrix Thinking](#)

This article from KPMG breaks down why matrix thinking and long-term planning can help to build a stronger board. Providing a matrix reflecting the qualifications of board members creates an equitable and well-rounded perspective to ensure an even disbursement of backgrounds, identities, and perspectives across the board itself for long-lasting results.

[Board Composition: The Road to Strategic Refreshment and Succession](#)

This article from SpencerStuart provides effective practices for diversifying board composition over time to ensure the board meets its goals, evaluates and re-evaluates its efficacy over time, and does not rely on board members' retirement to allow new members to join.

[Board Recruitment Matrix](#)

This article outlines the importance of meeting the needs of your board's shareholders by evaluating the makeup of your board regularly using Skills Matrices. Diligent provides useful tools such as evaluation areas and software recommendations.

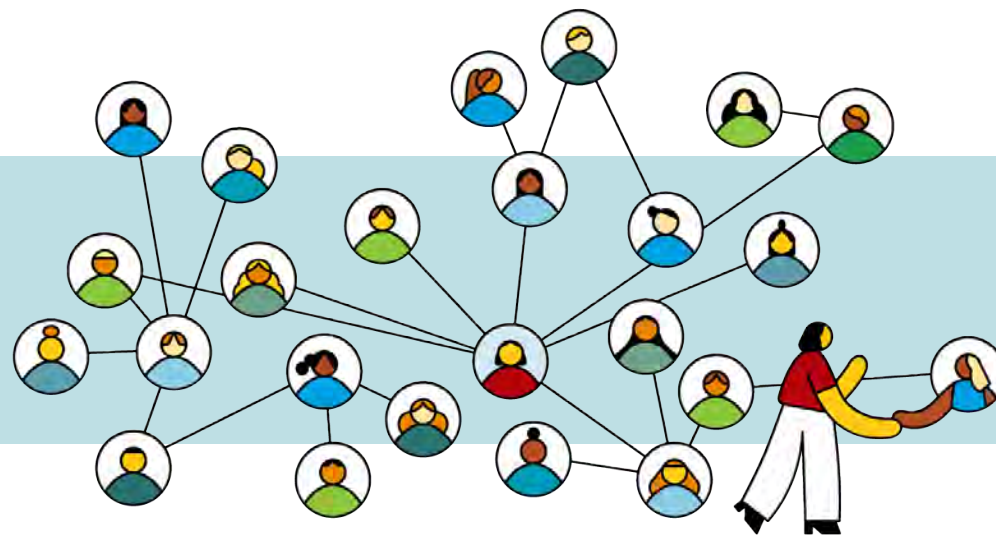
[Corporate Director Selection and Recruitment: A Matrix](#)

The Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance gets to the root of how and why you must align the goals and values of your board with your organization's mission and values. This article provides board matrices and describes how to go about ensuring your board is effective, efficient, and tailored to your company.

STEP 2:

Expand Your Networks

Look Beyond First Connections



The Aim

Increase the diversity of your slate of candidates to bring new insights and skills to your board.

Take Action

- ✓ **Leverage your key connections** to identify new candidates for the board search who may be second and third-degree connections in your network, such as your professional service providers.
- ✓ **Expand your search** beyond your existing network, tapping into organizations and professional associations.
- ✓ **Identify candidates' connections** to the board's network.

Benefits

It increases board confidence to see second- or third-degree network connections, by organically identifying commonalities. The board is likely to be connected to a more diverse network of talent than they think, and we tend to [underestimate the importance of the outer circle of our networks](#).

Why it matters

Finding these connections increases the board's confidence in new talent, which helps you to move beyond [affinity bias](#), increasing your board's overall effectiveness. It's worth noting, boards don't operate under the same EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) laws as operational roles, so they can be very specific about looking only at candidates with clear-cut criteria such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, age, etc.



Tools

Start with these free tools

[Go to Tools >](#)



In the Words of Experts

Directors' suggestions

[Get Inspired >](#)

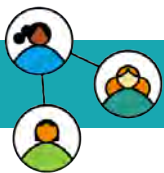


Insights

Additional resources and references

[Go to Insights >](#)

USER TIP: Aim to identify at least two candidates from historically marginalized demographic groups. If you have only one, [they will have no statistical chance of being selected](#), and, if selected, [shoulder the burden of being "the only" in the room](#). But the chances go up with two.



Expand Your Networks: Tools



To build a better board, you will need to be creative when it comes to leveraging your network. Reach beyond your comfort zone to see where (and with whom) your board can grow.

1. Mine your network

Leverage your key connections to identify new candidates for the board search.

- Check in with your local bankers, accountants, lawyers, insurance brokers and other **professional service providers** for connections to leaders from historically marginalized groups whose expertise will strengthen your board.
- Identify people from historically marginalized groups on your company's **leadership team** and ask them to connect you to their networks.
- Look inside **membership organizations, which often have subgroups such as women's initiatives.**
 - » Alumni associations for undergraduate and graduate programs
 - » Business and professional associations
 - » Check out panels on diversity on boards and mine them for potential candidates

2. Expand your search beyond your existing network

Connect with organizations and professional associations that can help you identify top talent.

- The California Partners Project's [Resource Hub](#) can point you to director affinity groups as well as organizations that offer curated lists of qualified candidates.
- Washington State's Office of Financial Management has created a [Diversity Organizations Resource List](#) which provides links to a wide range of business and professional associations for women and members of historically marginalized groups.

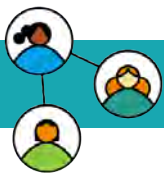
3. Identify connections to your network

Use databases to identify existing relationships with potential candidates to build confidence and familiarity with those candidates. Candidates may have second- or third-degree connections with board members.

- Equilar's [Board Edge](#) database can help you uncover connections between candidates and your company's board members and executive team.
- [LinkedIn](#): Contact other CEOs and directors for names of candidates they have considered – a mismatch for one company can be a fit for another.
- Keep and regularly update a spreadsheet of potential board members that tracks the expertise and attributes of each candidate. Even if they are not a fit today, they may be a suitable candidate in the future.

DOWNLOAD THIS GUIDANCE

VISIT CPP'S RESOURCE HUB



Expand Your Networks: In the Words of Experts



We asked experts how they leveraged board matrices to shape better boards.

“

Local bankers, accountants, lawyers and insurance brokers play a critical role in helping small- to medium-sized businesses grow and expand. **They can also be a great resource for finding new directors for your board.** Try approaching them to introduce you to other savvy business people in your community - people who can help you identify new opportunities, strengthen your business and help solve business challenges in creative ways.



Sylvia Acevedo

Former CEO, Girl Scouts of the USA | Board Member,
Credo Technology Group Holding Ltd., Qualcomm Inc.

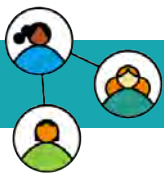
“

When you're shortlisting candidates to interview, make sure you're not just adding one woman into the mix - that's not going to set you up for success. **In some cases, I've seen nomination and governance committees review slates of all women candidates, and that's great.**



Jana Rich

Founder and CEO, Rich Talent Group



Expand Your Networks: In the Words of Experts



We asked experts how they leveraged board matrices to shape better boards.

“

*Bright, fresh, diverse talent is out there, boards simply need to be committed to finding such talent and **know where to get help with the board director search**. Fantastic organizations like the Latino Corporate Directors Association helped me and several of the boards I serve connect with highly skilled Latina and Latino talent who were well-prepared to serve on boards with credible and credentialed substance.*



Fred Diaz

Former CEO, Mitsubishi | Board Member, Archer Aviation Inc., Smith & Wesson, Valero Energy Corporation, SiteOne Landscape Supply

“

*You have to get comfortable looking for talent in new and often unexpected ways in order to achieve your goals. We once called a woman who we respected and admired but was already boarded up and asked her for recommendations. She referred us to a female tech founder who was highly credentialed but had never served on a public company board. **We encouraged board members to trust this referral from a respected source and be open to the unique perspective that an earlier career tech founder would bring.** She was invited to join the board and provided key insights on the tech talent market, including how to attract, pay and retain tech talent.*



Beth Axelrod

Former Global Head of Employee Experience, Airbnb | Board Member, Heidrick & Struggles



Expand Your Networks: Insights



This is a compilation of resources on the importance of reaching beyond your already-existing networks and ways to implement new network-building strategies.

Beyond the C-Suite: Trends in Director Skill Sets

This report from Diligent Institute reviews data from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia and provides an overview of where the newest board members are mostly found, including technology, marketing, and sales.

Director Tip Sheet: Filling in the Missing Pieces on Boardroom Diversity

This article from Deloitte, in collaboration with the National Association of Corporate Directors provides effective and intentional tips for aligning terminology, evaluation practices, and diversification efforts in board recruitment and sustainment practices.

Boards are Overlooking Qualified Women. Here's How to Fix That

The Harvard Business Review (HBR) looks at Fortune 100 companies to see the trend in female CEOs and how boards are overlooking qualified talent in female hiring. The authors offer a tactical approach to avoiding these mistakes.

Examples of Diverse Candidate Search Language

This collection from the Midwest Investors Diversity Initiative (MIDI) showcases specific language examples for position descriptions from various companies to increase board diversity. Note: Contains slightly outdated language (such as 'diverse candidate' and refers to 'Facebook' rather than Meta). It contains helpful examples as a starting point.

Getting More Black Women on Corporate Boards Is This New Program's Urgent Mission

Black Women on Boards is working to do exactly that: place more Black women on boards. This article from Fortune outlines how to get started (if you don't know where to start) and the importance of initially encouraging Black women to consider joining boards when they think it might be impossible.

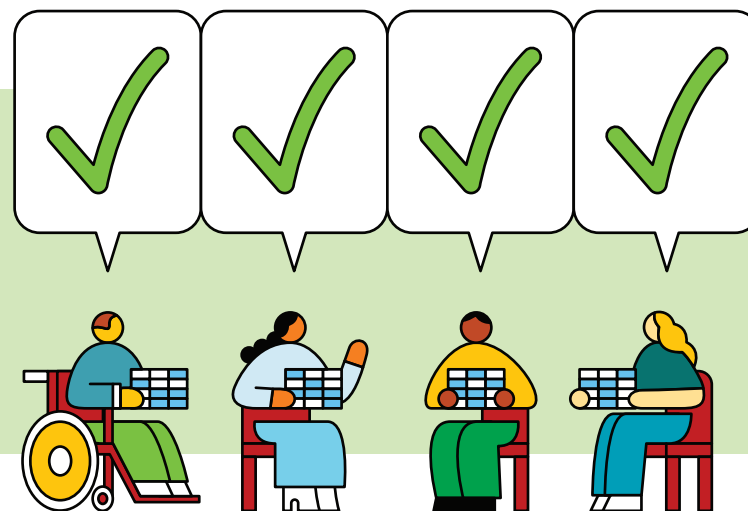
STEP 3:

Create an Equitable Interview Process

Systematize Practices to Block Bias

The Aim

Make the interview process as effective as possible.



Take Action

- ✓ **Select the interview panel.** Set expectations to use bias-blocking practices and set clear roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ **Prepare for interviews.** Create clearly defined, shared criteria, and a standardized scoring system for all interviewers.
- ✓ **Hold the interviews.** Keep the process consistent for each candidate.
- ✓ **Gather feedback and discuss.** Ensure that feedback is collected in a consistent way to remain as unaffected by others' opinions as possible.

Benefits

Consistency can [lead to better decisions](#). When you stick to the agreed-upon criteria, you are more likely to value talented board candidates who may otherwise get overlooked.

Why it matters

Consistent interview processes can help block [performance](#) and [affinity biases](#) that may otherwise prevent you from recognizing the talent of candidates from historically marginalized groups.



Tools

Start with these free tools
[Go to Tools >](#)



In the Words of Experts

Directors' suggestions
[Get Inspired >](#)



Insights

Additional resources and references
[Go to Insights >](#)

USER TIP: Assign one person on the nomination committee to lead and advise on the implementation of best practices and criteria.



Create an Equitable Interview Process: Tools



We each have our own set of biases (conscious and unconscious) and these steps outline how to make the interview process for your board candidate(s) as intentional, objective, equitable, and inclusive as possible.

KEY CONCEPTS

Good processes can lead to good outcomes.

Practices designed for consistency and clarity can not only strengthen your process but also minimize the impact of bias. Good practices include:

Seek clarity and remove ambiguity. This includes clarifying the criteria used in making decisions and how you are going to come to a recommendation.

Align the team. Calibrate expectations of interviewers and create a process that is consistent and inclusive. Monitor for bias.

Check your work. Look at gender, race, disability, affinity and other demographics and experiences. Check to see if you are inadvertently favoring some candidates or being unduly harsh on others.

1. Panel Selection

- Select an interview panel to serve on each candidate interview.
- Assign questions or capabilities; keep this consistent for each candidate.
- Make sure you are establishing shared expectations and clear definitions to avoid any misunderstandings.

- Establish a feedback collection method at the beginning so that members of the panel are not impacted by others' opinions.
- Consider adding a valued and different perspective to the interview panel, by inviting the People Leader or the company's banker, accountant, or lawyer who is subject to duties of confidentiality.

2. Prepare for the Interview(s)

- Develop an interview scorecard to guide the process, but not necessarily for notetaking.
- Schedule pre-interviews to help equalize the experience for all candidates, especially those without prior relationships to board members. Share expectations, processes, and approaches of the committee.
- Craft interview questions focused on competencies, personal experiences, and attributes.

3. The Interview

- Make the interview process consistent for all candidates. Changing or adding questions introduces bias into the process.
- When giving or receiving feedback on the candidates, focus on similar attributes for all. Try not to vary how you evaluate the candidates.

4. Give Feedback and Discuss

- Focus on the opportunities and gaps identified in the board matrix. Stick to the criteria and strive for consistency.
- Notice if there are criticisms for non-traditional candidates and seek to understand if you can either question the criticism or gather more insights through other means.

[DOWNLOAD INTERVIEW GUIDANCE](#)



Create an Equitable Interview Process: In the Words of Experts



We asked experts for tried-and-true strategies to establish an equitable interview process and mitigate unconscious bias.

“

*In my experience, consistency is key to getting the best outcomes when interviewing director candidates. As a Nomination and Governance Committee Chair, **I start by insisting on a strong slate where every candidate meets our criteria - including our criteria for diversity.** I then have the same people interview the final candidates, using an established list of questions as a guide, and evaluating each candidate with a standardized evaluation tool. I also like to keep the interviewing timeline tight. **People have very different styles of advocacy, and it makes for better and more equitable discussions and decision-making when everyone on the interview panel has recently spoken with every candidate.***



Nanxi Liu

Co-founder and Co-CEO, Blaze.tech | Board Member, CarParts.com, Inc., CarLotz, Inc.

“

*What's been game changing for me is to institute a process where we always **interview candidates from underrepresented groups first.** This disrupts the unintentional bias of a “friends and family” recruitment process, which often excludes underrepresented groups. If we do not select them for a role, we articulate what skills they would need to be a better fit for the position. We then make sure that **we only pursue other candidates with those skills.** This way we can look at ourselves in the mirror and recognize and mitigate our biases head-on.*



Dane E. Holmes

Co-founder and CEO, Eskalera, Inc. | Board Member, KKR & Co., Inc.



Create an Equitable Interview Process: Insights



This is a compilation of resources on the importance of reaching beyond your already-existing networks and ways to implement new network-building strategies.

Beyond the C-Suite: Trends in Director Skill Sets

This report from Diligent Institute reviews data from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia and provides an overview of where the newest board members are mostly found, including technology, marketing, and sales.

Director Tip Sheet: Filling in the Missing Pieces on Boardroom Diversity

This article from Deloitte, in collaboration with the National Association of Corporate Directors provides effective and intentional tips for aligning terminology, evaluation practices, and diversification efforts in board recruitment and sustainment practices.

Boards are Overlooking Qualified Women. Here's How to Fix That

The Harvard Business Review (HBR) looks at Fortune 100 companies to see the trend in female CEOs and how boards are overlooking qualified talent in female hiring. The authors offer a tactical approach to avoiding these mistakes.

Examples of Diverse Candidate Search Language

This collection from the Midwest Investors Diversity Initiative (MIDI) showcases specific language examples for position descriptions from various companies to increase board diversity. Note: Contains slightly outdated language (such as 'diverse candidate' and refers to 'Facebook' rather than Meta). It contains helpful examples as a starting point.

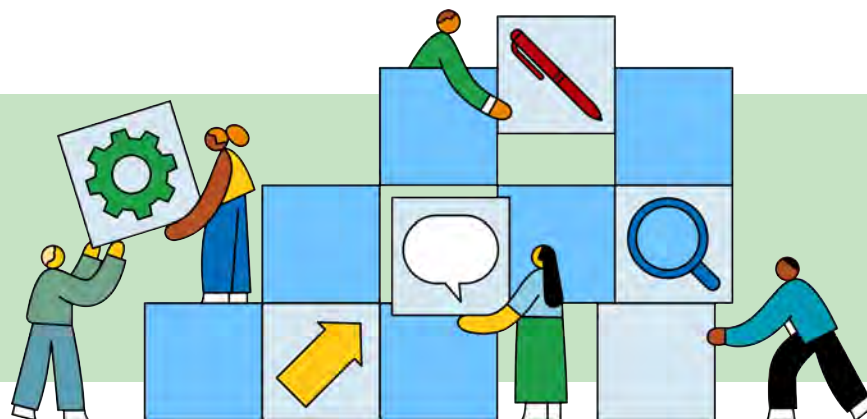
Getting More Black Women on Corporate Boards Is This New Program's Urgent Mission

Black Women on Boards is working to do exactly that: place more Black women on boards. This article from Fortune outlines how to get started (if you don't know where to start) and the importance of initially encouraging Black women to consider joining boards when they think it might be impossible.

STEP 4:

Onboard Intentionally

Foster an Environment to Thrive



The Aim

Create the conditions, share insights, and foster relationships so that your new board member(s) can thrive. Support their growth to become impactful and engaged thought partners.

Take Action

- ✓ **Brief the new board member** on the company strategy and the legal and administrative duties and responsibilities before their first board meeting.
- ✓ **Make strategic committee assignment(s)** for the new board member.
- ✓ **Assign an experienced mentor** or board buddy to focus on the board culture, dynamics and informal processes.
- ✓ **Create social activities** and opportunities to form a bond.
- ✓ **Create norms** to make room for new board members so their ideas get valued and heard.
- ✓ **Check in regularly** and give the new board member clear, specific feedback so they can be effective in their role.

Benefits

A good onboarding process helps the entire board reap the benefits of all of the work that went into selecting and vetting the new board member(s). The more holistic and well-rounded (and ongoing) the onboarding process is, the better chance your new member can effectively leverage their specific skillset and perspective for which they were brought onto the board; capture the value of the new board member's expertise by making clear "how" the work gets done on this board.

Why it matters

Boards have hidden dimensions of their culture, including communication patterns and implicit hierarchies. Being new to this role or an "only", your new director may not automatically gain access to these insider insights. Clarifying roles and expectations can help your new board member overcome barriers to being an effective member of the board.



Tools

Start with these free tools
[Go to Tools >](#)



In the Words of Experts

Directors' suggestions
[Get Inspired >](#)



Insights

Additional resources and references
[Go to Insights >](#)

USER TIP: Consider onboarding as a year-long investment in your new board member's success, not a one-time act.



Onboard Intentionally: Tools



Now that you have found the best candidate for your board, the real work begins! Recruitment is the gateway, but onboarding is when the board member learns about board nuance, culture, and how things work behind-the-scenes. The onboarding process is not a one-time occurrence, rather, it is ongoing and dynamic. The checklist below will guide you through one potential onboarding process to support your new board member (you can adjust the checklist as needed to fit your particular board).

New Board Member Onboarding Checklist

The responsibility of getting up to speed in the boardroom is often shouldered by the new director; yet, the company and existing board members can (and should) provide the insights and tools to make the process more efficient, productive and rewarding. These steps are meant to highlight the obstacles and offer straight-forward strategies to help onboard new board members. This is not a one-time task: follow these strategies for a minimum of one fiscal year.

1. Provide context. Brief the new member on the company strategy and the legal and administrative duties and responsibilities before their first board meeting. Give them access to prior board materials. Brief them on current focus areas, especially for the committees to which they are assigned.

Why it matters: Even though the new board member is an expert in their field, they need to be set up for success in this context.

2. Make strategic committee assignments. Assign the new director to a committee where they will connect with the most influential board members and bring their unique insights to support the future success of the company.

Why it matters: People from historically marginalized groups often get assigned² to the least influential roles. So, it's important to provide channels to connect to longer-term committee members and create opportunities for them to learn about and influence the work of the board.

3. Assign a mentor or board buddy. Focus on the board culture, dynamics, and informal processes. This can include protocols for making requests and establish context such as personalities, how directors interact with one another, and expectations. The mentor can also act as an ally and amplify the new director's voice in discussions when others inadvertently ignore, interrupt³ or unduly criticize⁴ them, as can happen when someone is new to the group.

Why it matters: Just as in any community, the corporate board has its own culture. The new director may be new to board service and have fewer existing relationships⁵ to board members, thus having fewer insights into these less apparent but important dynamics and expectations. In addition, due to implicit associations of leadership, we tend to overlook expertise from people from historically marginalized groups. This can block their expertise from contributing fully to the group.



Onboard Intentionally: Tools



4. Create social activities and opportunities to form a bond. Consider ice-breaker exercises, board dinners, and other ways to on-ramp the new director and help all to build bonds with one another. Check in with the new board member to ensure the activities make them feel included; they may have religious, dietary or preferential concerns that make some activities difficult to join.

Why it matters: Social bonds⁶ are more difficult to make and maintain across differences; so intentionally creating opportunities where these connections can form can help overcome gaps in relationships.

5. Create norms to make room for their insights and feedback. Focus on strong facilitation of group discussions to ensure there is room for all to contribute to the conversation.

Why it matters: Women experts, and those from historically marginalized groups, are more frequently interrupted and talked over in meetings. This can limit their ability to have the intended impact⁷ on the board's success. Establishing inclusive norms⁸ will help them to contribute without fighting against these dynamics.

6. Check in and give feedback. Periodically ask, "How else can I help you be most effective?" Give them clear, specific feedback on what they are doing well. And suggest ways they can become more effective, including ongoing education such as seminars, email lists to join or books to read, how to listen and observe patterns, and ways to better contribute in conversations.

Why it matters: Women often receive feedback that does not help them advance⁹. It is often vague (not focused on outcomes), about their personalities not skills, and overly focused on how they communicate, rather than the substance or aim of their communication.

[DOWNLOAD ONBOARDING CHECKLIST](#)



Onboard Intentionally: In the Words of Experts



We asked experts about the importance of purposeful onboarding and what it takes to put it into practice in a meaningful way.

“

As a Nomination and Governance Committee Chair, I continually remind the full board of the importance of purposeful onboarding. For directors who are new to our company and our culture, we seek to provide a seminal first exposure and create a sense of belonging from the very start. As part of onboarding, **we encourage new board members to mentor members of the management team.** In addition to getting to know key contributors, this is a great way to quickly integrate into a function and gain deeper insights and diverse perspectives on the business from the start. Another key onboarding step is **strategically assigning board projects to new members so that they can immediately step into value creation.** For example, at Ultragenyx I was assigned the task of attending an R&D day as the board's representative. It gave me the opportunity to fully integrate into the science and provide feedback to the team and perspectives to the board.



Shehnaaz Suliman, MD, MBA, M. Phil.

CEO, Recode Therapeutics | Board Member, 10x Genomics, Inc., Ultragenyx Pharmaceutical, Inc.

“

When Better Boards Initiative surveyed experienced directors about their first onboarding experience, **42 percent said they wished they'd had a better idea of the hidden dimensions of board culture.** Key steps we dedicate time for in Asana's onboarding plan include having the Chair of the Audit Committee walk new directors through two years of financials, board culture, and how we communicate. We also pair all new directors with a current member of the board to serve as the primary onboarding partner – to discuss board materials with them and debrief with them after each meeting. **We find it makes meetings more productive and helps new directors become fully impactful and engaged thought partners.**



Anna Binder

Chief People Officer, Asana | Board Member, Culture Amp



This is a compilation of resources which guide executive boards and new board members to ensure onboarding is effective and thoughtful.

[New Director Onboarding: A Roadmap for Boards](#)

Woodruff Sawyer suggests ten different ways to set your new Board Director up for success. This article also provides additional resources for individuals considering joining a board as well as other articles that provide data around board diversity and the changing landscape of executive board demographics and shareholder expectations.

[Refining the Roadmap: A Guide to Onboarding the Next Generation of Board Talent](#)

SpencerStuart provides a holistic guide to onboarding your new board members. This ranges from the nuances of onboarding to who specifically carries out what task throughout the onboarding process and how to encourage success throughout a member's tenure.

[New Director Onboarding Guide](#)

[free PDF download]

KPMG's Board Leadership Center has created a resource for any new director and their introduction to an executive board. This includes suggested reading, orientation tips, and how to implement regular meetings with key stakeholders.

[Advice to New Board Members](#)

[free executive summary, full report available for purchase]

The Better Boards Initiative has given the newest member of any board a how-to-succeed guide in their Advice to New Board Members. By interviewing 103 directors currently serving on diverse boards, they gathered the candid answer to what they wished they had known whilst first joining the board, and their advice for new directors (now that they know what they know). This executive summary gives you a sneak peek into their clear and relevant data for the new board member.

Testimonials

“

*Companies who care about business performance need to prioritize **diversity as a key lever for driving growth** — not because it's a nice thing to do, but because it's the smart thing to do. Use the strategies in this playbook to **create opportunities to accelerate the performance of your board.***



Sukhinder Singh Cassidy
CEO, Xero, Ltd. | Founder and Chairman, theBoardlist

“

*If you are creating a company and you want it to succeed in the long run, the company — and its board — should mirror global demographics and perspectives on a range of vectors. **When you are ready to build a diverse, forward-thinking board, the strategies in this playbook are a good place to start.***



Julia Hartz
Co-founder and CEO, Eventbrite | Board Member, Four Seasons Hotels & Resort

“

*I have found that **diversity of perspectives and breadth of experience** are critically important attributes of a well-functioning board. **It's worth being intentional** about building a strong, diverse, world-class board.*



Brian Niccol
Chairman and CEO, Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc. |
Board Member, KB Home

“

*Diversity was one of the key values we embraced when we refreshed our board after Hewlett-Packard Company split into two separate companies in 2015. We did this because it was the right thing to do and because we know diverse boards have a broader range of experiences and expertise to provide invaluable insights on strategic business initiatives. **A diverse board attracts diverse talent and ensures we meet the needs of all our customers.***



Enrique Lores
President and CEO, HP, Inc. | Board Member, PayPal Holdings, Inc.

Launch Celebration



About the Collaboration

This resource was developed by the Stanford VMware Women's Leadership Innovation Lab and the California Partners Project, with an aim to empower change agents with research-based approaches to advance diverse women's leadership. We bring together leading experts and people in the field to capture the best ideas for those seeking to diversify their boards. We are:

- [The VMware Women's Leadership Innovation Lab](#) at Stanford University is an impact lab pioneering research to advance women's leadership. The Lab generates foundational research to advance women's leadership by diagnosing barriers, developing and evaluating interventions to get beyond barriers, and disseminates research-based solutions by bridging the gap between research and practice.
- [The California Partners Project](#), co-founded by California First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom and Olivia Morgan, is a champion for gender equity within the business sector and promotes the mental, behavioral, and physical well-being of California's children.

Who Should Use This Board Diversity Playbook?

The Playbook will be a useful resource for any CEOs, investors, board members, and board nominating committees recruiting new directors to their board - especially those that do not have the resources to hire experts to run the search process. Organizations and educators who work with boards on governance, effectiveness and oversight will also find the community-sourced strategies and tactical advice valuable for their work.

How To Use This Resource

There are four main portions of this resource, each full of information for you to use at your discretion throughout the process of assessing, growing, diversifying, and sustaining your corporate board. Each page

includes practical tools for you to employ, tactical suggestions from those who have done the work in their organizations, and insights linking you to further resources and readings to support and expand awareness to set your board up for success.

Diversity on Boards Definitions

We aim to support boards to diversify and strengthen their membership. Our focus is advancing women on corporate boards. We broadly define the word woman: we include women across multiple dimensions, including race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, and age. We include:

- People who are gender non-conforming.
- Transgender women.
- Anybody who identifies as a woman.

We aim to be as inclusive as possible so that we can see and include remarkable talent across multiple intersections and dimensions of identity.

We use the terminology underrepresented in reference to the representation on boards themselves and historically marginalized when it comes to identities which have been systematically and systemically oppressed in society. These terms can include - but are not limited to - the identity groups listed above. By focusing on those who have been missing from board service, we aim to help boards maximize their effectiveness.

To find out more or get involved, contact info@calpartnersproject.org.

© Stanford University 2023. All rights reserved.



Board Diversity **Playbook**

inclusiveboards.stanford.edu