

Take on Board Podcast – Episode 231

Transcript – RSVP: Reflections on 2023 and goals for 2024



Helga Svendsen 0:00

Hello fabulous people of the Take on Board community. This is the final episode of 2023. And as always, what a year it has been. So as I usually do at the end of the year, I'm going to take you through my RSVP process, and invitation to reflect on the year that was and set intentions for 2024. We do this in the final session of the Take on Board Accelerator program, which is my program for women and gender diverse board members. So at the end of this episode, you'll also get to hear some of the reflections of members of that group. So how will we approach this?

First, let me take you through the RSVP formula. There's four steps, step one, review, look back over the year, that was step two, superpowers - what are you awesome at and should do more of? Step three values? What are the values you should lean into in 2024? What do you want to feel more of in 2024? And finally, Step Four purpose, start with the end in mind, what's your purpose for the coming year? And what goals do you need to have in place to achieve your purpose? So for each of those steps, I will take you through some prompting questions. And then my reflections about those prompting questions. And then at the end, you will hear my RSVP statement, as well as as I mentioned some of the RSVP statements from some of the group members of Take on Board Accelerator.

So first up step one, reflecting on the year that was some of the prompting questions that might help you reflect here include, what are some things you are proud of from the year? That was? What are some of the challenges that you faced? If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing from the past year? What would it be? What didn't serve you well, or beliefs or people or circumstances or blocks or fears? You know what had helped if you left them behind as you head into the new year? What surprises were there for you in the year, and what word or phrase sums up how you feel about the year that passed? So for me, when I'm reflecting on the year, that was a few things stood out for me, and they were non work things to start with. So first up, I had a holiday in the middle of the year that was overseas, which for obvious reasons, you know, global pandemic was the first time in a couple of years, I celebrated a friend's 50th at a castle in the north of Spain, with about 25 of her friends. And then we also went to Portugal, Italy and the south of France, caught up with my partner's cousins in Torino in Italy, which was glorious. So it was just lovely to get away and to I don't

know, the biggest thing you have to work out in the day is what you're going to eat for breakfast and how you're going to get the bus to wherever you want to go. And just relaxing. It was glorious.

Some other things that stood out for me for this year, my partner and I became new foster carers. So throughout the year, we had in our care six different kids on six different occasions, we learned a lot prompt, if fostering is on your radar. They're desperate for foster carers, so I encourage you to do it. What else I did a bit of work broadly around inclusion. So things like running a workshop for a team around psychological safety and how that executive team are going to work together in a really psychologically safe way. I facilitated the Board KickStarter program for the Cerebral Palsy Support Network, which was amazing. And some of those participants have already got board roles, which is great.

I ran a workshop with another client around hearing unusual voices. I stepped off one of my boards, the Royal Women's Hospital. And one of the people who stepped on into one of the two vacancies is just amazing, fabulous Aboriginal woman. So I just feel like there was a bit of inclusion work in the year which I really enjoyed.

My word for the year last year was ease. Some of you might remember that from my RSVP last year. And that was awesome. Right? It was great to be able to not not doing that... ease. Yes, we'll do it this way ease. So ease was a bit of a mantra throughout the year. But what I noticed was it didn't necessarily get me to leaving enough space for things like strength and flexibility, which was also one of my goals. Yes, I've made it to the gym at least once a week for personal training for the last couple of months. But I was hoping to do more. So yeah, that's some of my reflections about you know, when I just think on the year that passed.

So let's move on to the next step. This one's a bit quicker strengths or superpowers. Some of the prompting questions here. When you're in the zone, what sort of things do you tend to be doing? Secondly, what sort of things do you people say you're awesome at? And thirdly, what do you tend to be doing when you feel most energized? So for me, I am a community builder. It's all about what the Take on Board community is. So I like connecting people bringing people together. I like making space or creating safe space for people to think either individually or as groups. I think I'm pretty good at listening. And I think I'm pretty good at encouraging and motivating people.

So step three, this is the values piece, what do you want more of in 2024? So for this step, we're focusing on our values, and emotions. What do we want to feel more of? Sometimes people might think this is a bit wishy washy, but I have confidence in the Take on Board community that you know all about the importance of leaning into your values. So we longed to feel joyful, calm, secure, peaceful, confident, alive, loving, and all of those things that come when we are in the zone. So if we

focus on our key values for 2024, and recognise what they are, we can use that as a guide for planning the year ahead. There is a long list of questions here, I'm actually not going to read them all out, I should have said at the top of the episode, there is a download for this check the show notes, the RSVP worksheet, so you'll get all of the questions there. And I'll just give you a flavor of them here. So some of the questions you might like to consider, what are your key values, and there's a values list in the worksheet to help you. And for those key top two or three values? What are one or two behaviors that support your value? What's one or two behaviors that are outside that value? And what's an example of when you're fully living into this value? Are the prompting questions smart sound a bit grim, but it's not meant to be Imagine your eulogy. Or as I did with a client just this week, imagine your next milestone birthday? What qualities are people speaking off? What special memories are people reflecting on? Imagine yourself at the end of the coming year? What have you done that you feel really passionate about? What are the key memories that stand out for you? And why do these moments stand out? How have you related to people you care about? How is your health? What regrets Do you have, and so on. There's also a couple of others about reflecting on the last time I felt really awesome was and when I'm in the groove, the emotions that tend to pop up are and other than happy the other emotions I wish to feel more of.

For me, my key values include love, fun, making a difference, gratitude, and connection. And they show up for me in a whole range of different ways. I've already talked about, you know, the making a different stuff, I guess around inclusion. In some ways, I guess I've talked about love. My job is something I love, which is awesome. And the gratitude stuff. For those that have done the BIA signature strengths activity, gratitude has just popped up as my number one signature strength or value or whatever it may be. So I think I lean into my values reasonably well. I think I use them to guide what I'm doing. That's my value statement. So step four, this is about pulling it all together. And it turns into an RSVP statement. So I'm going to read your My RSVP statement. It's still a little bit of a work in progress, but I'll read it to you, then you'll hear some from others. When you go to the RSVP worksheet, you'll see that all of these prompting questions are there as well as spaces to brainstorm and then space to have your three key observations. So here's my RSVP statement for 2023.

In the past year, I noticed that my cup is full, which is awesome, although sometimes a little too full. So things I noticed about that is I really love the variety of my work and the people that I work with. And I managed to do things like have a holiday, do fostering, I'm a mentor on a YWCA, asista program. So I feel like I've got to do loads of stuff and loads of different stuff, which was fabulous, fun. Anyway, I also noticed that ease having the word of the year as ease was really nice. But it wasn't enough to ensure that my cup didn't overflow. So I didn't really get to things like building my strength and flexibility in a way that I would have liked. Did I have time possibly did I just not have the motivation to do it possibly. But I felt like I crammed a lot of stuff in didn't cram that one in. The other thing I noticed about the year was that working on inclusion is key for me and I talked about some of these before that, you know I did some work on the Yes campaign for those that are in Australia. The referendum that we had a few months ago, I ran the board Kickstarter program for the cerebral palsy support network I, fabulous Aboriginal woman took my move didn't take my

place, there's never your place on a board. But I stepped off the board creating a vacancy. And she stepped into one of those vacancies, workshop around psychological safety with an executive team workshop around listening to unusual voices. Yeah, a whole host of really fabulous stuff.

My superpowers are connecting and bringing people together, listening and creating space for people and groups to think and to thrive. And really just community building their my superpowers. For next year, I will focus on in terms of my values, making a difference. That's pretty much always number one for me. But I've tweaked love into self compassion. And thirdly, feeling at ease. I feel like I use the word ease really beautifully this year to I guess to delete some things or change some things the way I do. But I didn't always feel at ease. And that's what I want for this year. So my purpose, my word for this year is space. I want to leave space, I don't think it's about creating space, or making space or all of those things actually think I need to leave space for me and some of the things that are really key for me. So some of the more concrete things that I might do to leave that space in the cup. I need to explore my relationship with busyness, I quite like being busy, maybe I like it a bit much. And I need to explore what that means a little bit. And some of the practical things I might do to explore my relationship with being busy. I'm going to, I don't know people use the Pomodoro method. But I'm going to use the Pomodoro method for a couple of weeks just so I can really focus on what I am doing and what I'm not doing. And so it can help me focus on one thing at a time. And from that, I will have a really good thing about what am I going to keep doing? What am I going to stop doing? And what will I change about what I do. And I might even engage my own executive leadership coach to help me through this relationship with business. I will keep ease as part of the thinking about how to do stuff, but more focusing on leaving space is what I'm doing leaving space for me, and the things that are really valuable to me. So that's it. That's my RSVP statement for 2023. Let's see how I go. And before we close out, let's share some of those RSVP statements from the 2023 Board Accelerator groups. There's 40 people doing it this year. So I'm not going to have you listening to all of them, because that might be a little bit much. But we've chosen a couple to share with you.

So first up, we've got Deb Colville. Deb is on the board of Swan Hill District Health. And what I love about Deb is that, look, you'll hear it in her statement, but she's always exploring new things. She is such a learner and grower. Anyway, let's hear from Deb.

Deb Colville 13:18

This will be I'm not using the M word. But this so when I reflect on the year, I feel satisfied with exploring my own interests. I've enrolled in a Diploma of Conservation. Now that satisfies my thirst for knowledge, I have to have knowledge about where I am under understanding where I find myself is really important to me. And I feel like I've improved in my governance like improved in my sympathy with other people around the boardroom. Whereas I think I was more focused on myself in the past. But I've tried to hear more about where other people are coming from, I think. And my word is sort of containment and I understand the word ease when you're saying ease but some of it

contained with a sense of satisfaction. I want to be satisfied with what I've done where I'm up to I don't want to be constantly kind of ashamed or embarrassed or feeling like a pressure to do things just because I haven't done enough. So I'm trying to sort of sit back and feel satisfied. My superpowers I think are trying to make new connections and point them out to people and see what happens. So having the confidence to explore things and having the confidence to ask clarifying questions instead of knowing the answers. I don't really have to know answers. I just want to be part of a process of exploring things in around the world and people who are curious, sharing my life with people who are curious. And next year I'm going to finish my Diploma of Conservation and I want to make absolutely best use of every single class. So we go on field trips, I've joined the field nets I've counted lizards. I'm doing a water course over the summer, and I want to somehow do governance in that environment, nature space, I don't know how it's going to work out. But I feel confident that I'll just maybe probably put a few feelers out in the new year and see if I can get a job. Otherwise, it'll be the following year, I mentioned I'll get something and I think at all, so overall, I've been satisfied with the year and I'm looking forward to next year.

Helga Svendsen 15:25

So Thanks, Deb, for sharing that one. Now, let's hear from Sarah Anderson. Sarah Anderson is a board member at Scope Australia, and the Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association. And she's also the chair of Disability Sport and Recreation. I love how in this she talks about time stretching. She's pretty good at it. So yeah, let's hear from Sarah,

Sarah Anderson 15:48

In the past year, probably reflect the fact that my priorities haven't been quite right, that people in relationships really matter to me. And that feeling of safety, security value was also really key. Superpowers - so being strategic, I'm gonna continue pulling things together probably from disparate things. I called this as getting my way. But so help me start describe it more as being persuasive. So that was a helpful twist on it. And the last one is time stretching. So I'm only going to fit in the things I care about. So next year, I want to look at why I say yes, at the time. And one of the things because saying no doesn't work, I've tried it. I've tried it for two years, it's still not working so. So looking at why I say yes, and see if that will help. The next year, I'd also like to sort of look at my confidence and hard work and being realistic. So often, I'll sit there and go, Oh, it wasn't quite good enough. And also how I work out what my priorities should be. So to achieve it, and want to try and think about things and take the guilt out of them. So make decisions, not with a layer of guilt that comes from children, work, why think I shouldn't do something, but actually put me at the middle and go does this work? Because there's plenty of other people that can do lots of things, celebrate the good things and learn from the bad. So I'm really good at going yet we didn't move on next thing to actually sit and go. Okay, that was good. What made it good? Why did it work? What are the factors that put it influenced that and if it didn't work? It wasn't just cause I was bad at it. But actually, what were the things that made it not work? And what were the things that influenced it, and to make choices considering the whole picture, so to try and decide what I'm doing, but to with that making choices to be quite present. So I was reflecting when I was writing this, that so far in the

session today, I have signed a kid up for Duke of Ed, I've read three minutes from my kids and had to two phone calls. I've drawn three Christmas cards, but I've listened to everyone as well. But actually maybe stopping and concentrating on one thing, which is really, really hard when you're used to doing it. I've sort of looked at as like I often write because someone sorry, multitasking. Here's the quick answer. But actually, that doesn't help anyone. It means I'm not concentrating fully on what I'm doing. I sit and do because it helps me to concentrate, listen, but to actually sit there and go, no, that can wait, I need to listen.

Helga Svendsen 18:09

Now let's hear from Su Robertson. Su is the chair of Women and Mentoring. And I love how she leverages off Sarah's scrambling, into you know, leaning into her values.

Su Robertson 18:22

Okay, my year... far too much on and this sense of scrambling all the time. So I noticed that that meant that I was constantly reactive, because there wasn't enough time for me to sit and think about stuff. And there was not enough fun. There was some, we went on holiday to Sicily. So that was fun. But there needs to be more of it. But the positive part of that is that I actually made it through the year so I can do anything. There's I can do anything. I thought that after I birthed a child. My superpower is positivity and more. I've had that from a lot of different places this year. So I've taken it on it's part of my mantle in a more conscious way, and I'm an independent thinker, which sometimes gets me into trouble. And persistent, don't tell no. Self aware and reflective and I love new ideas and adventure. So my values are respect for others themselves, and fun and equity. They're the ones that I actually never lose sight of those. That's something that I'm good at. I understand my values and I will walk away from things that don't match and have. So more of that. And definitely fun is underpinning what my goals are which to do. less, but in a more satisfying and fun way. So that means being more selective. And even though only one of the things that was on my multi squillion agenda this year was less than satisfying. Everything else was, but it wasn't satisfying enough for me because because there was too much scrambling, so less scrambling more settled satisfying stuff. The second one is to choose inspiration and learning that boosts my superpowers with more of my values. So to mesh them more in every area of my life. And my final one is to write think first, but I actually changed that to be in a more transformative mode with kind of future building at the base of that, but still, we fund all of it has to have fun.

Helga Svendsen 21:04

Next up, we're going to hear from Natasha Smith, the Chair of West CASA, and I like her reflection here around integrity, you'll hear it in her RSVP statement that about how, you know sometimes acting with integrity means you won't be liked. Let's hear from Tash.

Natasha Smith 21:20

All right, where to start? Okay, so when I reflect on the year, I remember starting the year feeling quite like my confidence was quite shaken by a few things, I was really distinct that I felt quite unsteady, internally, mentally did a lot of things, this included as part of the plan to become more steady. And my reflections from the year is to hold steady and trust myself, because it often bought through that my instincts were correct. I just felt so shaky that I didn't listen to myself. And actually, that was a good lesson to learn, I actually manage quite a lot of change and turmoil and movement and uncertainty really well. And it features again in my superpowers. But that actually that is a strength of mine, and that I can be calm in the center of a storm. And also being totally fine with a because I had to put myself out there quite a lot. I also got a lot of constructive feedback, but also, sometimes criticism and people not taking whatever I did in the best way. And that is also okay, because part of my job in life is to be more comfortable with being not always liked. And sometimes acting with integrity means you won't be liked. And that is a tough learning if you're someone that likes people, and thinks relationships are important, but it was an important learning for the year and I've landed the year feeling more solid, which is good, more work to do. So my superpowers are that actually I'm exceptionally good. We're sitting in uncertainty and complexity and things that feel messy where there's no clear answer, and is sitting with and working with, which has served me extremely well. There's always a shadow side to that. But it has served me extremely well. That I am actually quite good with working with people and creating relational safety and understanding and that sitting with the complexity of people and being able to work with and also the courage to just jump in. I have a value of discernment. But I also am okay with jumping in. And that has also helped a lot of people around me and something that I'm okay doing. In terms of my values. I really value transparency and honesty. And I think that I want to continue to do that. But recognizing that sometimes where I can improve for my goals for the next year is to be honest about myself, like bringing myself into those conversations. So I can be honest with how I feel about a thing. But notice that I'm not always honest about the impact of how that has, what that has done on me. And I think that that's something I want to be better at. Compassion, I think is a really big value of mine. I always think about how can we do this as compassionately as possible, even if it isn't being nice, it has been clear and kind and also leaning into the balancing that with discernment and being thoughtful, like doing my best to even though I'm okay with the uncertainty and the jumping in to feet, that also one of my values is to be as thoughtful as possible in that so for next year, I am hoping to instill in a sense of quiet assurance and more solid ness and myself to be assured of my skills, my judgment and instinct to be you know, honest and open and more vulnerable and conversations even if it results in not always being liked or receiving some flack or criticism because that's okay and to value that relational is not a soft skill, but actually a hard skill that needs to be developed and worked on and to champion to those around me who also have that as a strength, that that is a thing that they have developed over time. And it's a thing that deserves respect, which is not always the case if you've got a very, very say patriarchal workplace. So very much championing and being the champion for the relational as a skill that is important and valuable and essential for the work that we do as leaders in different spaces.

Helga Svendsen 25:32

Next up, we hear from Elaine Gillespie, Elaine is a board member of the Victorian Skills Authority Advisory board is many things you love about hearing from Elaine, not the least being her beautiful accent. Yeah, and some of her reflections as well.

Elaine Gillespie 25:47

The thing that I noticed this year in particular was that workload, I think, for everyone dramatically increased, and that a lot of people were always on, and were actually given themselves, the right to disconnect, and actually not look at emails and the phone at home and do all of that. I did have a holiday overseas, which was wonderful. But again, still did a lot of work on that holiday, I had agreements that had to be signed off and put in and that's a challenge. I think it's something that obviously, I think we all meet in particular, I need to be able to switch off, I also need to put probably my health and well being. And I think this goes for a lot of people at the top of the priority list, and not after everything else. The other observation I make is that in this may sound a negative to start with, but it's actually a positive my whole life. I've really struggled with delegating and say no to things but delegation in particular, I now have the most amazing professional officers, she started with me last year. And she's just phenomenal. So she looks on my calendar, she looks at my emails, if there's things that they should be another one doing, she'll just automatically forward it to them to cc me. And so I've still got oversight, but she's amazing, it means that I'm doing delegation much better than I was, yes, it has been a little bit hard to get comfortable with that. And I'm working on that. And I'm gradually getting better at it. My superpowers are people skills, and emotional intelligence, these things don't just happen, you develop them over time. And they are very often not valued and looked at as soft skills couldn't actually always put them forward as a professional skill. We deal with employers all the time. And that's one of the key skills that they're asking for is that they have people skills, they have the right attitude, these are things that you can teach, and that they obviously are able to be self motivated. My other one is persuasion and influence. I've had that through my teaching career through my management roles, leadership roles. And even in the current role I have that that's that's really all you can do with government and with the department and things like that. It's persuasion and influence. My other one I think, is planning and organizing, and my very least driven person, I like to be organized my values. Social justice, is my number one value, working for the greater good. Doing things that are much bigger than that will benefit me this year, in particular has been very challenging with regards to that with the year sport and the devastation that followed. respect and trust is another huge one for me, building that trust, building that respect, respecting people's differences, respecting their points of view, their culture, all of those things. And actually, hopefully, building that trust with people that I work with. Fairness and inclusion is, again another huge, important value that I have. No one should be left behind for any reason everyone should be brought on together. My hopes and goals for next year. Work life balance, to continue to have a mentor and mentor someone in return. Being comfortable saying no and delegating to others. making healthy choices is a big one. And looking at the next chapters for my life. My words that I had my word for this year has been hectic. And my word for next year is health. That's my goals.

Helga Svendsen 29:34

And finally we will hear from Carolyn Polit a board member of Mambourin and again she's leaning into growth and change for the following year. Let's hear from Carolyn.

Caroline Pilot 29:45

I've noticed that I needed to change things up and reevaluate where I was. My other observation is in something that I sort of know about myself is that I like to do good work that really makes a difference and my observation is that moving to Melbourne was a little more challenging than I thought in some ways. And then I really need to build up my special personal network of friends are ones that you exercise with the ones that you have your mentally stimulating conversations with the ones you can have a laugh with, or cry on their shoulder, and the ones who you can have a good glass of wine with. So it's not always that all in the one person. So I was very fortunate in Sydney. So I need to do a little bit of work on building up that network superpowers. I think I'm courageous in facing challenges and knowing when I need to make change. Secondly, collaboration really bringing people together and enabling action, you know, knowing where where are we where do we want to be? And how do we make that and bringing the right people to the table to enact that. And then the third one strategic thinking sort of being a bit visionary and out of the box, how do we change things and do things very different to how we've always done them to get the next year is going to be a big one being a uni student and focus on, I guess, learning, we'll be learning more about the area that I'm really passionate about. Secondly, my health and well being I know that it's really deteriorated this year, put on like nine kilos, and not so much the weight, but it's the feeling that that weight gives me which is not feeling energized, billing logic and myself and mentally and physically, I know that I've been really rundown, so I need to make a focus of that. And the third one is around what else can I do around driving health outcomes, and maybe, you know, I'm ready to take on another board, or doing more sort of consulting work around patient advocacy and patient voice. So that will be my focus, with the goal that I move away from the corporate world, it could still be in a corporate but the corporate world around living shareholders side as opposed to working more in line with health outcomes, whether it be in public health, not for profit, because who knows what that looks like. But I guess I'm working on that goal number two, hopefully this time next year, I'll be feeling much better, healthier, and happier. And the last one, they might sound all fluffy, but they're important to me, I guess there's confidence in my future that I'm going to be more balanced, productive doing stuff I love and secure.

Helga Svendsen 32:12

So there you have it, my RSVP statement for 2023. And also some of the RSVP statements of the fabulous women that you might get to hang out with if you join Take on Board Accelerator next year. So you'll note that some of those statements were, you know, I guess more personal than professional. And that's one of the things I love about the tech on board Accelerator program is that those strength of those relationships that are built, and being able to share some of the stuff, the challenges that go on in the boardroom, but also seeing each other as a whole person. So again, if

you'd like to join a group of this awesome women and gender diverse people, links are in the show notes for this program, or just get in touch. If you want more information. I'm around over January. So that's it for me and the Take on Board crew for 2023. Thanks again for being part of the fabulous Take on Board community. I am so grateful. See grateful there it is coming through again, that you are here. Now, an ask if I may, could I ask that you share this podcast, whether it's this episode, or just the podcast overall, with a board colleague or a work colleague or someone you know, I am really keen in 2024 to continue building the Take on Board community. And you're apt to help me with that there's only so much I can do so I really hoping that you can help me out with it. So as your little Christmas present or end of year present or festive season present for me, I would love it if you could share it with somebody. Over the next three weeks that will be the summer season some of the best episodes of Take on Board from the past year. Share the love that other value of mine. And if you're not already a member of the Facebook group, come on over there and join us to keep the conversation going. There's almost 1000 members there sharing experiences, resources and opportunities. Last but not least, thank you to the fabulous Buffy Gorilla, the producer of this podcast and Lisa Davis. Oh, my God, what I would do without her. I don't know my Business Manager. Without these two awesome women. There is absolutely no way I would be able to bring you this podcast each week. So thank you folks for just doing what you do. I'd also like to thank Jackie Cooper, who ensures that the Take on Board Digest comes out once a month, as well as the monthly Ideas to Action and other blogs, case studies and more. What an awesome team will be back in 2024 with more interviews as well as a few new special things. And that my friends is a wrap from us here at Take on Board for 2023. See you on the other side.

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