

Take on Board

Transcript – Dr Dominique Hes (Part 3)



Helga Svendsen 0:00

I'm back with Dominique Hes who you might remember from Episode Six when I worked with her about her application and episode, I think 16 where we did some preparation on her interview. We've got a bit of an update for you two updates. Welcome back again to the take on board podcast, Dominique.

Dominique Hes 0:17

Thanks for having me again.

Helga Svendsen 0:19

So Dominique, give us your update. Why, why have we got you back here?

Dominique Hes 0:22

I got the role. I can't believe it.

Helga Svendsen 0:27

Refresh our collective memory you've been appointed to

Dominique Hes 0:31

Trust for Nature as a trustee. And so that is very similar to a normal board position. It's just called a trustee because we're managing the trust that's been set up back in 1972. To conserve Victorian land revegetated into perpetuity and look after it.

Helga Svendsen 0:51

Oh my god, that is fantastic news, Dominique. We couldn't have planned this better really for doing your application and then the interview and then her rain. You're appointed. So when were you appointed?

Dominique Hes 1:03

Officially my start date is on Monday, the ninth. And then my first board meetings, the 10th.

Helga Svendsen 1:09

So we're recording this on Sunday, the eighth of December. So your official appointment starts tomorrow for your first board meeting on Tuesday?

Dominique Hes 1:19

That's correct. And and they said, Look, we're not expecting you to actually drop everything and attend only if you're able to it will be a good interview, procedural revisit so that it is fresh for next year. They have induction processes, which obviously I haven't had a chance to do. But it just happened that I could attend. So I will.

Helga Svendsen 1:39

That is fabulous. So you're going to your first board meeting. Do you know if there was any other new directors appointed? Or is it just you?

Dominique Hes 1:46

My understanding is that they were everyone was being really interviewed. And I've received the board papers, but the board papers don't have an covering agenda that I've seen. I've only read the first 20 or so pages. So the agenda might be for Damn, because I didn't have a quick look to see. I guess they wouldn't have had my name on there. So would they say I know the CEO, of course is the same. And the chair I spoke to, although they are planning to select a new chair, but yes, no, I don't know who else

Helga Svendsen 2:14

All to be discovered. And indeed sounds like an induction period coming up to which is great to hear. Surprisingly, perhaps not all boards have an induction process. So it's great to hear that your one does have an induction process, and they'll put you through it. That is fabulous. So let's just circle back a bit because last time I spoke to you, we were preparing for your interview, obviously, since then, you've had the interview. And obviously, that interview went quite well. But if we could just circle back on the interview itself, refresh our memories on what you prepared for and then what actually happened.

Dominique Hes 2:45

So I am very nervous about interviews. So it was such a great thing to sit with you and just talk through the interview process and to be very well prepared for that. I created the matrix he suggested which was, you know, one of the main challenges for the organization and what skills can I bring to it and what's an example of me applying those skills. So that was very useful to have. In retrospect, I had two pages of notes and that was too many I should have had just one page and I should have just had three things that I really wanted to live with which I came into the meeting with three things I wanted to leave with, and then I got nervous and it all kind of lift my head even though I had notes.

Helga Svendsen 3:34

You won't be the first person to be nervous in an interview and two things have gone slightly differently but my point is that you having those things, having identified your three things, they still would have been there in your subconscious and my point is they would have come through anyway.

Dominique Hes 3:48

I have no idea what I said. I wish there was a recording so that I could actually read it, because it just went Yeah, went into a slight panic. Yes, I think being prepared enough meant that I sounded like I knew while I was there, and I'm passionate about it, I think that must have come through. But interestingly enough, if you remember, I had two pages of notes. And I had two pages of notes, because we weren't sure whether the interview would be with the board, or some people from the board or whether it would be more of the government and a bureaucratic interview. And so I kind of prepared a little bit with both camps in mind, but probably more if I was looking at the organization and its future strategy and so forth. So I was probably expecting more to speak to the board than I was expecting to speak to someone from government. So the first question was, you could become a trustee for an organization that has responsibilities under an act, and therefore what would your expectations be to be part of that and I should have said, you know, it's taxpayers money and I should be respectful and watch what I say and those sorts of things, but it threw me off Little bit, I

was expecting that what can you bring to this board? Or what are the challenges? Not the very bureaucratic question around? How do you behave, which I should have expected, but I didn't, I guess, for anyone listening who's going for a board position potentially have that as one of the expectations. You are the voice for government. Therefore, what are the key things to think about?

Helga Svendsen 5:22

Great tip for anybody on any government board no matter what level it is?

Dominique Hes 5:25

That's right. And I should have thought of it but I hadn't. And so from that moment on, I was slightly thrown off. And it was all fine. And I could answer questions. And I particularly because I'm on the board of green fleets, and I'm really interested in how do we bring more research and rigor and science into it and how do we collaborate more I could talk through all of those things, which I'm interested in. Irrespective I said, irrespective of whether I get the board position or not, or the trustee position on I'm still very interested in ongoing connections. I think I spoke at interest in from the heart and from excitement around that. I think that helped. As much as afterwards I was like, I don't think I did very well.

Helga Svendsen 6:08

Well, clearly you did. Because as we now know, the joy of doing this debrief of the interview afterwards is there's no all fingers crossed. It sounds like you did okay. Or I'm sure you did. Okay, the joint now is we know you did, okay, because you've got the role, which is fabulous. So even though which again, is great for people to hear, I think, even if, and it's so hard when it's the first question in an interview that kind of puts you off your stride, because it often puts you off your stride for the whole thing. But it's such a great thing for people to know that even if that first question puts you off your stride, keep going. Because it doesn't mean that the whole thing is sunk clearly, because you've got through it.

Dominique Hes 6:46

Yeah. And then and then sort of the last thing I want to share with people, which is it was it was a lesson for myself was at the end when they said Do you have any questions for us? I had prepared questions, but those questions were around the strategy. Which obviously this audience was government not strategy. And they couldn't help me with that. And so, again, I prepared this, I launched into it and another five are actually this is not the right question, you guys, and I hadn't prepared a audience relevant question because I hadn't thought it through, had responded to the strategy and read the annual report from so forth. But that wasn't really the type of questions I could answer.

Helga Svendsen 7:27

It's interesting with that, because my hunch is that even though they weren't questions they could answer, they may well have still seen them as questions of value, gave an indication of where your thinking was at and how you would present to the board. My advice would be to still ask those questions, even though they couldn't answer them, perhaps with a precursor of Look, I'm not sure if you're going to be able to answer these questions. But here's some of the questions I have about the organization

Dominique Hes 7:52

Of the main things. We weren't sure whether it was going to be a government or a board type of people and then ended up Well, the government side which in retrospect kind of makes sense, apart from that, it was a wonderful experience to follow your recommendations and prepare the way that I had prepared. My main lessons for myself, to trust myself a little more, to have less, I had too much material, have less material, the things I did well was to bring that passion and interest.

Helga Svendsen 8:24

Fabulous advice. I was going to ask you about your advice for others. And there is in a nutshell, trust yourself, Lacey's more, that's my words, not yours. And really let that passion and interest in the organization shine through. That is all just great insights for people dominate. Having done all of that research now around the organization, even if it wasn't, even if you weren't able to showcase that in the interview. Now that you're on the board, my guess is some of that reading and reflection and thinking about the organization and thinking about the strategy is going to help you enormously as you now take your seat at the board table.

Dominique Hes 9:01

I'm very interested, having not been on a government board before to really experience, what that's like, and what the opportunities are and what the constraints are of the most innovation and constraints. So I'm really interested in seeing how that works. And looking forward to Tuesday and meeting who else is on the team and saying, there is a difference between being a trustee and being a board member in different words, but whether they're different words for the same expectations. And I'm also looking forward to being on board.

Helga Svendsen 9:36

Yes, I'll be interested to hear about their induction process. If it's useful, I think one of the most valuable things that I've experienced as a new board member, both when I joined the Royal women's a few years ago and having just recently joined a new board is getting that deep dive both

into the board, but also into the business and the sector and knowing what's going on and one of the things that we do at the Royal Women's Hospital is we have a board mentor. So there is somebody who's currently on the board who mentors, the new people coming on for the first six months, 12 months, whatever. Who's your? Here's my stupid question. Here's who I can bounce things off those sorts of things. And I've I have found that very valuable both as a mentee as a new board member. And indeed, now as a mentor to the new board members, I've found it incredibly valuable as well. So I'll be interested to hear what the induction process is and what that involves. And you might even have some suggestions for them around what might be valuable as well. Great. One final thing if I can just and I know we spoke very briefly about this before we hit record, but for you and for other new board members, can I just remind you that as fresh eyes what you see early on is incredibly valuable in a board. Often people really want to take the time to listen and learn before they participate at a new board. Can I encourage you that if you say things to say it because you only get I don't know, maybe three to six months of being inverted commas new. And in that time, you will see things and before you know it, you won't be seeing them anymore. So really use that as something of value to the board and being able to speak up as of those new things that you're saying.

Dominique Hes 11:15

I'm actually really interested to see what happens, because they, even the people on the board had to reapply. So how much of a turnover and how many of us are there for the first time, because that was one of the things that I did mention in the interview, that having some corporate memory is really important, the mentoring and so forth, as you were saying, so I'm expecting them to have reappointed some people, and they've appointed some new people. That's also a stressful thing for people to have to re apply my terms, two years, so they had four year terms and two year terms. I'm going to be interested to see how that plays out.

Helga Svendsen 11:52

Which in some ways makes sense if they're already appointing everybody because otherwise they have everybody on for four years and in four years time. There's this such goes on again. So was there others that were appointed for two years or just you know, again, we will find out. It certainly happened on one of my boards. Last year when there was a large number of people coming up for reappointment. Some of the people who were reappointed were given shorter terms, just so we could avoid that in the future. So it's no fun because then they have to reapply again quite soon after that it makes sense in terms of that long term succession planning and making sure there's not a big outflow all at the same time. Oh, Dominique, that is fantastic news. I am so excited for you. I have no doubt that listeners are exhausted for you, as well as we've all watched your journey along the way from application through the interview, and now through to appointment. So that is awesome news. I am so pleased for you. It's made my day made my year what a great thing to happen at the end of the year. And you can just set yourself up for 2020 settling into that role. And of course, I can't wait to welcome you. I know you're joining the board accelerator program this year as well. So there'll be some fantastic insights that you will provide to that group. And I'm sure we'll get from that group as well.

Dominique Hes 13:05

I'm very much looking forward to building that community of practice with you Helga.

Helga Svendsen 13:11

All right, anything else you'd like to share before we close it out?

Dominique Hes 13:14

Just how valuable it is to have someone like yourself to speak to re the application process and an interview process. Just have someone to say if that makes sense. No. What about this? Here's my tips from my experience. It's just amazing. So thank you so much.

Helga Svendsen 13:32

Oh, could not be more pleased to be part of your squad. Well, he's to 2020 and taking on this fabulous new role, and I look forward to hearing more of maybe an episode 36 whenever that might be, we might get a check in with you then.

Dominique Hes 13:49

Maybe looks like a 46.

Helga Svendsen 13:52

We could do that too. Fantastic. Thank you so much for coming back and sharing your insights about the interview. And again, just huge Congratulations on the new role.

Dominique Hes 14:01

Thank you so much Helga.