

Take on Board Podcast – Episode 235

Transcript – Top tips from the Take on Board Facebook Community



Helga Svendsen:

Hello people of the Take on Board community and welcome to 2024.

Yeah, I know you've had a couple of episodes in the last few weeks, but they're the summer series. This is our first new episode of 2024. Happy 2024 to you. So a couple of things in this episode. Firstly, I just wanted to reflect on my word of the year in my RSVP, my reflection, which was, well, the last new episode last year, where my word is SPACE, I saw a fabulous LinkedIn post by the equally fabulous Leah Methers, who has been on this podcast before talking about soft is the new hard, which is of course the title of her book. And in her LinkedIn post, she reflected on her words for 2024 being space, ease, and enough. Now that spoke to me because of course, ease was my word for last year, space is my word for this year. And I thought oh, enough, I like that. So she has summarized it into the acronym SEE space, ease, enough as her theme for 2024. And the word in the nicest possible way. Leah, I said this on LinkedIn, I might borrow that from you. So I think it's more than space. Now. It's SEE, and I love the way she framed it about. I have enough. I've done enough. It's good enough. I am enough. So there we have it. Space has moved into SEE, space, ease and enough and being enough and no sing that I have enough and done enough and all of those things. So thanks, Leah. I will link to Leah's podcast in the show notes. As well as maybe even just her post about that if I can work out how. So let's first up my update on my RSVP.

Secondly, look Board Accelerator, Take on Board accelerator. I know you heard about it at the top of the episode, but just want to reiterate, if you're in the boardroom, I would love it if you came and joined us at Take on Board Accelerator 2024. It's already more than half full. So if you're keen, and even more importantly, if you've got a particular group that you want to join, get on it. Join us during the fabulous Take on Board community for a monthly deep dive into a whole range of governance issues. And note that earlybird finishes the end of January. So get on it because you don't want to miss out on your group get on it because you don't want to miss out and get on it, you probably want to have early bird.

Thirdly, it's my birthday this week. By the time this goes to air, I will have just passed by birthday. Happy birthday to me. So I am going to be a bit cheeky, because you know I am and my ask of you on

my birthday, if I may, please share this podcast, share the podcast, share this episode, share the show in your podcast app, share it on Facebook, share it on LinkedIn, share it on Instagram, share it on wherever you like, I would love to continue to grow the Take on Board community. Little secret insight, don't tell anybody else or maybe do whatever. This podcast is coming into its fifth year in the middle of this year. And every year since we began. It has grown by about 20% every year, which has been fantastic. And I am incredibly proud of the 200+ episodes of all of the amazing guests of the events we've had and everything. But 2023 I don't know what was going on. But it's fair to say growth slowed a little bit. So I want you to help me. I want you to help me grow the community, grow the show, help me know that people out there still love the show because that's what gets me showing up every week. And so it needs that little little hit for me to help me out for that for my birthday, which was this week as well. So as I say, yeah, happy birthday to me. Could you help me out? How cheeky is that?

What else? Fourthly, this is the main part of the show. I thought what I would do to open this up for this year is go back through some of the incredibly magnificent tips that have been shared in the Take on Board Facebook group over the last year or so. Every Tuesday we have a Tips Tuesday, hashtag thing and people share tips. I probably won't share them all here because that'll take a bit of time but I am going to share some of them and where appropriate, shout out to the awesome person that provided the tip. If you want to know more head on over to the Facebook group.

So first up this is actually in January this year rather than 2023 but the very fabulous Karen Percy who you may have heard heard on the podcast. Previously, she shared some reflections in the well being in the boardroom episode because she was part of the group there. When we've asked for tips, she says, "if you have new folks joining the board, taking some time for introductions can be really valuable. Informal is best, though some question prompts can be helpful. Name job background where home is, which doesn't have to be where you live, but a favoured or cozy or comfortable or happy place, family, sporting, leisure pursuits something unexpected about you, or why you wanted to join the organisation. Understanding the people you'll be making decisions with is crucial to ensuring a board functions well. It might make you realize that the way the board operates times, locations, processes, and so on might not suit all. Accommodating the needs of others can be simple and shows respect. It shouldn't be a one size fits all approach." Here here, Karen, and thank you for being the first tip of those 2024.

So let's go back to 2023. What were some of the tips shared there, so one person shares. And this just prompted such an awesome conversation. Her ask was, she's joined a local council board and they could really do with some time reflecting on their performance, so they can make better use of their time. The chair is on board with the plan, no pun intended, but as indicated that this person might be with a little bit of resistance. And she asks for some low time investment, non confrontational ways to warm them to the idea, things she's already thought about a survey or brief one on ones with people, or just a one to five anonymous rating system. So she asked for some input. I jumped in first saying what an awesome question, and said that I think you're totally on the

right track with using your meet and greet to find out a bit more. And if there's likely to be resistance, my suggestion was taken slowly, slowly, a survey to find out what areas they think is important is a great idea. And you could use something like the Australian Institute of Company Directors not for profit governance standards as a guide. I also mentioned there are some free tools out there. I think the Queensland University of Technology has one. So look them up.

Other suggestions Jodie Willmer, who is just wonderful in this group, and often coming on with brilliant ideas, she suggested to this person that to look at the ACNC, the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Governance Standards as a good place to start. And she also suggested to start with some simple questions for a facilitated discussion - what's working well about our work in meetings? What's not? And what do we need to change? How would members of the community or staff or stakeholders react if they were watching us and how we run our meetings? What other practices or ideas could we apply to improve our strategic focus and quality of advice or decisions? What can we stop doing? Do we have a full understanding of the skills experience and aspirations of everyone around the table? Are we doing what are charter or terms of references? Do we hear from everyone? How else can we do better? What did it feel like when you joined? And how can we support a new board members to do it better? And so on just some incredible suggestions there. And she also linked to the governance for good a guide for responsible people from the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission.

Coralie Nash leaps in as well saying, "Take it slowly, asking gentle, inquisitive questions" about how they do or don't do things that you probably already know the answer to. But that might prompt them to think about, oh, we haven't thought of that, or we don't actually do that. But maybe we should, which could be an effective nudge in the right direction. Coralie suggests questions like, "I'm just wondering what process we would follow when we have to make a decision about 'X'. Can you explain that to me? Oh, you don't have a set process to follow, that must make it challenging to make decisions." Coralie also agrees that one on ones are a great idea to build rapport and understanding before introducing a tool survey or suggestion to effect any change. Alright, some more tips.

So Maggie Baron suggests, "My tip as a member of a state government or board or committee, and involved in selecting board members is, don't assume anything about your fellow board members. They will come from diverse backgrounds selected for a range of reasons and bring independent lenses to the task." Lots of people jumped on and said that was an excellent tip. And I jumped in with at one of my boards, a government board we recently had a session to get to know each other a bit more. I asked everyone to bring along something that represents who they are and what they do and it was just incredible the breadth of things that people shared from war medals to photographs to cards from the kids to a plectrum. So it's amazing when you get to know more about the stories of everyone, how you can work together, which links back to that first one from Karen Percy.

Okay, diving in again, these ones from September, Rosie Wheen, of the magnificent, Rosie Wheen, we've crossed paths in a number of ways, through Leadership Victoria and as foster carers at the same agency. So Melbourne is a village I tell ya! Anyway, the fabulous Rosie, when tip would be to centre relationships around the board table. What has that looked like? So it might be a call with each board member when joining the board to introduce yourself and get to know others, or getting to meetings early to check with management or other staff.

Isn't it interesting when we share tips that my reflection as I see this every week coming up is that it's almost always about dynamics. You know, it's not about risk frameworks or about I don't know, profit and loss statements. Obviously, all that stuff is important for your directors duties. I am not discounting it, but boardroom dynamics. So I chimed in again, I'm always chiming in and saying I love meeting greets of new board members. And sometimes it's even a walk and talk with new board members. And that in one of the recent episodes of the podcast, Lina Patel shared an approach where she joined a new board and she found an issue to explore which gave her an excuse, not that you always need one but an excuse to have one on one discussions and then to facilitate a workshop with her new board. So that was a good one to

Robyn Davis. New tip. Consider everyone's point of view, but always make your own decision. Tip number two, read your papers carefully. And always read the previous meetings minutes. And tip number three, attend your meetings with an inquiring mind. It's incredible what you'll learn in the passing conversations. Robyn, they are all excellent tips.

Alrighty. Where are we now in August, Jane Davel shares, "I'm unsure if it qualifies as a tip or a trick," Jane, it can be both. "However, my advice is to keep on persevering. If you are working hard on improving the level of trust and respect on the board and between the board and management. Sometimes you wonder if it will all happen or if it's worth the effort. And then all of a sudden, it all clicks into place." Jane, I could not agree more, I would say not only something where it all clicks into place. But after it's clicked into place, you actually have to keep going. Because that level of trust and respect between board members can also be lost. It's an ongoing thing. So again, see board dynamics.

June 2023, what fabulous tips do we have here? Meredith Carter, her suggestion, "do your due diligence before you join a board and observe a board meeting if you can, at a minimum check, of course, their finances and also how stable is the board? And How stable is senior leadership? Do they have a current strategic plan? Are they interested in innovation and policy issues? Or is the board's role more focused on the compliance side of the ledger?" I added a thing in the Facebook group. But I'm saying it as I as I record what kind of what you want as well, do you want an innovation type board, you want a strategic board, you want a compliance board, none of them are

right or wrong. I mean, all boards do a little bit of all of that. But often all boards will be focused more on one than the other depending on where they are in, you know their business development or whatever it may be. So work out what you want, and then work out where the organisation's at and do those things align. I also added in the group that I know of at least one person who observed a board meeting so she had done the application she had applied, she'd been interviewed all of those things. And then she observed a board meeting and chose not to join that board. So it is an excellent thing to do if you can,

Back in May 2023. More tips, more tips, more tips, so many wonderful tips here. Red, red says, "Catch up with all other directors individually every now and again. Especially when you're new and still developing relationships. It'll make decision making and getting input into things so much easier if you know what they're interested in and so on." Again, more dynamics, building the relationships.

Karen Percy, who was always chiming in on this with wonderful tips, she says, "Don't be shy about admitting that you don't understand something and keep asking questions until you do. Also, you have the right to seek expert advice and opinions. Obviously organisations have different abilities to pay for such expertise, but it's important to have the best information in front of you to make robust decisions." Again, I chimed in. Often asking those questions is incredibly useful because sometimes I'll Those don't understand either. So you think you're asking the stupid question? And it's not the stupid question at all. Because you find that others around the table have other things that they want to share as well. Back in July, Karen, Karen, you, I think you win the prize, I'm not quite sure what the prize is, Karen, I'll come up with something. When you get in touch with me, you will, at this stage, the prize is the gratitude of the Take on Board host and the gratitude of the host of the Take on Board community. And indeed, the rest of the Take on Board community in getting your wisdom, but she shares here, "A soft start on occasions where you go around the table and chairs something, or reintroduce yourselves make a personal connection. Before getting into the business. It helps build trust and understanding and makes for a positive beginning. Dynamics, dynamics, dynamics. It's all so important."

So folks, there you have it, there is a flavour of some of the incredible tips that have been shared in the Tips Tuesday posts in the Take on Board Facebook group. If you're not already there, come over and join us. It is always fabulous conversation. And if you've got questions, you can pose them there. If you've got tips, you can share them there. It's not restricted to Tips Tuesday and every now and again, more than every now and again. There are some really fabulous conversations in there when people pose a question. So come join us.

So that's it, folks. That's it for today's episode. In closing, again, thank you. Thank you for being here. Thank you for being part of the Take on Board community, whether it's listening to the podcast, coming to events in the Facebook group. Well actually if you're listening to this, of course you're a podcast listener because you wouldn't be hearing it otherwise, would you, so thank you for being

part of it. Thank you for continuing to support me and the Take on Board community. I love your work. And don't forget to share the podcast. Thanks. See you next week for the next episode.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>