



Take on Board Podcast – Episode 376

Transcript – Resilience & Alignment: Getting Your Next Board Role

Hi, folks. I bring you this episode from Banff in Alberta, Canada. And it builds on some of the conversations that I had at the Vancouver Take on Board meetup. I'm going to nip my head out of the way here so you can see. Look at that awesome mountain in the background. I think that's Mount Norquay.

And while I'm here, I'm going to have to read from this, but I would like to acknowledge the First Nations people of the land on whose land I record this podcast. And these are the First Nations people: the Kootenai, the Stoney, the Piegan, the Siksika, and the Tsuut'ina First Nations people. I may have got pronunciation of that wrong, and I apologise if I have.

Now, folks, the theme for today's podcast As I say, it builds on some of the conversations I had at the Vancouver meetup, and shout out to Nancy Maloney and Shona McGlashan who joined me at the Kitsilano Vancouver meetup. Awesome to see you both there.

And some of the stories that we talked about was getting on boards, building your board portfolio, and the tips from that will form the basis of today's podcast, and the theme of today's podcast, which is resilience. The resilience that you need to get yourself your first board role, or perhaps your second, third, fourth, 10th, 12th board role.

So first up, this theme of resilience came from the final session of, uh, one of the recent Kickstarter programs, and the final session we review each of the modules, and then there's an ask me anything section.

In that, I was asked, "Helga, what do you think the key skill is that we will need to highlight for our boards to get in the boardroom?" And I think they were expecting me to say something like technology or people and culture or finance or legal or whatever, all of those hard skills, the technical skills that you need to get into a boardroom.

But I gave it a little bit of thought, and the skill that I came up with, the strength that I came up with was, was resilience because, folks, whether it's your first board or 10th board or 50th board role, you are very likely to apply for way more board roles than you are going to get. So, you need resilience, and you need perseverance to be able to just continue to do that and continue to ask for feedback and continue to take feedback. So, resilience.

If I reflect on one of the stories shared at that Vancouver meetup, so Nancy Maloney was there, and we were reminiscing about when we first met, which is probably 12 years ago, and Nancy was being interviewed by me and Paul Smith, who was at the time the chair of the Jane Goodall Institute of Australia, and we were interviewing Nancy for a role.

Now, the first thing Nancy said was, "Do you remember that I was late?" I was like, "Nah," didn't remember that at all. All I remember, uh, is that she shone in that interview. She was strongly

aligned. She had the skills that we needed. She had the attributes that we needed, and you know what those interviews are like. Within two seconds, we're just like, "Oh, this woman's awesome. She's got it." Sure, she was five minutes late, but 12 years later, do I remember that? No, I do not.

Now, I'm not suggesting that you should be late for board interviews, and Nancy is at pains to say Don't trust your GPS. She was still embarrassed about that 12 month, uh, 12 years later, and it was because she'd had a GPS issue and taken to the wrong George Street in Sydney. Uh, but yeah, so double, triple check these things. Be early for interviews, all of that stuff. But also just make sure you strongly align, because that is what stood out from Nancy's interview. Apart that she was a bit late.

The other thing in terms of resilience is my own experience. So I've applied for a couple of board roles recently. Um, haven't got either of them. Got interviewed for one, didn't get it. Uh, didn't even get to the shortlisting interview stage for the second one. But in the email that I got from the recruiters for that second one, uh, they had some awesome advice. So I did ask them whether I would be able to share it with you on the podcast.

So shout out to Monique Fulmer from PeopleFusion. Thank you for allowing me to share this. So the email that I got saying, "Sorry, you weren't shortlisted," and I'm really hoping this is... I'm pretty sure this is, was a, um, generic feedback to people, because I hope I did some of these things.

The first piece of advice there was make sure you are aligned in terms of the skills that are being looked for. Now, I suspect this is code for we got a stack of applications with people that didn't align to the skills at all. Pretty frustrating for a recruiter.

So if there's an organisation you're interested in but they're not looking for your skills, maybe reach out and say, "Look, I know that I'm not in the mix this time, but I would like to be kept on file for the future." But don't waste their time or yours if the skills are not aligned.

The second piece of advice in the feedback was, uh, and I love this, make your board and governance experience first on your board resume. Now, again, I suspect this is code for a whole stack of people sending their executive or day-to-day professional resume rather than a board resume.

If I've said it once, I'll say it again, folks, do not do that. It is just not respectful to the organisation that you're applying to, not respectful to the nominations committee. You need to spend the time coming up with a governance resume. Yes, it's going to take you some time to do it, but if you're not going to spend that time actually putting it in for the application, how have you got time to be on that, that board?

So the other part, the third piece of advice, uh, from the recruiter was linked. Have the board and executive experience separate. So your executive experience in one and your board experience in another. Again, this comes from making a board resume.

If you haven't done one before, I will link in the show notes episode six. Years ago of the Take on Board podcast, I did an on-air strategy session with Dominique Hess. Go have a listen. It'll take you through all you need to do to do your board resume. Or if you're brave enough, reach out, and I'll be happy to do an on-air strategy session with you about your resume today and how to make that your resume for going forward.

So yes, yes, yes to all of that advice, Monique. Thank you so much for sending it through as the feedback. Thank you for respectfully coming back to candidates and closing the loop. Uh, that is also, you know, should be day to day, but very much appreciated.

Now finally, back to stories from the meetup, and again, it's Nancy. So Nancy and I, as I said, had first met through the Jane Goodall Institute of Australia. Then I think she was first. She was then on the

Greenpeace Australia Pacific General Assembly, and I joined it after that, and she was one of my nominators for it. So we were, we're reflecting on that experience as well, and she ended up joining the board there.

But what she said to me was that she applied for the board once, didn't get that board role, but was offered a role on the finance and risk committee and took it, and then later down the track ended up on the board.

So again, folks, keep an eye out for committee roles because they can be an excellent way of try before you buy, of, um, you know, finding out more about the organisation, of showing them your skills and you finding out about them. So committee roles are an excellent way of finding out about board roles and building that resilience.

So I was going to say if I had one word to sum up this episode, well the one word would be resilience, but the second word would be alignment. Align the skills, align to the organisation, align your resume, you know, make it a governance resume, take up committee roles if you can.

Okay, folks, that's it from me this week, a short episode from beautiful Banff in Canada. Uh, I will be catching up with folks in Toronto in a couple of weeks. If you know people there, uh, please feel free to share the meetup there and, um, we'll see you in a couple of weeks' time.

Until then, uh, hope you are feeling resilient and aligned, and I look forward to catching you around the Take on Board community. Thanks, folks. Ciao.

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