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# The Board Bio: Getting into the Game

**By Paula Asinof and Mina Brown**

The Raj & Kamla Gupta Governance Institute asked board bio experts and the authors of “Be Sharp: ‘Tell Me About Yourself’ in Great Introductions and Professional Bios,” Paula Asinof and Mina Brown, to discuss how overlooking the important step of developing a board bio could lead to missed board opportunities.

As everyone knows, board seats don’t grow on trees. So how does a successful senior leader get one? It’s not by filling in an application and sending in a resume. In fact, in the early stages of board candidate selection, the resume may not even matter. This is where a well-designed, engaging and perfectly targeted professional bio is the way to go.

Traditionally, boards have been filled by colleagues and associates of sitting board members. In fact, it’s quite common for executives to sit on multiple boards, frequently with members who share other board assignments.

Board members comprise a small community. Breaking into the hallowed halls requires relationships and serious networking. Korn Ferry’s recent article, “The Boardroom’s Stubborn Glass Ceiling,” found that “the process of filling vacant director positions has historically been done by word of mouth” among people who know (and trust) each other.

Anyone who is pursuing board opportunities must become expert networkers. A professional bio becomes an essential tool for expanding one’s visibility and communicating qualifications. Board search committees especially like bios in the early stages of the selection process because they are short, engaging documents that can be easily obtained, shared and reviewed by members for both immediate and future consideration.

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A board bio serves as an introduction to a prospective candidate from which information can be grasped quickly.

Done properly, the bio will not only present the qualifications of the individual but also capture the reader’s attention with the candidate’s unique value, match with the organization’s needs, and fit with the board as a governance team.

A good board bio is a story-telling document, a kind of “personal press release”, that conveys who the board will get if they select a specific candidate – beyond credentials. Although it includes career

history, tightly summarized and cherry-picked for the most relevant information, it is not just a mini-resume. It also speaks to leadership style, unique attributes, and team alignment. The best bios include a professional headshot that communicates professionalism and energy and contributes to making a good first impression.

Resumes are not irrelevant, of course. They typically come into play later in the selection process when top candidates are being evaluated more in-depth or when an executive search firm has been engaged.

Our word to the wise: For anyone serious about securing a board seat, networking is imperative—it could take years of relationship building. And a board bio enables these conversations. With the demands of corporate governance today, highly qualified candidates need to get into the game.

*Footnote 1: Korn Ferry, This Week in Leadership, "The Boardroom's Stubborn Glass Ceiling", November 29, 2018*