



Chapter 18

BIOS FOR PROSPECTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

Many successful executives aspire to sit on Boards of Directors in both the corporate and not-for-profit arenas. These Board positions offer an opportunity to share expertise, gain visibility, and give back to the community. They also provide a great network of high-level contacts and a way to differentiate yourself from your peers. In some cases, these positions offer additional compensation and other benefits.

Boards generally seek people who can make substantive contributions to their organizations. They also favor people who have the standing and stature to make organizations stand out within the community, the industry, or the marketplace. Expectations will vary from organization to organization. Sometimes Boards are seeking fundraisers. Others seek out people who can provide business advice and counsel. Still others will be looking for diversity or a recognizable brand name. To be a good prospective candidate, it is important to understand your target organization's expectations. You satisfy these requirements and effectively communicate through your bio.

Networking is an essential part of being considered for a board seat. And **bios are the essential tool** for such networking. The bio used for this purpose, however, is somewhat unique. Since Boards are looking for stature and pedigree, it is heavily focused on an individual's **credentials**. A Board member bio must highlight strong credentials that are aligned with the organization. Everything about your background and experience, your customers, your awards, and your degrees needs to be presented with an eye towards credentialing.

In general, Boards are looking for one or more of the following qualities for their Board nominees.

- **Cachet:** Boards want their members to be well recognized so that they can bring an element of stardom and credibility to the company.
- **Functional Expertise:** Boards need to have many business functions represented so that decisions are made with a balanced perspective. The Board is not hiring additional executives to run the business but rather to provide strategic governance.

Excerpted from *BE SHARP: "Tell Me About Yourself" in Great Introductions and Professional Bios*, Paula Asinof and Mina Brown, 2018

- **Valuable Relationships:** Board members are expected to be able to open the right doors and access the right resources for their company. They are often selected because they know who to call and can effectively get things done through their networks.

- **Skilled Governance:** A company's strategic policy decisions are made by its Board, with each Board member contributing to the overall governance of the organization. The Board is responsible for bringing thoughtful sophistication to the process of leadership.

For not-for-profit Boards, two additional criteria are applicable.

- **Passion for the Mission:** Not-for-profit Boards want Board members who believe in the organization and can serve as its voice, both formally and informally, internally and externally.

- **Monetary Contributions:** Not-for-profit Boards generally expect their Board members to make material personal monetary contributions in addition to helping the organization raise money from other sources.

The Board Bio

You can craft your new Board Bio directly from your Foundation Bio with an added focus on what the Board needs. Here is additional guidance for developing a compelling Board bio.

Paragraph 1: Positioning Paragraph

Sentence one—Essence Factor: What is your professional essence from the perspective of being a board member? Who are you viewed through the eyes of a board selection committee (and shareholders)? Remember, you may have to be approved by the shareholders. Why would this company want you on their board? What is the most important contribution you think you could make to this particular board? It might be your reputation as a “mover and shaker” within the industry. It might be your track record as a successful entrepreneur.

Sentence two—Guru Factor: What special expertise or unique knowledge can you provide? For example, you might be someone who has a knack for recognizing future technology trends. Or you might be especially astute in emerging legislative or global economic issues.

Sentences three and four—Star Factor: What have you done that has earned you recognition? What particular characteristics make you attractive as a Board candidate? For example, you might be someone who is recognized for your ability to ask profound, provocative questions that guide the decision-making process.

Paragraph 2: Current or Most Recent Job

This paragraph will usually be very similar or the same as the one you wrote for your Foundation Bio. The question to ask yourself is whether the accomplishments that you have highlighted are the same ones you would select to present to the Board Selection Committee. This should showcase strategic leadership as well as

governance roles.

Paragraph 3: Prior Experience

This paragraph will likely be very similar or the same as the one you wrote for your Foundation Bio. However, it will be condensed as much as possible and only mention an accomplishment if it is directly relevant for this Board seat. By keeping it short, you leave more room for your credentials.

Paragraph 4: Credentials

Boards like candidates who have already been discovered by other organizations. In other words, if you have been or currently serve as a board member, whether corporate or not-for-profit, then you have an advantage here. List it along with any leadership roles that you have held in industry, civic, or charitable institutions that demonstrate your ability to guide an organization beyond your current or prior positions.

Boards also like people who have been well recognized for their accomplishments, especially with awards or honors from outside their own company. Industry awards, civic honors or honorary degrees are examples of such credentials. Finally, you will want to emphasize any publications, speaking engagements, or other forms of external recognition. Just like in your Foundation Bio, you should include your foreign language skills as well as your degrees and certifications.

Additional Considerations

With notable Board experience, the bio should include a stand-alone paragraph like the one below. Its placement in the bio will depend on how it fits into the overall career progression and other credentials.

Since 2010, Travis has been a member of the Board of Directors of ABC International, where he currently chairs the Nominating Committee, serves on the Compensation Committee, and previously served on the Audit Committee. During his Board tenure, ABC has made a well-managed CEO transition, grown internationally through acquisition and diversified its portfolio. For a not-for-profit board, be sure to highlight your passion for the organization's mission and to include information about your ability to bring money into the organization.

In addition, a Board Bio will include “Board of Directors Candidate” just under the individual’s name. When the person already has Board experience, a list of relevant boards is included in the Heading section. When the person does not have specific Board experience, the candidate should include responsibilities in the bio that reflect such activities as interfacing with Boards or leading governance activities within a functional role, especially in the current or most recent job.

Sample Bios

Author Paula Asinof obtained permission from two board-candidate clients to include their bios in *Be Sharp* with their contact information removed. They are presented as they were written at the time of creation, and accordingly their situation is likely different since publication of this book. One of the bios is for a Board of Directors Candidate who already has Board experience. The other is for an individual without prior Board experience.

- **With Board Experience:** Sharon Gabrielson, Chair of Global Business Solutions (Division President Equivalent), Mayo Clinic
- **No Board Experience:** Michele Allegretto, Vice President of Human Resources, Glaukos Corporation

SHARON R. GABRIELSON

Board of Directors Candidate

Current Chair of Global Business Solutions (Division President Equivalent)
Mayo Clinic

Healthcare Solutions

Consumer/Patient Focused Service Offerings
Provider Organization Leadership

BOARD OF DIRECTORS EXPERIENCE

American Medical Group Association
Mayo Medical Services Inc., a private health plan administrator
Health Traditions Health Plan, a private insurance company
Austin Medical Center, Compensation Chair
Albert Lea Medical Center



SHARON GABRIELSON is dedicated to enhancing the lives of consumers through health and wellness products and services. Recognized for her role in energizing innovative and creative market-driven solutions, she focuses on leveraging portfolio strengths, engaging others in a vision, and taking calculated risks. With the confidence and expertise to make high stakes decisions from research and evidence-based information, Sharon is adept at navigating the changing healthcare environment.

Currently, Sharon is Chair (Division President Equivalent) of the Mayo Clinic's Global Business Solutions Department. She has also served as Administrator of the Clinic's Office of Population Health, and Vice Chair of Health System Administration. As Chair of Global Business Solutions, Sharon is transforming an underperforming unit into the heart of Mayo's business diversification and profitability. She directs the domestic and international new business development opportunities for commercializing the Clinic's competencies to deliver service-based products to the B2B and B2C markets. As Vice Chair of Health System Administration, she led a \$2 billion revenue generating organization of community-based practices through the transition from "fee for service" to "value based care". She also led the design and implementation of the new governance structure for Mayo Clinic in the Midwest. In these roles, she was instrumental in developing a strategic plan for market penetration, scaling for growth and competing in a risk-based environment.

Previously at the Mayo Clinic, Sharon rose to a leadership role as Section Head of the Division of Systems and Procedures, the company's management, engineering and internal consulting function. Earlier she held administrative positions with the Olmsted Medical Center and LifeSource Upper Midwest Organ Procurement Organization. She began her career as an RN at Saint Marys Hospital.

Sharon has served on numerous leadership and management committees of Mayo Clinic as well as several industry boards. Her board memberships include American Medical Group Association, Mayo Medical Services, Inc., the Health Tradition Health Plan, the Austin Medical Center as Compensation Committee Chair, and the Albert Lea Medical Center. She has made presentations to industry associations on topics such as competing with disruptive innovators and authored articles with her most recent one being "Developing a new governance structure: the mayo clinic experience". Sharon received an MA in Health Administration and an MA in Management from Saint Mary's University and a BS in Nursing from Winona State University.

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MICHELE M. ALLEGRETTO

Board of Directors Candidate

Vice President, Human Resources
Glaukos Corporation

Strategy, Human Capital Management and Structured Governance
Business Alignment
Organizational Effectiveness
Executive Counsel & Thought Leadership
Acquisition Integration



MICHELE ALLEGRETTO is an innovative leader who is passionate that the biggest differentiator of success is a company's talent. Known for impeccable judgement and a forthright yet diplomatic style, she can manage across an organization and influence perspectives. Respected for acquiring in-depth knowledge of the business including its competitive and regulatory landscape, Michele establishes credibility and guides decisions towards outcomes that make sense for the company, its culture and the situation. Above all, she thrives on making a difference in the organization.

Currently, Michele is the Vice President of Human Resources at Glaukos Corporation, a fast-growing international ophthalmic medical technology company focused on breakthrough products to transform the treatment of glaucoma. She serves as a member of the Executive Team where she oversees human resources strategy and operations. She also interfaces with the Board on CEO and senior leadership succession planning, executive compensation, equity awards and related SEC disclosures. In this role, she built a new human resources culture focused on aligning talent management with the business strategy and brought structured human resources governance to the increasingly regulated company.

Previously, Michele joined Abbott Medical Optics as its Director of Global Business Human Resources when it acquired Advanced Medical Optics where she was Director of Human Resources. Among her responsibilities at each company, Michele was the human resources lead on acquisition integration. Earlier, Michele's career spanned three divisions of The Walt Disney Company – Walt Disney Studios, The Disneyland Resort and The Disney Store – focused on a broad range of talent acquisition. When the company opened Disney's *California Adventure*, *Downtown Disney* and the *Grand Californian* hotel, Michele drove the recruiting strategies and successful executions required to fully staff each property with employees meeting Disney standards. She began her human resources career with a division of The Limited Inc.

Michele received a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from California State University. She has continued her education through various programs on organizational design and effectiveness, change management, and business alignment including a workshop through the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business "Translating Business Strategy: HR's Role in Value Creation". Michele is a member of the National Human Resources Association (NHRA) and the Human Capital Institute.

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