

“My Board of Directors”

A self-coaching toolkit

**Supporting you to achieve your development,
professional and career ambitions**

This complimentary toolkit is sponsored by

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We’d like to thank all the leaders who have helped to create this toolkit by offering input and advice, piloting and giving feedback and offering to help with its distribution.

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About the Authors

Fiona Gifford and Rachel Calder met in the summer of 2011. We were involved in the early stages of the development of a social enterprise aimed at supporting women leaders to achieve their ambitions. We wanted to do something practical, positive and scalable. After a few discussions, we decided to collaborate to create this set of tools and to distribute it free of charge to leaders through multiple, online channels.

Anyone can use the toolkit – not just women and not just leaders. However, we do ask that, if you pass it on, you “pay a small fee” by also lending your coaching, mentoring, networking or other support to another emerging leader. We also welcome your feedback at www.theperformancecollective.co.uk/contact-us.

If you know of any online channels we could use to extend the access to the toolkit, or if your organisation is interested in including it on your employee intranet, please get in touch.

We hope you find this toolkit valuable and wish you every success in achieving your personal ambitions.



Fiona Gifford is Director of The Performance Collective. She has over twenty five years’ personal experience of leading and developing high performing teams and is passionate about the subject. For the last 10 years, Fiona has specialised in supporting the delivery of exceptional performance through her work in leadership and team coaching and organisation development.

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Rachel enables leading business owners and professionals, athletes and a wide range of private clients to experience even greater levels of success, performance breakthroughs and personal fulfilment.

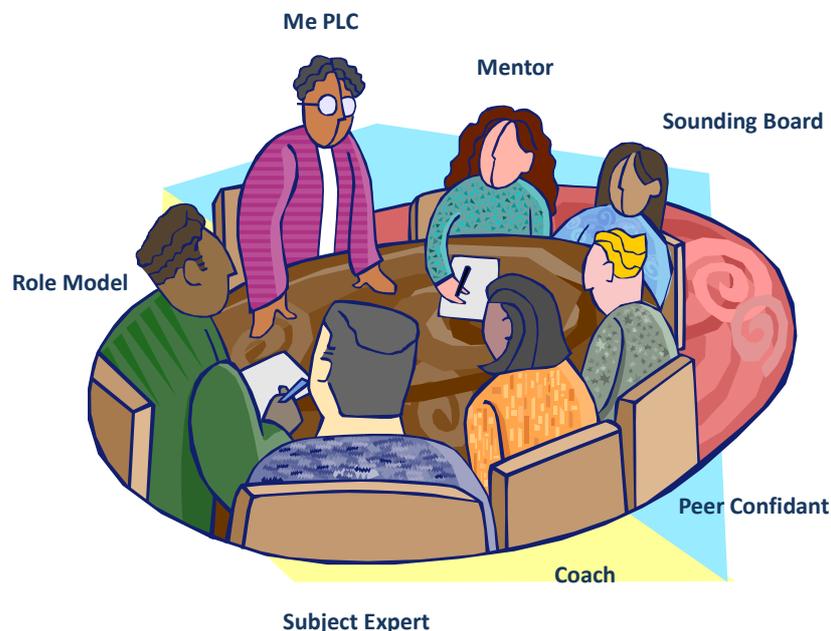
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Why do I need a “Board of Directors”?

No successful person gets “there” alone. Everyone has met people along the way who have supported, advised, helped and mentored. Some of the people who have been most helpful to us may not even be aware of the influence they have had.

Most of the help we receive on our path to leadership is provided by our organisations (training, development, coaching, mentoring etc). If you have been lucky, you will have had loads of this. Some of our support is more personal; bosses and colleagues who choose to be helpful to us in our careers. The latter is a matter largely of luck and chance; but it doesn’t have to be.



Your “Board of Directors” is the group of trusted individuals, selected by you, who can help you on your personal and career development journey. By approaching the creation of the right support network in a thoughtful and choice-full way, you will:

- Reduce your reliance on luck
- Maximise the impact of your “Board”
- Accelerate your development
- Increase your chances of achieving your ambitions

Using this toolkit, you will establish the roles you need on your “Board of Directors”, evaluate the resources you already have, and create a plan for filling any gaps.

The Process

The process of planning and executing your “Board of Directors” is completed in seven simple steps. Although the process is simple, it does require a lot of reflection and analysis. It may take you some time, and several sessions to work through it. It can also be helpful to work on it with a coach, mentor, or a trusted friend.

The seven steps are:

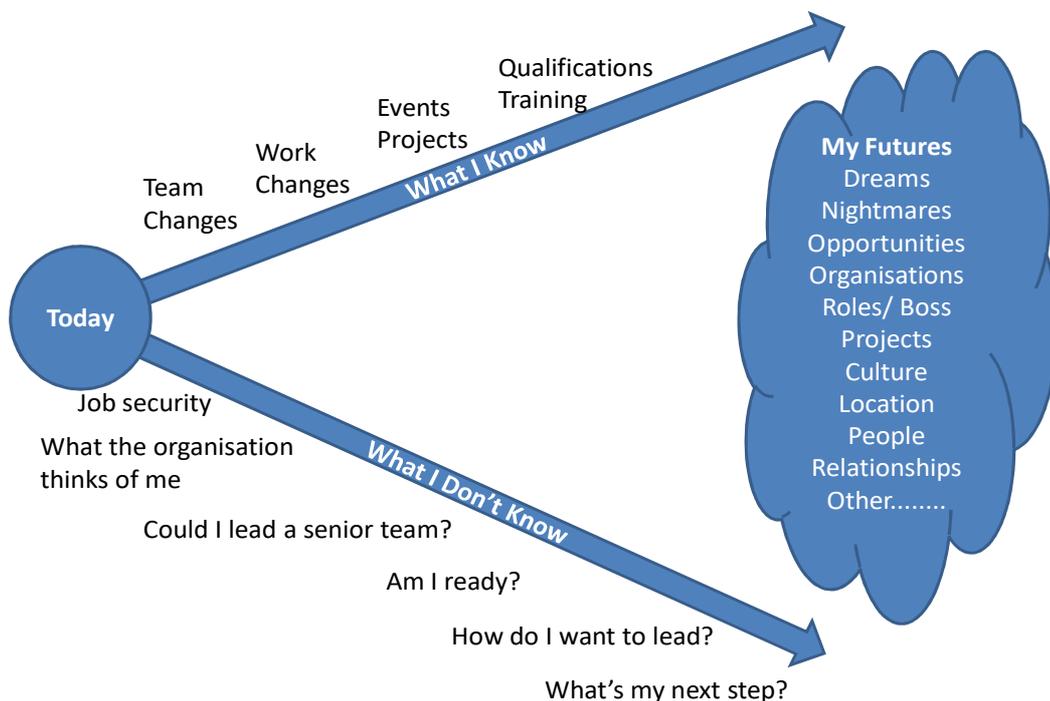
1. Future Mapping – exploring the future of both the “known” and “unknown”.
2. Future Challenges – assessing the challenges that these futures may hold for you and examining your feelings about each of these.
3. Dreaming – specifying your most desired outcomes for the future.
4. Identifying the Board Members – planning what you need and what roles these might fall into.
5. Gap Analysis – identifying the roles you have already filled and the vacancies.
6. Recruitment – filling the gaps.
7. Contracting – creating agreements with your Board members.

Each step is detailed in the following sections. You can complete the whole exercise in one session (this could take you several hours and even a whole day). Or you can work through one step at a time. This can be beneficial as you have time for reflection between each step.

Step One: Future Mapping

Future mapping is a process of exploring the possible futures that could unfold for you. In the process, you consider both what is “known” and “unknown”. Of course, the actual future that unfolds may turn out to be different. However, the thinking you do, and the awareness you will build through Future Mapping, will lead to fewer surprises and greater confidence. You will also be more likely to spot positive opportunities and anticipate situations you wish to avoid.

Future Mapping Template



To create your Future Map, draw two lines from “Today” as in the template above.

One line represents everything you know with a reasonable level of certainty. This might include; planned promotions or next assignments, changes to your current role/ location/ reporting, courses and qualifications you are completing, and so on.

On the second line, capture as many unknowns as you can. This is obviously more difficult and will probably be less detailed. Be as open as you can, even if some of the things you write down seem a little unlikely. Don't feel limited by the suggestions on the template; think as widely as you can. The most unlikely ideas may unlock something else that's important for your map.

The final step is to describe as many possible future scenarios, in as much detail, as you can. Make sure you focus both on the most and the least attractive possible futures.

Once you have done this, leave it for a few days and then revisit it and add some more.

Step Two: Future Challenges

The next step involves exploring and assessing the challenges that your Future Map may hold for you and examining your feelings about these. This step will help you to identify your most desired futures for the Dreaming step. It also allows you to begin to face some of your fears – before they are real.

Facing our fears, when their cause is still just a possibility, allows us to prepare and build confidence in our ability to prevail. As a result, they seldom actually come about. If they do, their power to stop us achieving our ambitions is diminished.

Future Challenges Template

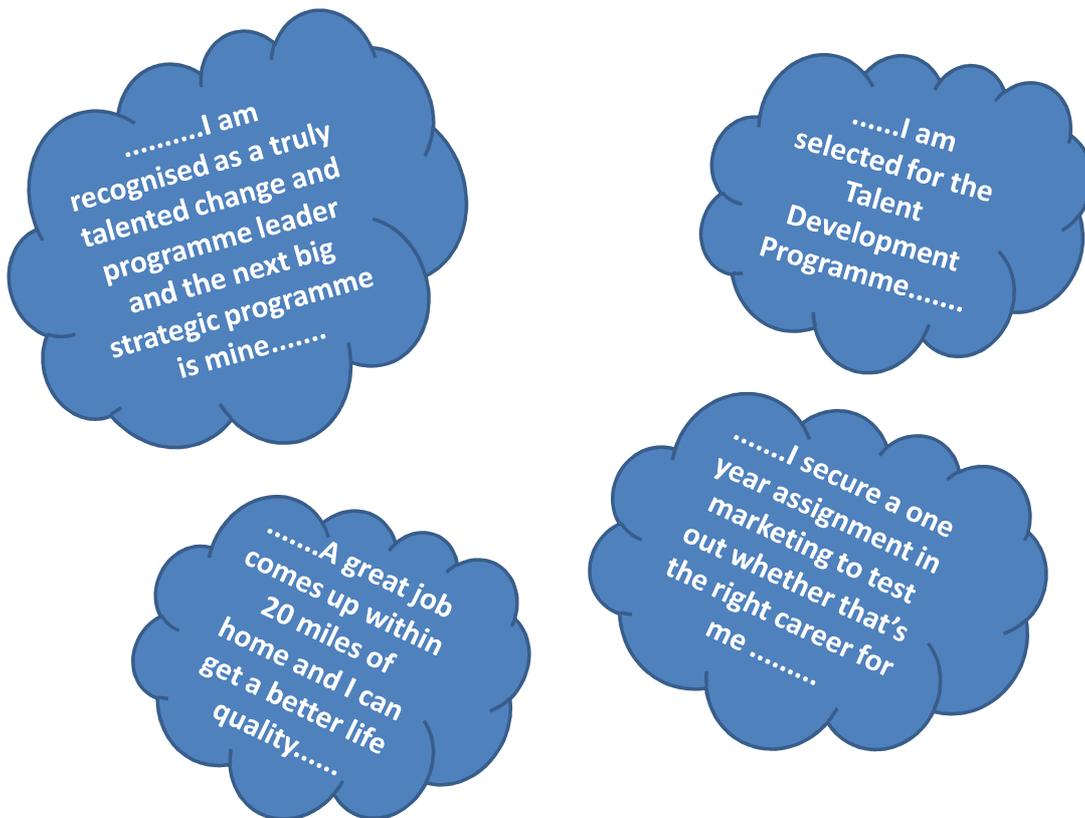
Challenge Types	Challenges	Emotions
Technical	<i>New ERP system will completely change how I do my job. I am not confident in my understanding of it</i>	<i>Uncertainty, Fear of failure Also excited about possibilities</i>
Functional	<i>The team I lead are very resistant to the changes ahead</i>	<i>I have led teams through change before – confident that I can do it again and up-for the challenge. This is an opportunity for me to “shine”</i>
Personal	<i>The next project involves reporting to the Board regularly</i>	<i>A great opportunity, but scary and risky. I need to prepare well and practice to make the most of the opportunity</i>
Skills		
Relationships		

To complete the Future Challenges step, you review your Future Map scenarios and identify all the challenges that you may face if each scenario becomes reality. As you articulate each challenge, notice and be aware of the emotions and reactions you have to each of them and also capture these. You may have mixed emotions about some. You may also have totally positive or negative feelings about others. Be honest with yourself. Also, there are still a lot of unknowns on your map, so focus widely and keep working on even the most unlikely scenarios.

Step Three: Dreaming

Now you can dream. Review all the work you have done so far, and then set aside the paper and pen. Make yourself comfortable, close your eyes and allow your mind to take you to the futures you most desire. Dream about more than one desirable future – remember there are lots of unknowns, so having only one dream may become limiting. Have as many dreaming sessions as you like – it's fun and great for motivating later action.

Dreaming Template



Write down your dreams. Some of your dreams may be very specific, some less so. Some may involve actual job moves or promotions, some may be about experiences/ lifestyles you want to have. The important thing about dreams is that they attract and excite you - they are desirable, and the idea of them coming true is compelling.

Step Four: Identifying the Board Members

The first three steps have been preparation for the process of identifying what roles you need on your Board of Directors. Think of your career as “Me PLC”; you are the Chief Executive of your career and your “Dreams” are the possible futures that could lead to delivering your ambitions.

Your Board will provide the expert skills and knowledge, personal support, challenging thinking, honest feedback and counsel, problem-solving and networks that you need to deliver these ambitions. Each member will have a specific contribution to make. The membership may change and evolve over time and the members’ role may also evolve.

Identifying Board Members Template

Help I Need.....	Role.....	Specifics.....
<i>Fast track development of ERP system knowledge and advice I can trust.</i>	<i>Technical Mentor</i>	<i>ERP Technical Expert Can explain in plain English Not a member of the change team Local – want to meet face to face</i>
<i>Career change out of this sector and into another – I have only ever worked in this sector and don't know anyone in the other. I need to create a new network.</i>	<i>Networking Mentor</i>	<i>Highly networked in my target sector A “networker” who will be generous with introductions I have something to offer them in return – they would value my connections</i>

To identify your Board roles, review all the work you have done so far and think about what help you need to achieve this. Be as specific as possible.

Don't listen to the voice in your head that tells you that you don't know anyone for that role, or “why would such a person help me?” – that voice is not helpful to you. You will be surprised the help you can find when you know what you are looking for.

In one specific respect, your Board of Directors is different from an organisation's; some of the members may not need to know they are on it! For example, you may decide that you need a Role Model for building your influence at more senior levels. You can observe a Role Model and learn from what they do, without having any personal relationship with them.

However, for the most part, you will both identify and contract with your Board members. So once you have identified the roles you need, you can move on to the final two steps.

Step Five: Gap Analysis

Now you have to figure out what resources you already have to fill the roles, what gaps there are and whether there are other ways to fill the gaps. You may also want to prioritise; smaller Boards are easier and more time-efficient to manage.

Gap Analysis Template

Role	Current Resources	Alternative Resources	Possible Candidates/ Resources
<i>Technical Mentor</i>	<i>Brian or Sarah?</i>	<i>ERP Diploma?</i>	<i>Sarah recommended book E-Business and ERP: Transforming the Enterprise</i>
<i>Networking Mentor</i>		<i>Linkedin Industry Group? Anything on Facebook?</i>	<i>No identified candidates Jen's dad works in the sector, could ask him for advice.</i>
<i>Role Model</i>	<i>Karen – I have been observing and learning from her for a while – perhaps contrast with someone with a different style?</i>		<i>Jo or Suzanne?</i>

You can add these columns to your Step Four Template if you want to keep one complete view.

In this step, you keep an open mind to the possibility that there are other ways to fulfil your needs that may be more effective. In addition to training and reading/research, you could consider joining a special interest or industry group, forming a peer support group or using online resources such as LinkedIn, Vimeo and Slideshare to access networks, information and insight.

Often when you begin to try to identify candidates, you find you can't think of any. This can be discouraging, but don't give up. Remember the concept of "Six Degrees of Separation"? We are all, on average, only six connections away from everyone else on the planet! So you may only be one friend or colleague away from the connection you are trying to make.

Think about family, friends, colleagues, team-mates, bosses, virtual networks, professional associations and so on. Who do you know, who could be a link to the resource that you need. It may take some time, but you'll get there.

Step Six: Recruitment

Once you have identified your targets, you will need to create a prioritised plan for recruiting them. If there are Board Members who do not need to know the role they are playing (eg Role Models), you may simply need to find ways to be where they are, when they are demonstrating the skills you want to observe.

For the members whom you actually need to approach and contract with, you will need a more structured approach:

Before making your Approach

- Find out about the person. What are they passionate about, what is their past track record of supporting others, is there anything they are interested in that could be a “hook” for them to want to meet you.
- Write down a very clear and specific statement of what you want to achieve from the relationship
- Do the same with regard to what specifically you want them to do
- Think about how much of their time you will want
- Think through what would be attractive to them about engaging with you
- Think about what would be the “cost” to them
- Is there anything you can offer in return? Be creative eg could you offer to mentor a junior member of their staff, give their teenage child a work experience placement, or simply offer that they think about what you could offer in return

Making your Approach

- If you don’t know them personally, get a “warm” introduction from someone they respect if you can
- If you have to make a “cold” approach, the first point about getting to know about them is even more critical. Build rapport by talking and asking questions about what they are interested in
- Behave as if you expect them to say “yes” – they are more likely to do so
- If possible, make a personal approach (face-to-face or by phone). Rehearse it – you only get one chance to make a good first impression
- State clearly and succinctly your objective and how much of their time you need
- Keep it short. Eg Ask for 20 minutes for an initial meeting and stick to it
- Let them decide what’s most convenient – give them as little reason to say “no” as you can

You may be short on networking experience, and the idea of asking for help like this could be daunting. You could focus your attention again on getting a warm invitation. Or you could do some research into networking and influencing techniques. You will find a lot of online resources and very accessible literature on both of these subjects. If this is a real weakness for you, perhaps you just need to focus on building your networking skill as the top priority, before you build the rest of your Board.

Step Seven: Contracting

Having a clear contract in place for the relationship you will have with each of your Board Members is essential:

- It provides a clear outline of what the expected outcomes are for both parties. The mutual expectations are made explicit
- It specifies any boundaries or ground rules that both parties must respect
- It provides a process for how the relationship will run and be managed in practice
- It defines the criteria by which the relationship will end

Your “contract” does not need to be formally recorded; the conversation is the important part. You may want to simply note down what you agree or capture it on an email. No signatures required!

Contracting Template

These are some of the questions you may wish to discuss and contract on with your Board Members. It is not exhaustive and will not cover every possibility, but it is a starting point.

- What needs to be in place for each of us to get what we need from this process?
- What are your expectations of me?
- What are my expectations of you?
- Are there any other stakeholders involved/ affected and what do we need to think about for them?
- Confidentiality – what is our agreement about this?
- Duration of relationship – how long will this engagement last? How will we know it is complete?
- Meetings – times, places, cancellations – what works for us?
- What is the purpose and goals?
- Behaviour style – eg Just how much challenge are you up for?
- How will we review and evaluate how it’s working?
- How will feedback be handled; honesty and openness?
- How and when will we disengage?

Of course, it is likely that some of your Board Members may become long term friends or mentors. Others will be happy to keep in touch. Some will want to close the relationship and move on. Whatever the long term future of the relationship, you must still formally disengage from their role on your Board. What happens after that is then clearly a different relationship.

More Resources.....

Websites

www.linkedin.com – online business network. In addition to individual connections, look in “Groups” to find specific networks by industry or subject matter. Also, search “Events” for networking and development opportunities in your area.

<http://www.thesocialmediahat.com/article/ultimate-guide-perfect-linkedin-profile> - there's a free guide to writing your LinkedIn profile on this page.

<http://www.businessballs.com/> – free diagnostics, resources and templates for personal development and career planning.

www.ragged-online.co.uk – free learning events and links to dozens of other free stuff on the “Resources” page.

<https://www.coursera.org/> - free MOOCs

www.selfgrowth.com – loads of free resources and weblinks including online profiling and questionnaires.

<http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/knowledge-hub> - resource for leaders launched in 2012. Also has links to events.

<http://scottishchangingthechemistry.co.uk/> - support and development for aspiring board members.

Publications

Now, Discover Your Strengths: Marcus Buckingham & Donald O. Clifton - comes with a logon to take the Strength Finders questionnaire.

Networking for People Who Hate Networking: A Field Guide for Introverts, the Overwhelmed, and the Underconnected: Devora Zack

Business Model You: Clark, Osterwalder and Pigneur

Other Resources

If you are a graduate, join your college or university alumni group. Most hold regular events that will enable you net work beyond your usual boundaries. If you have moved away from your university, check the local one for communities and events you can join.

And Finally.....

We hope that you have found this process enlightening and useful and we wish you luck and great outcomes in pursuit of your dreams.

We would like to ask you for something in return. If you do at least one of these, you will have “paid” for your toolkit in full:

Can you support others to achieve their dreams?

- Having used the toolkit, could you coach another person to apply it to achieve their dreams?
- Could you create a peer-support group for several people working together to achieve their dreams?
- How could you encourage the use of this toolkit within your own organisation and networks?

Can you help to improve and develop the toolkit and its use?

- Please send us your feedback and suggestions for how we can improve this toolkit
- Are you, or do you have the ability to introduce us to, someone who could be a channel for making the toolkit available to many more people? Please get in touch.
- Are you someone, or do you know someone, who would be interested in supporting/ advising on the creation of an online and interactive version of the toolkit as a free contribution?

Would you share a story or resource with us?

- Did something interesting or special happen for you as you worked towards your dreams?
- Did you find a useful, cool or highly effective resource that others might like to know about?
- Send us your stories and suggestions please

With best wishes from

Fiona and Rachel

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*“A person is the product of their dreams.
So make sure to dream great dreams.
And then try to live your dream.”*

Maya Angelou