

# 7 Traits of Highly Successful Women on Boards Views From the Top and How to Get There

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Let's be clear from the start, successful women on boards have many more than seven traits to define their success, and yes, there is a lot of advice out there already, but I decided to go on a mission to get the other half of the story that has never been told; not corporate, but from the hearts, the souls and also the heads of women who have been there, done it, are still doing it, and are willing to share.

*7 Traits of Highly Successful Women on Boards – Views From the Top and How to Get There* is not academic research, it is not a thesis, nor is it a statistical report. It's an easy-to-read interview account of 22 brilliant women who have kindly agreed to share with me their stories: the peaks and troughs of their journeys to the top. They donated their stories, not to impress but to press upon women the world over that whilst getting to the top of the corporate ladder is tough, it is achievable.

This book is written in an accessible way specifically to enable the widening of participation of women and future leaders. It also aims to show, if these illustrious women can do it, it can be done by other women, given self-belief, the right preparation and a bundle of drive and determination to boot. The time is right, the time is now. 'Carpe Diem' has never been more appropriate. Never before has the boardroom gender equality conversation been so in vogue. With more and more businesswomen gaining positions on FTSE boards, this book, *7 Traits of Highly Successful Women on Boards*, has another incentive as it offers high profile women already on boards another platform to be at the vanguard of the gender equality debate.

During the process of writing this book I approached 22 very special women, at the pinnacle of their business environment, to share their views and experiences. By their involvement they distribute insight to others and inspire with their expertise, tips and advice. In doing so they will not only be supporting a variety of aspiring women on their journey to the top, they will be setting standards in corporate mobility and responsibility for the women coming behind them. They will also empower the men at the top who want to know what women really think about being on a board, and hopefully inspire chairmen to think more about widening diversity and participation, and not be haunted by the nemesis – like scepticism – about what women can really bring to the table.

My aim was to get a good balance of age range, which I feel I managed to do, covering from mid-30s to 60 and beyond. I also focused on getting a balance in race, which I did not achieve so well. My one disappointment was that, although I could find many women who wanted to contribute, it was very difficult finding women of colour who were in a position to contribute. When I did find a few, more than half of those that I approached declined the request. Very puzzling.

Whilst this was very disappointing, it also confirmed my fears that there are even fewer women of colour breaking through the triple whammy of the race, gender and boardroom barriers that they come up against.

It is encouraging that the "Women on Boards" report has facilitated a significant breakthrough in the gender strand of diversity, but there is a mountain still to climb as far as the race issue is concerned, and possibly other elements of the other diversity strands also need to be explored with regard to equality on boards.

*7 Traits of Highly Successful Women on Boards* will contribute to the shortening of the already smashed prediction of the 70-year time frame for gender equality in the boardroom mentioned by Lord Davies in his 2011 "Women on Boards" report. Thankfully the production of that report has spurred more women into action, showing that we are ambitious, we are confident, we do have the savvy, and we bring a very different approach and contribution to the table, showing the benefit of diversity in the boardroom.

