



Writing Your First Board Biography

Positioning Yourself for Corporate Directorship





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Section 1

How to Write a Board Biography



How to Write a Board Biography

You already have plenty of experience writing an executive biography (likely multiple biographies), and you are now at the point in your career when you need to draft a Board biography. A Board biography is not the same as your executive biography. An Executive biography is a narrative of your resume. *A Board biography should speak to your specific skills in relation to serving on a Board.* It should include leadership, mentoring, profit and loss responsibility, governance knowledge, board exposure and management experiences. For some, this will also include speciality experiences like e-commerce, digital/technology, human resources, M&A, and marketing.

Your Board biography is the foundation for landing your first (or next) Board seat and requires you to articulate the value you could bring to a company as a Board member. Over the years, we've seen many versions of Board biographies, and based on our experience of working with Boards, we've created this guide to help you draft your own Board biography.



What Should Be in Your Board Biography

- **The first step in writing your biography is to take some time to reflect on your career and determine the most important experiences that have prepared you for board service.** Your key skills and expertise should be focused on 3 to 4 areas that you would be considered an expert in (by yourself, by colleagues, and by outsiders). This is more than a laundry list of regular corporate experiences; don't simply write "strategy and leadership." ***You must show this expertise*** in your experiences rather than simply *write* it. For example, your headline could be "Digital Leader," "Transformational Leader," or "M&A Expert," but you will want to provide details of how you achieved that expertise.
- **If you have international experience, that is an important highlight.** Give details about which markets and countries you have specific experience in and what your role(s) were. If you have specialized knowledge in a certain region, that is worth noting as well.
- Think about what your conversations would be like in a Board interview – what topics would you gravitate toward and what questions you'd be interested in asking?
- State the type of board you are seeking – private, public or non-profit

What Should Be in Your Board Biography

- Your Board biography should always answer three standard questions:
 - 1. What is your role in your current (or most senior) reporting structure?** The level at which you report to (C-level, C-1 or C-2) is significant and also dependent upon the size of your company. A C-2 role for a \$50 billion company means you can have a sizeable P&L, you have face time with your Board of Directors, and a fair amount of exposure to the Street—all of which belongs in your Board biography.
 - 2. What, if any, is your P&L experience?**
P&L is typically the most asked about experience for Board of Directors. It is not a requirement, but many companies believe that executives who have clearly managed profit and loss will bring something extra to the table. If you have had that experience – even a small amount – you should include that experience in your biography.
 - 3. What exposure have you had to Boards and Boardrooms?**
Most executives have spent at least some time in the Boardroom with the Directors of their company. If you are presenting on a regular basis to the Board (particularly if you have a non-traditional P&L role), highlight the level of exposure and guidance you are receiving from your Board. Do you get regular feedback on your performance from the Board? Have you served on a Board? If so, have you held committee responsibilities?



What You Should Leave on the Cutting Room Floor

- **If you have served on a board in the past don't inflate your experience.**

For example, if you were on the board of a consumer-packaged goods company, unless you have other experience specifically in CPG as an executive, you are not an expert in CPG and shouldn't write your biography as though you are.

- **Avoid broad descriptors and industry jargon.**

Don't simply say you were involved in strategy setting—explain what you did and how you helped the company implement and measure the effectiveness of the strategy. Try to limit your use of jargon and be deliberate and thoughtful as you describe your experience, especially if the Board seat you are seeking is in a different industry than your executive experience.

- **Leave out your early career and minor roles you have held.**

Focus on significant experience from the past decade.

- **No need to give specific dates in the biography.**

You will want to give a sense of time in terms of the number of years you held a role or when you began and ended roles, but you do not need the month and date. Save that for your resume.



Keep in Mind

- **Tailor your Board biography for the type of Board you are hoping to join.**
The experiences and skills you highlight for a non-profit educational Board would be different than a public company financial services company.
- **Indicate that you understand the difference between oversight and management.**
Make sure your biography shows that you understand the difference between being an executive (doing) and being a Board Director (advising). A CEO's greatest fear is having a Board Director who gets too involved "in the weeds" and does not know how to share guidance and advice without trying to operate and lead. **"Nose in, Fingers Out"**
- **This is not your Board resume.**
That is a separate document. Your Board biography is an introduction to who you are and what value you would bring to that board.



Section 2

Sample Board Biographies

BOARD CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

Display Your Executive Presence

Corporate Boards USA

Board Bio Sample

Below is a classic example of a board biography.



PAUL GURROLA

President & Founder
Corporate Boards USA

Consumer Products
Transformation through Brand Strategy

BOARD EXPERIENCE
GS-1, Global Industry Standards Association
Supply and Demand Chains
Daymon Worldwide
Audit Committee • ESOP Investment Committee
University of North Texas, Board of Governors
School of Hospitality & Merchandising

PAUL GURROLA takes a vision and makes it reality through sound strategy development. He intuitively sees the threads of opportunity that wind through an organization, brings them together into a coherent whole, helps others extend their thinking, and drives material business advantage. He is an inspirational leader who tells stories that inspire action while at the same time is grounded in financial information that leverages the business. Respected as a credible voice in decision making, finding strategic financing partners, and establishing governance boundaries, Paul earns a seat at the table wherever he serves.

Currently, as COO and CFO at Daymon Worldwide, a privately-held, global retail branding and sourcing company, Paul oversees the operations of a billion dollar plus organization. He led the successful buyout of the founder and transitioned the company to a 100% employee-owned company. He is now spearheading major strategic shifts for transforming IT from a functional focus to an enabler of innovation for the business and integrating the finance organization so that it supports a truly global company.

Previously, as Senior Vice President and General Manager, Paul led business development for the foodservice division of PepsiCo after heading their \$1.5 billion U.S.-based multi-channel business. During this time, he drove the acquisition of market share from Pepsi's largest competitor, repositioning Pepsi as a recognized and credible player in the foodservice industry. Earlier he rose through the ranks of The Coca-Cola Company transitioning from finance to sales and marketing. He began his career in public accounting with Ernst & Young.

Paul holds a Bachelor of Science and an MBA in Finance from the University of Southern California. He serves on several Boards of Directors including GS-1, a Global Industry Standards Association, the Audit and ESOP Investment Committees of Daymon Worldwide, and the University of Texas Board of Governors for the School of Hospitality & Merchandising.

323-273-5534

paul@boardseats.org

BOARD CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

Display Your Executive Presence

Corporate Boards USA

Bio Structure

The basic structure of a board biography is a document of about 350 words that fits onto a single page using an appropriate font and point size. Currently, a good choice is Calibri (a hybrid font that reads well both in a printed document and on an electronic screen) using a point size of 10.5 or 11.

Bios are written in the third person, consistent with the literary genre of biographies.

Bios may or may not include headshots. Generally, a professional headshot is recommended. It serves to reinforce the executive's professional stature and helps to engage the reader. The well-known adage, "a picture is worth a thousand words" is especially relevant.



NAME

Title
Company

Keywords
Keywords

Paragraph #1: Positioning

Paragraph #2: Current or Most Recent Position

Paragraph #3: Rest of Career

Paragraph #4: Credentials

Contact information

The core of the personal brand appears in the descriptors that align with the headshot. There are as many variations as there are people and situations—with or without Board experience, currently employed, retired, or in transition, title, company, functional area, areas of expertise, or "tag line". The goal of this section is to describe the executive with laser focus such that his or her value is grasped immediately by the reader. This information is then supported in the body of the bio.

For more information on preparing for board directorship or becoming a member of Corporate Boards USA, please contact:



Paul Gurrola
President & Founder
Corporate Boards USA
323-273-5534
Paul@corporateboardsusa.com



Linda Iannone
Board Advisor – Corporate Boards USA
Board & Audit Committee Member
CommerceWest Bank
310-600-1537
info@corporateboardsusa.com

Corporate Boards USA's Mission is to Prepare our Members to be Highly Qualified Board Candidates.

We Make You Board-Ready!

For more information visit www.corporateboardsusa.com

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