



**Targeting a Board**  
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*Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom.*  
 — Tao Te Ching

So you would like to serve on a board. But which one? And why?

Serving on a board is a commitment of time, intellectual energy, and, sometimes, money, so it is important to carefully determine the type of Board on which to serve. American Academy of Nursing fellows have broad and deep expertise in health care. Considering health care is estimated to become 17.5%<sup>i</sup> of the GDP, there are numerous possibilities of serving on health-related boards alone, particularly in the areas of quality and patient safety. While subject matter expertise is important, knowing about governance, financial management, compensation, information technology or other management functions can be just as valuable. It can be time consuming to prepare for board meetings since there's often with a considerable amount of information to review.<sup>ii</sup> So think about what you enjoy doing and what you might like to learn as your first step in targeting a board you'd like to join.

How well you get along with others will be important to the board selection committee. Your skill in articulating opinions in a diplomatic matter can be tested in emotion-ridden discussions about topics such as compensation and liability. When you do this well, you can expand your network and further strengthen communication and leadership skills.

Start with self-examination as you target a board. Board service is certainly résumé enhancing, but successful service requires a careful matching between the individual and the needs of the board. Evaluate yourself on the spectrum from novice to expert using the chart below.<sup>iii</sup> If you've never served on a board or have limited experience, consider seeking board involvement with a national or community-based nonprofit organization. You do not want to serve on a board that is taxing, overly complex, or uninteresting. Serve where you add value and can contribute meaningfully. Often the reputation you earn on your first boards becomes the key that opens doors to higher level boards.

**Elevating Nurses on Boards**

-Novice-	-Intermediate-	-Expert-
Trusted leadership team member	Has several years of staff management experience	More than 10 years in an executive role
Attend at least 1 advanced training in RN specialty field	Attend at least 2 advanced training to continue specialty education	Attend at least 3 advanced trainings to continue specialty education
Proven strategic thinking and problem solving experience in the healthcare field	Developed strong relationships with C- level administrators and physicians	Member of a State or National level Board of some kind
Track record in management, ideally in healthcare	Shows initiative to be involved in volunteer board opportunities to gain governance experience	Publications exhibiting field knowledge and/or research
Understanding of the healthcare marketplace	Advanced degrees preferred	Exhibits expert business acumen through progressive corporate goals
Working toward advanced degree in specialty field	Under 60 years old before escalating to 'expert' level	Has experience in corporate governance
		Holds advanced degrees, ideally in executive leadership

Work your network keeping in mind your competency profile and objectives. And not just your nursing network. Lawyers, accountants, financial consultants and people currently serving on boards often know opportunities. Express your genuine interest and ask their advice. They can provide information about the expectations of different boards and help pinpoint which might be the best boards for you to target.<sup>iv</sup>

There are a wide range of resources about serving on boards. For example, if you're a woman, look at [Catalyst](#). If you're African-American, [The Executive Leadership Council](#). Hispanic, [The Hispanic Association of Corporate Responsibility](#). More general references include the [NASDAQ](#) registry of prospective directors and the registry of the National Association of Corporate Directors.<sup>v</sup>

Using a research intensive approach, identify several organizations that most interest to you and pull up the roster and biographical information about current board members. Identify where your knowledge might complement the board's existing expertise. Using Frigyes Karinty's six degree of separation theory, find a relationship with a current board member. Arrange for informational conversations about the board selection process, board member responsibilities, term limits, etc. to determine if there is an opportunity for you on one of the boards and what your next steps should be. While some board identify members through a rigorous search firm process, most often boards turn to referrals from individuals they know and respect. This is understandable to achieve a well working, collegial board.

Your take-aways as you continue your board search are:

- Targeting a board is best done through networking, once you have done your self-examination and determined the rationale for how you can contribute.
- An abundance of online resources can help refine your search as the first step in developing your plan. It is important to become known.
- You can obtain a free Board Seat Assessment at [Executive Advisory](#).

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<sup>i</sup> CMS December 3, 2015

<https://www.cms.gov/research-statistics-data-and-systems/statistics-trends-and-reports/nationalhealthexpenddata/nationalhealthaccountshistorical.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Your Complete Guide to Serving on a Board of Directors by Laura Cohen. January 9, 2013

<http://www.brazen.com/blog/archive/career-growth/your-complete-guide-to-serving-on-a-board-of-directors/>

<sup>iii</sup> Thanks to Paul Earle, retired from Spencer Stuart, for his help in developing this chart.

<sup>iv</sup> How to Get on a Board. Bloomberg. September 13, 2007. Beverly Behan.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2007-09-13/how-to-get-on-a-boardbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice>

<sup>v</sup> How to Get on a Board. Bloomberg. September 13, 2007. Beverly Behan.

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