



Preparing to become a NED

CV Writing and Cover Letter

The Seacole Group is the national network for NEDs from Black, Asian and other minoritised communities serving on boards in the NHS and wider health system. Their mission is to strengthen representation, voice and effectiveness of NEDs from Black, Asian, and minoritized communities on Boards.

We provide resources to help aspirant NEDs and Chairs achieve their ambition of joining a Board in the NHS or wider health system. If you haven't already, read our [Preparing to be a NED – top 12 tips](#).

This guidance focuses on your CV and we've found some fantastic advice from our friends over at Dynamic Boards. Before you start, double check what the advert and guidance say. Sometimes they ask you to keep your CV to a certain number of pages, or to answer specific questions in your supporting statement.

Top things to include in your NED CV

A Summary of who you are and career or experience highlights:

- Summarise your key skills (e.g. strategy, marketing), sectors you have experience in (e.g. fintech), qualifications (e.g. chartered accountant), and the markets you've worked in (e.g. FTSE, AIM, Housing Associations, VC, start-ups...)
- Highlight big achievements (e.g. increased revenue from X to Y, lead a team of 30 age 27, winner of ** award...), and experiences (e.g. turn around, IPO, raising seed investment round).

If they didn't read on would they know enough about you to spark their interest?

- Show you understand what the most important skills are for a Non-Executive Director role and highlight that you have those skills. E.g. risk management and mitigation, succession planning, corporate governance, shareholder and stakeholder engagement, performance monitoring, growth.
- **It's not the time to be humble.** But it also isn't the time to brag with vague statements like "Excellent at Press and Comms". Be clear and precise with

your language e.g. “Nine years as Head of Comms at two UK SMEs, both in the manufacturing and industrial sectors”.

- Mention your soft skills too. Things like: analytical skills, interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, leadership style, problem solving, diplomacy.

Your board experience

- Note – this is probably the biggest change from your ‘normal’ CV. Your ‘board experience’ section should come before your chronological career experience.
- What board, or board-like experiences have you had? This could include: executive or non-executive roles on a board, company secretariat, observer seats on a board, experience near board level (exec minus one) should also be mentioned, pitching to the board, consulting to the board or attending board meetings, charity trustee roles, start-up boards etc. Have you been on any subcommittees? E.g. Audit, Risk, Remuneration. Be clear what your role was and whether it was a ‘director’ role or not.
- In each instance, share an insight into what value you brought to that board. What difference did you make?
- Remember that whilst you may be emphasising your ‘technology’ skills that you bring to board, you will be expected to speak into multiple areas of the organisation. So perhaps mention other things you’ve influenced e.g. finance, governance. Give evidence for the soft skills you mentioned in the summary.

If you haven’t had board experience then emphasise how your experience connects into a board environment, and what makes you want to join a board. Don’t worry we all have to start somewhere!

Your career experience

- This is the more traditional CV section: include where you have worked, what were you responsible for, and what you achieved. Be as specific as possible. Don’t forget voluntary roles, too.
- Revisit your “normal” CV and focus it more on high level, strategic and board skills and experience. Make sure this section chimes with what you said in the opening paragraph. Draw out evidence of those skills and experiences in your career experience to date.

Your education, qualifications and awards

- Education: include any degree level qualifications or equivalent.
- Professional qualifications and certifications.
- Relevant training: e.g. non-executive director training or governance training you have had (this definitely isn't a requirement).
- Awards: relevant professional awards, with details as to what you won it for.
- Regulatory positions: e.g. PRA SMF16.
- Memberships to professional bodies or relevant organisations.

Personal interests

- We're all humans, show that here! Let them know something about what you enjoy outside of work, especially if it's relevant to the organisation. Keep it short.
- References (if required)
- Some organisations request that you state two or more referees. If you choose to do this, only do so with the referee's permission, and share their name, title, and when you worked together. Don't provide their contact details; wait till they ask you for those at the interview stage.

Don't forget the CV basics

- Good spelling, grammar and a clear layout! Font size – minimum 11, ideally 12.
- Spell out any acronyms or jargon: don't assume the person reading it will know them.
- Include the basics at the top: Full name, Email address, Phone number, Location – e.g. Leeds (doesn't need to be full address), LinkedIn URL (visit your own page on LinkedIn, and copy and paste the URL that appears
- When you mention an organisation you've worked with or for, indicate it's turnover or number of employees, to give an idea of scale.
- For specific roles, ensure you include formal organisation names, role titles, dates of where you worked when. And put the most recent roles at the top. For education and training include dates.
- Length – it's debatable, some recommend 2 pages, some say max 4 pages. We'd recommend 2 pages. Check if there are specific requirements on the advert.
- PDF or Word version? We'd recommend sending it as a PDF unless they've asked for it in Word, as that way you can be certain they will view your CV in the formatting you set out. To save as a PDF: if you are using Word, click 'save as' and where it says file type, select 'pdf'.

- Don't write 'CV' at the top, just write your name in big letters. They know what it is, make your name stand out! **Seacole Group tip: Write your name phonetically!**
- Always save the file name as your 'name', 'CV', and the 'role' you are applying for.

Top things to demonstrate in your NED cover letter

You are passionate about the organisation. Link your personal interest to their specific mission/ purpose. Look back at your brainstorm notes, be honest about what interests you about the organisation and why.

You understand why you are a good candidate for the role. Reflect back to the advert or brief: what skills and experience did they say they are looking for? Make sure you have highlighted your experience in those areas. If you think you have other skills, experiences or a perspective that will add to the mix on their board in a way that they didn't specifically state that they require, this is the time to get that across.

You are ready for a non-executive role. If this is your first board role, show that you appreciate the difference between exec and non-exec roles. As with the CV, consider board or board-like experience, show that you see the difference, but don't let titles hold you back from explaining the relevant experience you have. If you already have board experience, highlight what you've learned and have been able to contribute.

You recognise the context of 'now'. Show you understand the strategic moment in time that the organisation is facing, its goals and ambitions, and how your skills/experience can help them with that.

You have done your research on the organisation. Share the insights you have gained through that research.

Your skills, experience, perspective, training, achievements. Are there any big obvious things you want to make sure they know about you? Don't just leave it to chance as to whether they spotted them in your CV, mention it here too.

You are aware of any concerns they may have about appointing you e.g. you have no prior board experience, you are young, have no higher level qualifications, don't live near the office, have a full-time role alongside this etc. Tell them why that issue will not be a problem, and even how it gives you a fresh perspective on the role. Address any significant gaps in your CV if applicable. *Don't let the elephant in the room take your seat!*

Don't forget the cover letter basics:

- Check if they have asked you to address any specific points in your cover letter.
- Address your cover letter to the current chair of the board, unless you specifically know the application will be considered by someone else.
- Keep it to no more than two pages (unless they've told you otherwise).
- Always save your cover letter file name as your 'name', 'Cover letter', and the 'role' you are applying for.

Before you submit...

- Find someone who can review it for you. If you know someone with board experience, ask them. If you can ask someone who knows you well and can make sure you are drawing out all of your skills, even better.
- Don't be afraid of feedback.
- Make sure you've done everything they've asked for in the application (including any other forms) and sent it to the right person by the deadline.

Apply!