



BOARD CONNECTOR

Seven women share their top tips to prepare for a governance career

Begin with clarity and confidence.

- Back yourself: your experience, culture, and lived perspective are legitimate sources of board value.
- Don't wait to feel "ready": readiness is built through action.
- Be clear on your why: purpose and values guide board choices and sustain you through challenge.
- See governance as service: align your board journey with causes and kaupapa you genuinely care about.
- Remember: you belong in the room.

Prepare, listen, and be courageous.

- Prepare deeply: read papers early, understand the context, and come ready with thoughtful questions.
- Listen first, especially when new: deep listening strengthens relationships and decision-making.
- Ask values based and practical questions early to ensure the board is right for you.
- Speak up and persist: you don't have to be loud to be heard.
- Challenge respectfully by clarifying why you were approached and the full value you bring.



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Start where you are.

- Community, voluntary, not-for-profit, school, sports, and grassroots boards are credible governance experience.
- Start local and small to build confidence, then think long-term about where you want your governance career to go.
- If pathways don't exist, create them — and bring others with you.
- Be open to trial and error; stepping away from a board that isn't the right fit is part of good governance.

Be visible, create opportunities.

- Reframe your professional experience through a governance lens — strategy, oversight, risk, and stewardship
- Invest in a clear, governance focused CV that articulates board level contribution (not operational roles).
- Put yourself out there: research boards, apply, and expect knockbacks as part of the journey.
- Use coffee conversations and intentional networking to learn, build confidence, and increase visibility.

Continue to learn and invest in development

- Adopt a learning mindset: no one ever knows everything.
- Seek mentors, sponsors, and champions (formal and informal), especially experienced chairs and director's webinars, newsletters, and online platforms — to build governance literacy over time.
- Build financial confidence and understand organisational risk across financial, cultural, and people dimensions.