



The  
**Observership  
Program**<sup>™</sup>  
ESTABLISHED IN 2014

Board Readiness

# Tips and Guidance for Your Governance Journey



# Congratulations on Your Achievement

Congratulations on completing The Observership Program. This is a significant milestone in your governance career.



## Observed Governance

Attended board meetings and witnessed strategic decision-making in action



## Professional Training

Completed programs with AICD and The Ethics Centre



## Built Relationships

Connected with experienced directors and governance leaders



## Developed Skills

Enhanced leadership capabilities and practical governance expertise



## Added Value

Made meaningful contributions to your host board and organisation

Today's session focuses on translating this valuable experience into securing your first board role.



# Reflection: Capturing Your Learning

Take time to systematically capture what you've learned and achieved during your observership. This reflection will become a powerful tool for future applications and interviews.

1

## Significant Discussions

What were the three most impactful board discussions you observed? Which strategic decisions shaped the organisation's direction?

2

## Your Value Added

Where did you contribute unique perspectives? What questions or insights did you share that influenced thinking?

3

## Governance Challenges

What complex issues did you witness the board navigate? How were risks balanced with opportunities?

4

## Key Insights

Which discussions gave you the deepest understanding of governance? What surprised you about board operations?

# Action: Document Your Experience

Create a comprehensive reference document that captures the essence of your observership experience. This becomes your go-to resource for applications and interviews.

- Board Context**  
Your host board's name, mission, and organisational purpose
- Strategic Issues**  
Key challenges, opportunities, and decisions you observed
- Your Contributions**  
Questions asked, insights shared, and committee work completed
- Skills Developed**  
Specific governance capabilities you strengthened
- Relationships Built**  
Professional connections and mentorship relationships established



**Pro Tip:** Keep this document updated as you continue your governance journey. It will evolve into a powerful narrative of your board readiness.

# Your Board CV: A Strategic Tool

A board CV is fundamentally different from a job resume. It's a specialised document designed specifically for seeking board positions, highlighting your governance experience and strategic leadership capabilities.

## Purpose-Built

Showcases your governance experience from The Observership Programme and positions you as a strategic asset

## Strategic Focus

Emphasises governance, leadership, and strategic thinking rather than operational tasks

## Concise Format

Typically two pages, focusing on high-impact achievements and board-relevant capabilities

## Value Proposition

Tells a compelling story about the unique value you bring to a board

Multiple resources and templates are available. The key is understanding that this document serves a different audience with different priorities than a traditional employment resume.





# Board CV vs. Job Resume

Understanding the distinction between these documents is crucial. You're not applying for employment—you're positioning yourself as a governance asset who can contribute to strategic oversight and organisational success.

## Job Resume

- Detailed task descriptions
- Reporting relationships
- Day-to-day responsibilities
- Career progression timeline
- Employment-focused narrative

## Board CV

- Strategic achievements and impact
- Leadership capabilities demonstrated
- Governance-relevant experience
- Skills matrix format often preferred
- Value proposition narrative

# What to Include in Your Board CV

Your board CV should showcase the specific capabilities and experiences that matter most to board service. Focus on demonstrating governance readiness and strategic value.



## Strategic Thinking

Evidence of strategic decision-making experience and ability to think beyond day-to-day operations



## Financial Literacy

Demonstrated financial acumen and business judgment in complex situations



## Stakeholder Engagement

Track record of building and managing relationships with diverse stakeholder groups



## Industry Knowledge

Deep sector expertise and relevant professional networks that add value



## Risk Management

Experience identifying, assessing, and managing organisational risks effectively



## Governance Training

Formal governance education and board experience, prominently featuring your Observership



# Language Matters: Reframe Your Experience

The language you use in your board CV should emphasise governance impact and strategic outcomes rather than operational responsibilities. This shift in framing positions you as a director, not an employee.

1

## Job-Focused Language

- ✗ Managed budget of \$2M
- ✗ Led team of 15 staff
- ✗ Implemented new CRM system

2

## Governance-Focused Language

- ✓ Demonstrated financial oversight through strategic resource allocation decisions, achieving 15% efficiency improvement
- ✓ Demonstrated leadership capabilities through team development and change management in complex stakeholder environments, resulting in improved organisational performance
- ✓ Led digital transformation initiatives, balancing risk and innovation, delivering measurable outcomes in customer engagement and operational efficiency

# CV Structure and Format Options

Choose the structure that best showcases your strengths and aligns with board application conventions. Both formats are widely accepted—select the one that tells your story most effectively.

## Option 1: Traditional Chronological

01	<b>Professional Summary</b> Governance-focussed overview of your value proposition
02	<b>Governance Experience</b> Observership plus any board or committee roles
03	<b>Professional Experience</b> Career history reframed for governance relevance
04	<b>Education &amp; Development</b> Formal qualifications and professional training
05	<b>Skills and Expertise</b> Core competencies relevant to board service
06	<b>Community Involvement</b> Volunteer leadership and civic engagement

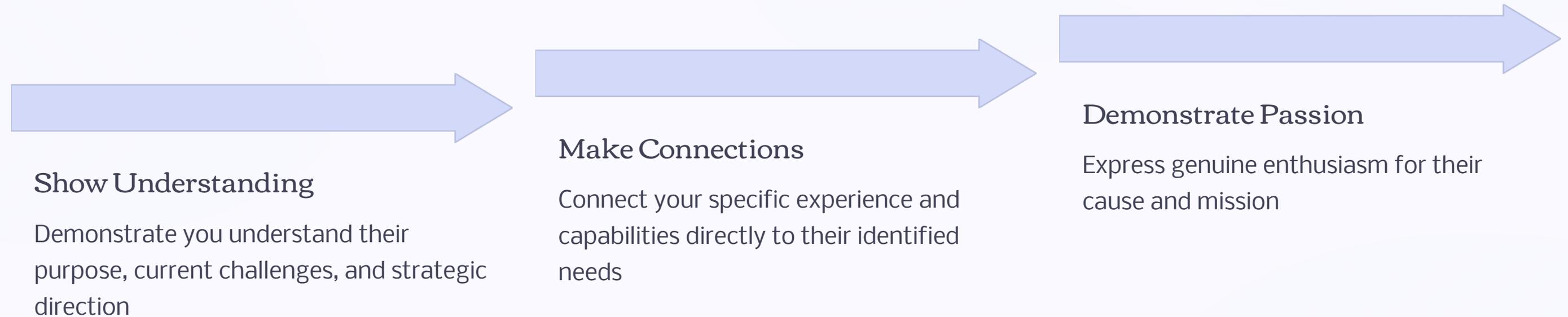
## Option 2: Skills Matrix

01	<b>Professional Summary</b> Clear statement of board readiness and value
02	<b>Board Skills Matrix</b> Table format highlighting governance capabilities
03	<b>Governance Experience</b> Board and committee positions held
04	<b>Career Highlights</b> Achievement-focussed, not chronological
05	<b>Qualifications &amp; Training</b> Formal education and professional credentials
06	<b>Directorships &amp; Appointments</b> Board roles and advisory positions

**Keep it concise:** Limit your board CV to 2-3 pages maximum. Board members are busy—make every word count. Create a master version, then tailor it for each application by emphasizing the most relevant experience.

# Crafting Compelling Cover Letters

Your cover letter is your opportunity to demonstrate genuine understanding of the organisation and connect your experience directly to their needs. It's where you show you've done your homework.



**Avoid generic openings like:** "I am writing to express my interest in..."

**Instead, lead with impact:** "Your organisation's recent initiative to expand mental health services aligns perfectly with my ten years of healthcare governance experience and passion for community wellbeing. During my observership with [Board Name], I witnessed firsthand how strategic board oversight can transform service delivery..."

## Research Before You Apply

# Know the Board Inside and Out

Applying to boards without thorough research wastes everyone's time—including yours. Demonstrating deep knowledge of the organisation shows respect and genuine interest.

1

### Annual Report

Review financial position, strategic priorities, achievements, and challenges facing the organisation

2

### Board Composition

Analyze current skills represented and identify gaps where you could add value

3

### Recent Media & News

Understand current issues they're navigating and their public reputation

4

### Digital Presence

Examine website, social media, tone, values, and current campaigns or initiatives

5

### Board Members

Research backgrounds on LinkedIn—identify potential connections and understand collective expertise

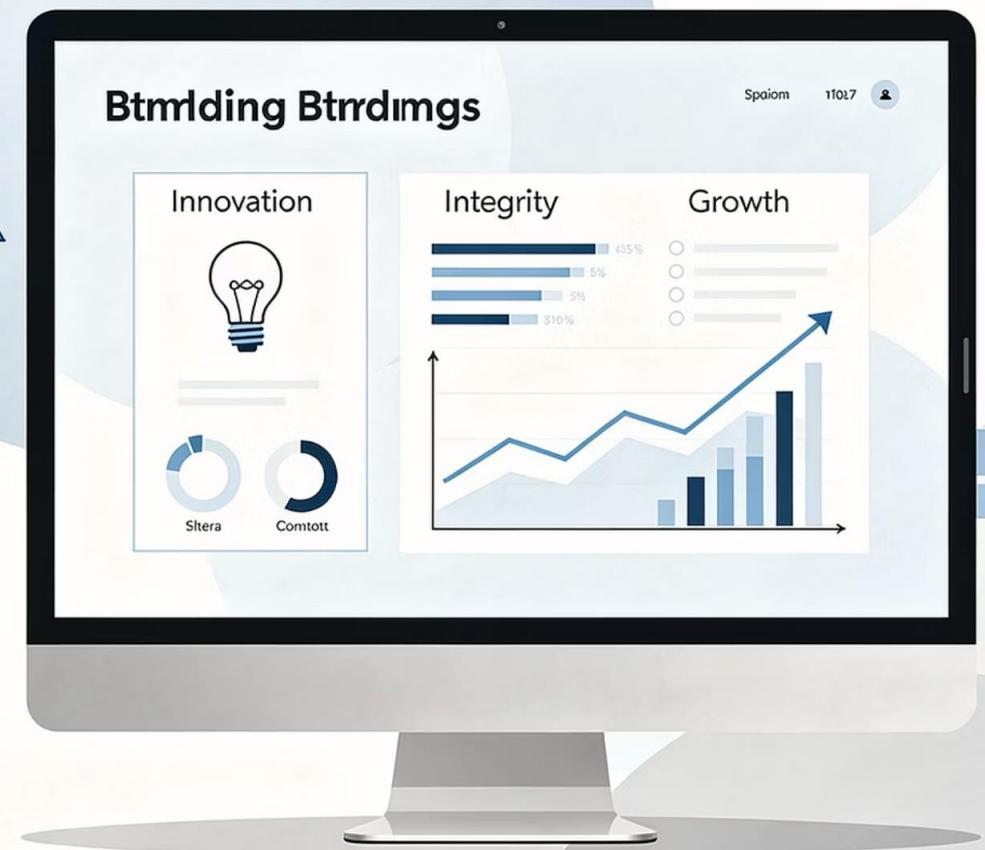
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### Financial Statements

If available, assess sustainability, growth trajectory, and potential risks

**Connect to Board Impact**  
Clearly articulate the individual value you bring to the task of making a positive impact on a board's goals

## Unique Value Proposition Strategy



# Why a Board Value Proposition Matters

Effective boards comprise members with diverse skills, experiences, backgrounds, genders and ages. Your board value proposition distinguishes you from other candidates and clearly articulates what you can offer a board.

### Demonstrate What's Special

Articulate the unique combination of skills, experience, and perspective that only you bring to the table

### Set Yourself Apart

Distinguish yourself from everyone else competing for limited board positions

### Connect to Board Impact

Clearly articulate the individual value you bring to the task of making a positive impact on a board's goals.

# Developing Your Board Value Proposition

Your board value proposition should be concise and powerful – highlighting your core strengths and explaining the unique value you bring to a board. Remember, a good board value proposition takes real work to develop and the best versions are constant works in progress. They benefit from the feedback of others.



## Identify Core Strengths

What governance capabilities do you possess that are in demand?



## Highlight Leadership Qualities

What leadership experiences distinguish you from others?



## Connect to Board Impact

How do your strengths translate into tangible board contributions?



## Use Specific Examples

Support your claims with concrete evidence from your experience



**Remember:** A strong board value proposition takes real work to develop. The best versions are constantly refined based on feedback from mentors, peers, and board members. Don't expect perfection on your first draft.

# Identify Your Target Boards

Identify the top five boards or industries you'd like to target. Narrowing your focus provides strategic direction and ensures your networking and application efforts are purposeful and effective.

1

## Provides Direction

Gives you clear focus on where to invest your time and energy

2

## Ensures Alignment

Helps match your interests and values with specific sectors or organisations

3

## Targets Value Proposition

Allows you to customise your message to be more compelling for each audience

4

## Enables Research

Makes it feasible to deeply research specific boards and industries

5

## Networks Efficiently

Helps you connect strategically with people in your target areas

Use this focused list to guide your research, tailor your applications, and network with purpose and efficiency.

# Maintain and Grow Your Network

Your network is one of your most valuable assets in securing board roles. Proactively nurture relationships with board members from your host board and continue expanding your governance network.

## Reconnect Strategically

Reach out to board members from your host board. If you haven't already, connect with them on LinkedIn to maintain visibility.

## Reintroduce Yourself

Remind them of your time together, express appreciation for the experience, and reinforce your enthusiasm for your governance career.

## Share Your Progress

Update them on any continuing education, such as pursuing an MBA or completing additional governance training programs.

## Request Future Consideration

Politely ask them to keep you in mind for future board opportunities or to make introductions to others in their network.

Many board positions are filled through personal networks before they're publicly advertised. Staying connected and top-of-mind with your contacts significantly increases your chances of hearing about opportunities early.

# LinkedIn: Your Digital Board Resume

Update your LinkedIn profile–this is where boards will look when considering you. Your profile should clearly communicate your board readiness and governance aspirations.

## Demonstrate Board Readiness

In your About section, explicitly note that you are board-ready. This signals your interest in governance roles and shows you've invested in professional development.

## Learn from Others

Review profiles of successful Observership alumni, such as Dan Johnson: [linkedin.com/in/dan-johnson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dan-johnson). Notice how he showcases both his Observership board role and programme participation.

## Feature Your Observership

Add your Observership as a distinct position entry. Include the board name, your role, and key governance activities you participated in.

## Use Strategic Keywords

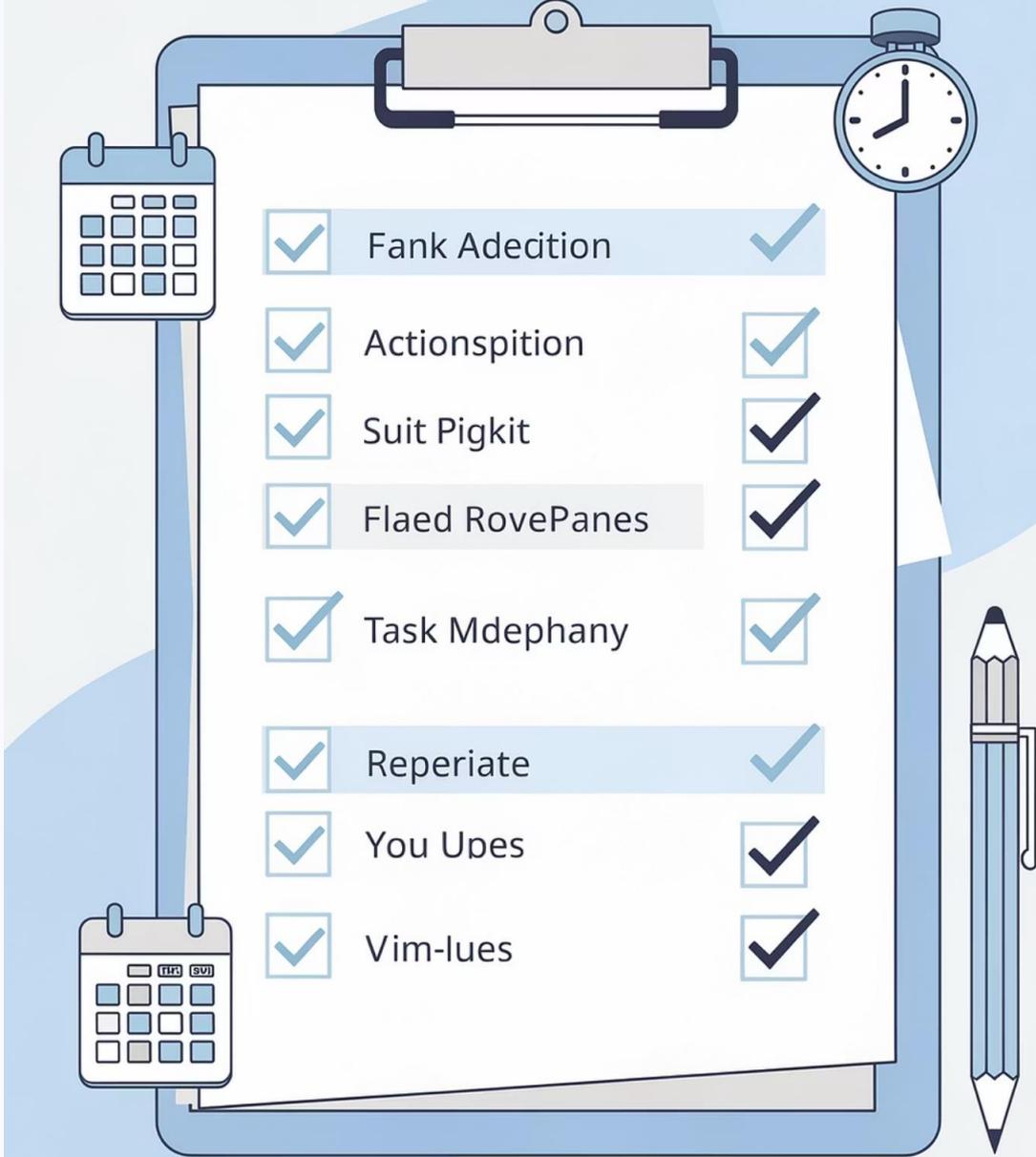
Include governance-related terms throughout your profile: board member, director, governance, strategic oversight, fiduciary responsibility, stakeholder engagement.

# Your Action Checklist

Take these concrete steps today to maintain momentum and maximise opportunities from your Observership Program experience.

- **Join Alumni Group**  
Connect with The Observership Program Alumni Group on LinkedIn to stay engaged with your cohort
- **Update Your Details**  
Ensure The Observership Program has your current contact information for opportunities, scholarships, mentoring, and alumni activities
- **Share Board Appointments**  
Notify the Program when you join a board or committee as an independent member
- **Report Career Changes**  
Keep the Program informed about job changes or promotions that enhance your governance profile

Staying connected ensures you receive information about board role opportunities, professional development initiatives, mentoring programs, and alumni events.





# We are Here to Support You

Contact The Observership Program anytime you need support. Your success is our success, and we're committed to helping you achieve your governance goals.

The Observership Program remains a resource as you continue your governance journey. Don't hesitate to reach out for guidance and support.



## Professional Development

Guidance on further training opportunities, courses, and certifications to strengthen your governance credentials



## Board CV Review

Feedback on your board CV to ensure it effectively positions you for governance roles



## Value Proposition

Help refining your board value proposition to articulate your unique governance strengths



## Mentoring Opportunities

Connections with experienced directors who can provide ongoing guidance and advice



## Selection Process Support

Advice on navigating board selection processes, interviews, and appointment procedures