

**Case Studies from**  
**Earn Your Seat on a Corporate Board by Jill Griffin**

**VISIBILITY**

Visibility is critical. You can do stellar work, but if it's not visible, it can't take you anywhere. Consider the following examples:

When Carole Brookins was CEO and chairwoman of World Perspectives Inc., a Washington-based consulting firm specializing in agricultural commodities, she gave a speech at a fertilizer-industry conference. After the keynote, the president of Terra Industries, a Sioux City-based fertilizer maker, approached her and a networking relationship began. A year later, when a board seat opened at his firm, he invited Brookins to interview. She landed the seat, her first of three corporate board director posts.

**KNOW YOUR OWN BOARD CURRENCY**

When crafting your resume for the boardroom, it's important to understand and communicate the worth, merit, and desirability you bring to the board seat. These attributes play a major role in building your appeal as a board member.

Case in point: When Australian Anne Ward prepared her boardroom CV (a common branding tool in Australia), she carefully translated her executive skills and her legal knowledge to board skills. Those skills included her ability to think analytically, to amalgamate huge quantities of information, and to ferret out and focus on an issue's salient points. In addition, she emphasized the risk radar that she had developed as a lawyer or, put another way, her ability to "smell the smoke," as she phrased it. In Anne's case, her deep experience advising companies on acquisitions and mergers, capital raising, and floats were also relevant boardroom skills that she called out on her CV.

**TIMING**

The more recent your experience the more it is likely to appeal to boards. Some recruiters tell me that a CEO or a senior executive who's been retired for more than a year has less appeal to boards than do

those currently employed or just retired. Because the world of business changes so quickly, it is essential that board members be up-to-date.

Let's look at this contemporary real-world example.

HomeAway, Inc. is a small-cap firm based in Austin, Texas, which was recently bought by travel giant Expedia.com. Home-Away is a leader in the online vacation rental marketplace, with more than 1,000,000 vacation rental listings in 190 countries. Seeking a new board member with extensive marketing experience in a closely "associated" industry, HomeAway recruited Southwest Airlines' Chief Marketing Officer, Kevin Krone.

As CMO, Kevin is responsible for Southwest's marketing strategies covering all sales and promotions; special event marketing; multicultural activities; partnership relationships; all field sales offices; advertising; Southwest's frequent flyer program called Rapid Rewards; online marketing; and distribution of Southwest's products. One particular skill that proved pivotal to Kevin's selection is his many years of leadership at Southwest aggressively expanding the airline's online customer service abilities. For HomeAway, social media plays a huge role in competing for the vacationer's rental dollar, and so they sought out a director like Kevin, who brought firsthand mastery of navigating the topsy-turvy world of social media.