

XCEO Toner

July 5, 2011

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Improve Your Odds: Stop Waiting for the Call

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In a recent *Directors & Boards* (D&B) E-news briefing, Editor-in-Chief, Jim Kristie, discusses finding that first corporate board seat and the amount of time it may take to actually be placed on a board. Kristie speculates, given his direct experience working with directors that it actually takes much longer than the 1 to 3 years reported in a recent Heidrick & Struggles survey. He offers some useful advice such as, read certain D&B articles dedicated to landing a directorship, etc., but more importantly, he advises readers to raise their profiles, offering writing/publishing as one opportunity.

This article struck me, because we have been advising clients for years to raise their profiles, offering a number of ways to do so, including writing. But it doesn't stop there. Getting at this notion of being "visible" is key, and addressing this issue on all fronts is paramount.

Interestingly, I recently spoke with the Chairman of Sealy Corporation, Paul J. Norris, who is also a board member at Nalco Company and FMC Corporation, regarding our work at XCEO, and in response to a question I posed regarding finding corporate board opportunities, he said, "my experience suggests that they find you." This just so happens to be a claim we agree on. With those of our clients who are interested in board opportunities, we work to position them so they are "findable".

Although having your name sitting in a recruiter database is a good first step, it certainly is not something that should be relied upon as the sole means of finding a board seat. Waiting for the right recruiting specifications for your name to appear on a list with a thousand others, may seem like the best way to position yourself, however, at XCEO we agree with Mr. Kristie that one should seek out alternative methods to be recognized as a potential director candidate.

At XCEO, we have a variety of programs targeted for individuals who are at different stages in their careers and who have varying levels of public board service. Although each program and each individual has a core set of positioning activities and processes, our method, rather our mission is to make sure that each client is uniquely positioned and showcased in a way that clearly indicates the true value he or she brings to a boardroom.

The strategy for enhancing the visibility of one person will not necessarily be the strategy for another. There are a variety of different activities that individuals can engage in to raise their profiles to get their information in front of key decision makers. My point is, reading, writing and publishing articles is just the beginning...it's something to consider if you are waiting for a recruiter's call.

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