



Your Personal Board of Directors

Who's on your board?

Many of us have a small group of people that we reach out to whenever we make a major decision. This typically includes family members, friends, relatives, etc. For example, imagine that you are considering moving your family to another country. Who are the people you would talk to before making this decision? Those people are on your personal board of directors.

For most of us, we pick our board members by default. Certain people have always been around and they automatically become the ones that we talk to. But, what if we put as much thought toward selecting our personal board as we would in selecting a corporate board.

Your personal board should not include only friends and family members. It should be a diverse group that can pose the big questions that need to be asked. Consider having one or “two free agents” (think representatives-at-large) along with a clarifier who asks clear questions, a connector who leads you to other people, a challenger who helps you act boldly, and a wise elder or sage. You want to draw upon the wisdom of people with diverse perspectives who think differently than you do.

Things to consider when putting together your personal board of directors:

Create a diverse board. In general, we tend to surround ourselves with people that look like us, think like us, and who value the same things we do. Keep your board diverse by having some people who are older than you, some who are younger than you, and some who are in your field as well as some in different fields. Establishing a diverse group of people with different backgrounds will provide you with unique perspectives that you may not have otherwise had.

Have an “inspirational” or iconic member. This is a less obvious point, but I recommend that at least one of your board members be a virtual person. (Not as in “remote,” but as in someone you perhaps don't even know.) This can be a figure in history, a relative that is no longer around, or someone you admire but have never met. Whenever you're faced with a tough decision, just imagine what this virtual member would say about your situation and what advice they might offer.

Invest in your board. Make it a priority to "meet" with each of your board members regularly about your decisions in life. Make sure you "show up" prepared. Be intentional about the conversation. It's okay to be relational, but don't forget to give them all the facts surrounding your issue in order to get the most out of the experience and their advice. And return the favor whenever possible, too.

Always be looking for new members. Once you make a decision to cultivate the best possible board that you can for yourself, always be on the lookout for new board members. It's hard to find someone who wants to be a venture capitalist and give you money, but it's much easier to find people who are willing to be "mentor capitalists."

Many of the successful people have accomplished powerful individual goals by creating a personal board of directors. In forming this group, they tap into wisdom they normally would not have access to and they develop a support network.

- Who is on your board?
- Who do you tap into for guidance, support, and advice?
- Who has helped you the most in the past?
- Who have you turned to when you face a problem at work, at home?
- Who has helped guide and develop you?

Name of Person	Role	How can I best utilize them?

Ever heard of having too big a board? It doesn't hurt to evaluate who is currently on your board and who might be a good addition or substitution based on new contacts you have made.