



# THE LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

Developing a leadership  
brand to get on the Radar

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## Background

Anna is successful. She sits as a member of the Executive Leadership team and is the functional head leading a large, dispersed team in a multinational, listed corporation. She has consistently delivered the required results, worked closely with the Board and established an engaged and committed team.

She is force for positive change being a mentor, patron and sponsor for initiatives in the organisation, industry and her profession.

Anna had been headhunted into this role by the CEO. They had worked closely together in a previous organisation. He was familiar with and confident in her capability. She has been with this organisation for just over 5 years and in the industry for 30 years.

## The challenge

The challenge came for Anna when she thought the next logical step in her career progression was to secure a position as a member of a Board.

Within Anna's current world she enjoyed a strong and established reputation. She had existing relationships with stakeholders and the decision makers knew who she was and understood her strengths and interests. This had been forged and developed over years. She did not have to effort in this area.

Anna become frustrated in her attempts to secure Board positions. She experienced what she already intellectually knew, that this is a highly competitive market with many candidates with the aspiration and credentials in competition for relatively few positions.

Her commercial experience and academic credentials were merely the right of entry into the candidate pool.

The strategies (or lack of) that Anna had employed previously were not helpful to her now. She had relied on reputation and existing relationships. In this new situation she was not only an unknown quantity – she was unknown.

*"Her commercial experience and qualifications were merely the right of entry into the candidate pool"*



## Our approach

Through coaching it became clear what was needed was a 'Brand Anna' Strategy. We worked through a process to gain clarity about her objectives and to inform the strategy. Once these were established the process moved to planning for implementation and also enabling Anna for execution.

## Knowing what you want

Given the competitiveness of the market it was important for Anna to be clear about what it was that she wanted in terms of being a board member. This was a significant piece of work that took some weeks. The output was a clear definition for herself of the desired and realistic industries, board type, size, location, desired role. These were all considered in relation to the amount of available time, interests, industry knowledge and experience.

## The Brand

Another significant piece of work was for Anna to identify and articulate her brand as a Board candidate. She worked through what she wanted to be known for; what she wanted people to say about her. She went through the process of identifying what was her unique value proposition and matched this to what it was that was being sought.

## The Market

Anna actively researched the process and market for board appointments. Some of this was desk research but it was complemented through meetings with colleagues, network groups and referrals. Through her due diligence she gathered critical information to inform her strategy.

She found that being known and recommended is critical in securing roles such as these. So, being known to the decision maker or by a trusted advisor or peer of the decision makers is critical.

*"Through coaching it became clear that what was needed was a 'Brand Anna' strategy"*



What was obvious was that this was a crowded and noisy market. Supply overwhelmed demand and therefore getting on the radar was not going to be achieved without overt effort.

## The Plan

Knowing what is desired is the start, it was then about planning - how to make this come about.

She worked a process of identifying the companies and the key decision makers involved in Board member selection. This fell to two groups - the Chairmen and the Search firms.

Anna developed a plan to make contact with these people. She also identified the network and other events that would be helpful for her to attend to remain informed and make contacts.

## Enabling Anna

Promoting herself was an unpalatable and unfamiliar situation for Anna. She had been approached to take her last 3 roles. She recognised that making a cold approach to be considered as a potential candidate was uncomfortable. She also recognised that resisting only meant she was limiting her chances. Anna needed to find a way to work comfortably within the system.

What all this really did was test Anna's conviction and commitment to achieving this goal. It was not easily attained like most highly prized goals.

Having identified Brand Anna, we established what thinking, behaviours and language would support and reinforce this to the stakeholders.

She practiced the conversations she would have, the approaches she would take without the crutch of her previous position power and credibility.

The challenge was working on a way that Anna could do all these things with a degree of comfort and in a sustainable and credible manner.

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## The Successful Outcome

Anna was successful in implementing her plan. It was not without challenge and it required her to persevere and work with her natural reluctance to market herself.

Within 12 months of implementing her plan she secured Board position with a not for profit organisation. Having served successfully on that Board she was approached to consider joining the Board of a small listed company.

While never likely to be completely comfortable with self promotion she is very clear about Brand Anna and uses this as her navigation point and platform for her interactions. Her brand gave her the edge.

*"While never likely to be completely comfortable with self-promotion her brand gave her the edge"*





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