



EMMA MASLEN

# THE PERSONAL BOARD OF YOU INC.

How to recruit the best personal  
advisors to accelerate achievement

# Praise

‘The concept of a Personal Board was alien to me. However, it has now become apparent that it could play a critical role in achieving my career vision, especially now that I am pursuing a portfolio career.’

— **Tribeni Chougule**, Diversity Leader

‘It’s a really interesting and innovative concept that I wish I had discovered years ago. As a founder, I’ve already started implementing some of Emma’s suggestions and I can see how powerful it’s going to be for both the business’s growth... and my own! Highly recommended.’

— **Laura Harnett**, Founder, Seep

‘Five stars! I hadn’t heard of the Personal Board concept before and, being new to entrepreneurship, I am now using this concept to build my support network and customer base.’

— **Jules White**, Founder, Creativa

‘A must-read for new-founders and entrepreneurs everywhere. A structured approach to thinking about how to activate your network to achieve your goals faster.’

— **Lucy Rhodes**, Angel Investor

‘Successful careers are built with flourishing networks. An inspirational book with insights that I wish I’d systematically applied throughout my career.’

— **Laura Turner**, Sales Professional

‘Sage advice, delivered in a structured and methodical way. For both the young and tenured professionals who want to create opportunity through their network.’

— **Genevieve Martin**, Senior Tech Leader

# R<sup>e</sup>think

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# Introduction

Over the years, despite holding down a full-time job, I have also adopted the role of part-time career advisor. This was never part of my plan, and yet it has become the most rewarding part of my career to date.

I frequently receive calls from people looking for advice on the next step of their career journey. Some of these people I know well, but others I have met only once. Indeed, only yesterday, before writing this introduction, I took three calls from people asking for help with their careers.

Why do people call me? Ten years ago, I wouldn't have had an answer.

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People need support from those who are open to listening, working through problems and helping others find their way, make the path clearer and easier to navigate and, most importantly, easier to achieve. I have been lucky enough always to have known people who are happy to help me in both my personal life and my working career. When you are navigating your journey through life, the impact others can make should never be underestimated.

I'll share some of my own stories in this book as well as those of other people I've met. These stories serve to illustrate some of the amazing gifts others can bestow on your career.

Why am I writing this book? Why do I want to help? The answers to those questions are simple. I have been both the receiver and the provider of help. While I am grateful for every leg-up I have been given, I get an enormous boost from being the person who helps too. I also feel fulfilled when I see people accomplishing what they have set out to achieve and reaching the goals they have set for themselves.

However, while I will take a call from anybody, there's only one of me and so many hours in the day, and I realised I would be able to help *more* people by writing this book. In it, you will find the staple advice I have given over the years, which also helps others recognise what is possible.

I would love people to be inspired – for them to read one of the stories in this book and think, ‘That’s just how I was’, ‘That’s exactly what happened to me’, or ‘That’s just what I was going through at the time’, giving them the confidence to break away, to try something different and to take action.

This book is for anybody – regardless of age or demographics – who wants to build a better future for themselves and take ownership of their development, their career and their life’s goals. From an existing CEO to a wannabe yoga studio owner, everyone will find something in this book to further their goals.

## **My Personal Board revelation**

Thirteen years ago, I reached a crossroads in my career. I was working for Sun Microsystems, a large technology business which was being acquired by another technology giant, Oracle. During the acquisition period, I was offered two new roles – one internally and one externally – and found myself sweating over my next move. I deliberated at length, painstakingly weighing up the pros and cons of leaving a company and a job I loved versus moving to a new, unknown role that would deliver better career acceleration.

As I considered my options, I started to receive a lot of advice from those around me. Over a few evenings, my husband and I sat at the kitchen table while

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I offloaded the latest opinion I had received. However, we found we weren't getting anywhere. I was frustrated, as every recommendation I heard didn't sit right with me. I felt the advice was based on other people's experiences rather than my unique situation and perspective.

Then I experienced a sudden revelation. Not of the hallelujah type, but a rare sense of overwhelming clarity. Every person who had offered me advice had been one of my peers at Sun Microsystems. I had not sought outside opinions, except from my husband. I hadn't even asked my previous mentors for guidance, despite them having been fantastic in helping me steer my career to that point.

My revelation was this: What if I thought of myself as a company, Emma Maslen Inc., rather than as a person? Assuming I was CEO of this company, how would I structure any new advice and guidance? I pictured a company board advising a CEO and then imagined a diverse group of experienced people sitting around my kitchen table, holding the first Emma Maslen Inc. board meeting. My own Personal Board.

Who should be sitting at the table? What would they tell me? How would they help me to mitigate any risk? Considering how outside perspectives would help, I realised I needed objective and diverse opinions... and fast. I scribbled down a list of people

I would call in the morning and held a virtual board meeting in my head. Then I sounded out my new Personal Board's views and opinions.

Ever since, I have been developing and refining the concept of a Personal Board. Over the years, it has helped me to achieve my goals faster, mitigate the risks when undertaking significant career transitions, and find more joy in my work.

That is the essence of this book. Having developed the process for myself, I have seen how it can significantly expand career horizons, delivering more opportunities, more choices and more clarity on the right road. Often, at events or when I am mentoring, people ask me for my best piece of career advice. I *always* start with my Personal Board concept.

It's amazing how many tenured professionals forget to think strategically about the people they engage with in their careers. Their approach is ineffective for two reasons:

1. By not thinking strategically about your connections, you only use your organic connections – those you have unintentionally collected, including friends, family and colleagues – to make progress. Typically, these are the same people you have always relied on – the people in your immediate network. If there is no diversity, how can you maximise progress?

2. We all hope that life is a meritocracy, with rewards based on what we know rather than who we know. However, if you are not strategically extending your network, and you remain unknown to the people making decisions about big opportunities, how will those people recognise your merits? Also, if you don't tell people what you are looking for next, how can they think of you when the right opportunity arises?

Whether you are just starting your first job, are undergoing a career transition, or are an established senior executive or an entrepreneur embarking on a new journey, this book will give you a new perspective – one that will help you to progress in life. You'll find ideas on how to expand your network, develop your brand and push yourself to new heights, and even how to use your network when things get tough.

This book includes practical advice gathered both from my personal experience and from others who have created Personal Boards. Armed with this knowledge, you too can build, develop and operate your own Personal Board, which will accelerate you towards your goals.

## **How to use this book**

This book aims to encourage you to take control of your career, your connections and the advice and help

you seek. You may choose to read it from cover to cover in one sitting, but if – like me – you prefer to work your way through a book in bite-sized chunks, it is structured accordingly, complete with highlighted sections. These include:

- **Personal stories:** We often learn best from others' successes and failures. The real-life case studies I have included might be the easiest way for you to remember what works best and what you should avoid.
- **Practical tips:** These are my actionable tips on what's worked best for me; for example, how to use social media to expand your network, or how to set goals.
- **Background information:** Inspiration for some of my concepts originates from research or analogies. These points are included to illustrate those concepts and to spark your imagination.

The first part of this book (Chapters 1–4) deals with my ideas and theories behind setting up a Personal Board, such as the elements behind a successful corporate board.

The second part (Chapters 5–7) deals with the practicalities of creating a Personal Board.

The third part (Chapters 8–10) deals with practical scenarios, including how to use your Personal

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Board to secure a new job or promotion or to set up a new business.

Finally, Chapter 11 gives a short recap and further motivation for you to start your own Personal Board journey.

In a nutshell: This book will tell you how to create an imaginary concept; fill it with real people, experiences and advice; and use it as an active career management tool to make things happen. Let's get started on creating your Personal Board.



To get Chapter 1 of The Personal Board of You Inc. By Emma Maslen **FREE**:

**CLICK HERE**

