

# NORTHERN POWER WOMEN PODCAST **POWER UP** SEASON

## How To Gain Board & Trustee Positions with Maya Ellis

### What is a board member?

- ▶ As a board member, generally you have the ultimate financial, legal and strategic responsibility for the organisation
- ▶ Strategic vs Operational roles :
  - As a trustee you are mainly strategic, paid staff do the day to day operations
  - If it's with a smaller organisation, you could be asked to do more operational stuff
- ▶ Trustee vs NED (Non-executive director):
  - Trustee – for charities or voluntary/unpaid roles, but can still be quite senior and the ultimate responsibility for the organisation
  - NED – more often a paid role in private companies

### Why become a board member?

- ▶ To learn more about:
  - Risk management
  - Power structures
  - Financial decision making
  - To add to your life's purpose
  - Becoming a board member can help you feel like you are giving back to the world and having a greater impact than through your day job

- ▶ Whatever you do, make sure you want to join a board for the right reasons. As Maya said in the podcast:

*"I wouldn't do it for the CV, don't make that your primary reason. It is a lot of responsibility and if you're just doing it to get that name on your CV you won't stick it out and you won't do a good job"*

### How to do it well

- ▶ Ask questions, be curious and learn
  - Don't assume others know more than you, especially if they're older. They don't
  - Learn and understand board etiquette
  - During 2-3 hour meetings, you'll probably only make 1 or 2 points in there, so make the most of the chances you get to contribute. The board meeting isn't your soap box
  - Do your homework beforehand and have conversations outside of the boardroom so that when you do make those 1 or 2 points, they're really targeted and informed
- ▶ Have integrity
  - Only take on a board role if you feel that you have use there, your skills are useful and you feel as though you have a purpose there. As soon as you don't feel relevant anymore, step away, because your energy is better used elsewhere

### How to get onto a board: what can I start doing today to make it happen?

- ▶ Know your reasons for doing it and choose accordingly. If you're just doing it for a CV thing and you just look for an open role, you're going to realise it's not going to feel right and you'll feel a bit out of your depth
- ▶ Do your research and get to know those organisations before you apply
- ▶ Follow organisations and people in those roles on social media - start picking the brains of existing trustees
- ▶ Decide why you want to do it and how much time you want to give to it so that you know if it's worth it for you
- ▶ Be discriminating in terms of what you choose to take on or not
- ▶ Just start! Apply for a few roles for practice, and you can always turn them down if they're not a good fit