

It's Your Business; Your Opinion Counts – The Results



Company Secretarial Services Alert

Ambitious, adaptable and generally ‘up for it’!

This neatly summarises the findings of my last Quick Question which asked company secretaries what they might like to do next in their career.

All of the options:

- Governance Officer
- Head of Corporate Affairs
- Head of Corporate Communications Chief
- Operating Officer
- Consultant
- Strategy specialist
- Non-Executive Director

had some appeal but by far the most attractive was that of Non-Executive Director which polled 65% of the votes.

The chance to shape the governance of the company as a NED was highlighted by many and reflects a natural synergy, as both the company secretary and NED roles exist to take a lead on corporate behaviours, each from a different but comparable ‘independent’ perspective.

So what’s holding company secretaries back? Lack of operational experience was inevitably mentioned but also felt to be something of a red herring nowadays, when head office departments are much leaner and more closely aligned to front-end business functions, and there is greater capacity for integrated professional development across all senior personnel. Many respondents also commented on the fact that the company secretarial remit is often misunderstood by those outside the discipline who are involved in making top level appointments, and this, they believe, has led to the role holders being overlooked as potentially suitable candidates for other key corporate positions.

However, perhaps the perceived impasse was best summed up by a couple of rather challenging comments to the effect that the only thing preventing company secretaries from moving up is themselves and that they must take responsibility for their own careers by pro-actively promoting change and pushing for a higher profile and wider consideration. Of course, it’s easier said than done, but I’m constantly impressed by

the calibre of individuals in this field. I don't think they should have any hesitancy in coming forward, and I will certainly do all I can to support and sponsor them.

Is 2011 going to be the year of the company secretary? It certainly could be.

Thank you to all who contributed.