

MAKING IT TO THE TOP

Our Making It to the Top chart is a tool to help with career planning. It highlights key experiences and career decision points and acts as a map for making sense of a corporate career, whether you are a woman or man, from a majority or a minority group.

We know both from research and from our own experience that formal career planning, or the lack of it, often presents a barrier to diversity because of a number of factors:

- Organisational barriers may exclude women and minorities from the 'flow'
- Lack of creative thinking in organisations to recognise the usefulness of alternative paths of experience
- Pessimism from individuals who look at the need to plan, avoid facing up to the reality of a situation or under-estimate their ability to do a bigger job
- Reluctance to voice ambition, enter an effective dialogue about longer-term career options or ask for a pay rise
- The view that the rules of the organisational system are set in stone, immutable and can't be changed or circumvented
- An aversion/lack of understanding and engagement with the dominant organisational metaphors of war and sports.

As consultants on board effectiveness and through our individual coaching of directors, one of our roles is to support the individual to overcome these barriers and the rigidity of the organisation's career system. This requires creative thinking and an understanding of how the organisational system works so that alternatives can be presented in a way which gets traction in the organisation. We start by recognising the realities and identifying key steps and barriers to achieving outcomes. From this analysis, we begin a creative process of seeking work-arounds and alternatives.

It is particularly important from an individual perspective to present alternatives to the organisation in flexible and business terms that sidestep the setting of precedents which are the nightmare of HR departments the world over.

Using The Chart

Making it to the Top is a flowchart showing three generic routes to the boardroom, with an indication against each type of experience as to how highly it is typically valued. Our experience is that creative

thinking makes it possible to substitute and emulate the types of experience illustrated, even if they aren't fulfilled in their classic form. The chart can help individuals understand what might be happening in their own careers and where there are opportunities to create and meet longer-term goals.

• Three Routes To The Top?

The columns represent three areas of corporate life, a commercial, P&L focused career directed to the CEO role, a finance focused career aimed at becoming Group FD and a functional career as represented by the human resources function, aimed at Group HR Director

• Gaining Experience

While the diagrammatic flow of the chart is upward, the realities of corporate life often involve a sideways move to set up longer term progress. For example, an overseas move is often done as a 'sideways' move to gain valuable experience

• Lateral Moves

The finance function has a tradition of individuals moving across to the P&L CEO stream at various stages

• Positive Steps



These symbols provide a yardstick of how positive a particular type of experience or role is for achieving a board role

• Every Organisation is Different

The chart describes generic roles and types of experience to use as a template to review a career and plan accordingly. The actual roles and experience will vary from organisation to organisation

• Age Ranges

Age ranges are for guidance only. They will vary considerably, by individual and organisation.

