

Summary Session 5:

The meeting focused on preparing for board interviews, with Suzanne leading a session on common interview questions and effective responses. Participants practiced delivering career stories and discussed how to position themselves as either generalists or specialists depending on the board role. The group explored questions about compensation, board experience, and how to assess cultural fit with potential boards. Suzanne emphasized the importance of having a pipeline of board opportunities and advised against retiring from a C-suite role before securing a first board seat. The session concluded with Rebecca announcing the next meeting on March 12th, which will focus on campaign showcases and materials, while also discussing access to session recordings and materials for future reference.

Key Takeaways:

1. Board interviews are fundamentally different from job interviews

- The purpose is **mutual evaluation**, not persuasion.
- Boards are assessing *how you think, govern, and contribute*, not how you execute day-to-day work.
- Your mindset should shift from “candidate” to “peer-in-training.”

2. Your career story must be board-relevant

- Long operational resumes don’t translate well in board interviews.
- You need a **tight, intentional career narrative** that highlights:
 - Judgment
 - Pattern recognition
 - Strategic decision-making
 - Exposure to complexity and risk
- The question you should always be answering is:
“Why am I useful in the boardroom?”

3. Expect predictable board interview questions — and prepare for them

Boards consistently ask variations of:

- Why do you want to serve on a board?
- What perspective do you uniquely bring?
- How do you handle disagreement or tough decisions?
- What governance experience (formal or informal) do you have?
- Where do you add value *and* where are you still learning?

Preparation is about **clarity**, not memorization.

4. How you answer matters as much as what you say

- Boards listen for:
 - Thoughtfulness over speed
 - Self-awareness over confidence theater
 - Calm judgment under ambiguity
- Rambling, over-explaining, or “selling” yourself works against you.
- Pausing, structuring answers, and naming tradeoffs signal board readiness.

5. The questions you ask signal board maturity

Strong candidates ask questions about:

- Board dynamics and decision-making norms
- The relationship between management and the board
- Strategic inflection points facing the organization
- Where the board is most stretched or under-resourced

Weak signals:

- Overly tactical or operational questions
- Questions that could be answered by the website or deck

6. Governance experience comes in many forms

- You do not need prior public board service to be credible.
- Relevant experience includes:
 - Advisory roles
 - Committee leadership
 - Crisis decision-making
 - Enterprise-level responsibility
- The key is being able to **translate experience into governance insight**.

7. Board readiness is about presence and judgment

- Boards are evaluating:
 - How you listen
 - How you frame issues
 - Whether you can disagree constructively
- Executive presence in a board interview = **clear thinking, measured responses, and respect for complexity**

8. This is a long game — relationships matter

- Board opportunities often emerge from familiarity and trust.
- Interviews are one moment in an ongoing relationship, not a final exam.
- Consistency across conversations, referrals, and interviews is critical.

Action Items:

1. Practice and refine personal career story pitches, focusing on succinctness, clear outcomes, and tailoring to specific board opportunities.
2. Prepare and have canned answers for common board interview questions, tailored to their backgrounds and target board roles.
3. Connect (or follow up) with their assigned honorary trustee to review board bio and resume; consider requesting additional perspectives if desired.
4. Consider reaching out to honorary trustees for board interview practice when ready.
5. Come prepared to the March 12th session with campaign materials, questions for the group, and specific topics from previous sessions for further discussion.
8. Provide feedback on the program after it concludes to help improve future cohorts.
9. (Optional/Recommended): Review access to session materials and notify organizers of any access issues for improved future access.
10. (Optional/Recommended): Consider obtaining or reviewing personal D&O and umbrella insurance policies as discussed.
11. (Optional/Recommended): Reach out to Suzanne for individual consulting if preparing for a specific board opportunity.