

Social Firms UK Annual Conference
Shaping The Future: Supportive Employment, Successful Businesses
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**WORKSHOP D: Do You Have The Right Board For
Starting/Running A Business?**

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Background:

What skills do you need on a board that's going to oversee the development of a Social Firm or social enterprise? What are the legal responsibilities of directors/trustees and how can these be balanced with the need to develop the business and taking risks? This workshop will help you develop an approach that can be applied straight away.

Key Points:

Issues/questions raised:

- How to involve service users/company directors
- Increasing understanding
- Board set up
- Externalisation
- Governance and employee involvement
- Set up a CIC
- Move towards business orientation
- Sourcing board members
- Developing board members

Group exercise

If a train were a Social Firm, what would be the role of the board? Who drives the train, who are the passengers, who guides it to its destination? There are no right or wrong answers. Take this exercise to your board and use it to clarify their roles and understanding of what they are trying to achieve and where they wish to go.

Useful resource: "Good Governance, A Code For The Voluntary & Community Sector" £15 (useful for both new and established boards) 1st edition June 2006

Essential roles of board members:

- Ensure awareness of legal responsibilities
- Induction/selection process necessary
- Good practice – job descriptions, roles
- Be aware of potential conflicts of interest and implications
- Boards feel remote from day to day operations. If they become better involved they become better advisors

What skills/knowledge/qualities do we require to form a 'good' board?

Finance	Flexibility
Legal	Commitment
Product/market knowledge	Marketing/media
Business skills	Leadership
Risk takers	May need to buy in specialist skills

It is a good code of practice to have a two year appraisal and review of trustees. The board must be accountable for things. The vision, mission and values are set by the Board.