

Head of Governance Interview Guide

Introduction

Recruiting the right Head of Governance requires assessing deep governance expertise alongside the ability to lead a governance function, advise senior stakeholders and maintain effective governance standards across an organisation.

The role often combines strategic oversight with responsibility for governance frameworks, board and committee effectiveness, regulatory requirements, governance risk and the leadership and development of the governance team.

This interview guide has been designed to help employers identify candidates with the experience, judgement, leadership capability and credibility needed to succeed as a Head of Governance.

The questions can be adapted to suit organisations of different sizes, sectors and governance frameworks.

Technical Knowledge

1. Can you describe your experience leading or overseeing a governance function?

What to look for:

- Experience setting governance standards, overseeing frameworks and processes, advising senior stakeholders and taking accountability for the effectiveness of the governance function.

2. How do you assess whether an organisation's governance framework remains effective and appropriate?

What to look for:

- Structured review, understanding of governance risk, clear accountability, effective controls and the ability to identify where governance arrangements need to change.

3. What governance frameworks or regulatory requirements have you worked with?

What to look for:

- Relevant exposure to corporate governance requirements, internal governance frameworks or sector-specific regulation.

4. How do you ensure the organisation responds effectively to changes in governance and regulatory expectations?

What to look for:

- Strong external awareness, assessment of organisational impact, clear communication and the ability to translate developments into practical governance action.

Governance & Board Support

5. How do you ensure the board and its committees receive effective governance support?

What to look for:

- Oversight of board processes, high standards of information and advice, strong relationships with senior stakeholders and continuous improvement in governance effectiveness.

6. How do you determine whether the governance information provided to senior leaders and the board is sufficiently clear and effective?

What to look for:

- Ability to focus reporting on material issues, challenge poor-quality information and ensure decision-makers receive relevant, accurate and timely governance insight.

7. How would you handle a significant governance concern identified shortly before a board meeting?

What to look for:

- Strong judgement, appropriate investigation and escalation, confidence to advise senior stakeholders and focus on ensuring the board is properly informed.

8. How do you protect confidential or sensitive governance information?

What to look for:

- Discretion, secure handling of information and an understanding of professional confidentiality.

Stakeholder Management & Organisation

9. Tell us about a time you had to challenge or influence a senior executive or board member on a governance matter.

What to look for:

- Credibility, diplomacy, resilience, sound judgement and the ability to challenge constructively.

10. How do you prioritise competing governance risks, board priorities and regulatory demands?

What to look for:

- Strategic judgement, risk assessment, effective delegation and the ability to focus resources on the most important issues.

11. What is your approach to leading and developing a governance team?

What to look for:

- Leadership, delegation, coaching, succession planning, performance management and development of capability across the function.

12. How do you establish credibility with the Chair, board and executive leadership team?

What to look for:

- Strong governance expertise, commercial awareness, independence of judgement, communication skills and trusted-adviser capability.

Scenario-Based Questions

13. You believe a proposed board decision creates a significant governance risk. How would you approach the situation?

What to look for:

- Confidence to challenge, clear articulation of the risk, proportionate advice, appropriate escalation and respect for the board's decision-making authority.

14. A senior executive wants to proceed with an important decision despite your concerns about the governance process. What would you do?

What to look for:

- Independence of judgement, appropriate challenge, understanding of accountability and willingness to escalate where necessary.

15. You identify a recurring weakness in the organisation's governance arrangements. How would you address it?

What to look for:

- Root-cause analysis, assessment of risk, practical remediation, senior stakeholder engagement and mechanisms for monitoring improvement.

Closing Questions

16. What do you believe makes an effective Head of Governance?

What to look for:

- Strategic governance expertise, leadership, sound judgement, credibility with senior stakeholders and the ability to balance governance requirements with organisational realities.

17. How do you balance maintaining strong governance standards with the need for an organisation to make timely commercial decisions?

What to look for:

- Pragmatism without compromising governance standards, strong judgement, commercial awareness and the ability to provide workable solutions.

18. Why are you interested in this Head of Governance role?

What to look for:

- Motivation, preparation and understanding of the opportunity.

19. What questions do you have for us?

What to look for:

- Thoughtful questions about the governance function, responsibilities, development opportunities and organisational culture.

Candidate:

Position:

Interview Date:

Interviewer:

Interview Assessment Checklist

Following the interview, consider whether the candidate demonstrated:

- ☐ Deep governance knowledge
- ☐ Senior board and committee experience
- ☐ Governance framework and regulatory expertise
- ☐ Strategic and commercial awareness
- ☐ Excellent communication skills
- ☐ Sound professional judgement
- ☐ Leadership and team development capability
- ☐ High levels of integrity and independence
- ☐ Ability to influence board and executive stakeholders
- ☐ Ability to lead governance improvement and change

Overall Recommendation

- ☐ Strong Hire
- ☐ Hire
- ☐ Hold
- ☐ Do Not Hire

Overall Comments