



Why Tech-Q Alone Isn't Enough: Bringing the Right Technology Expertise into the Boardroom

Boards are increasingly seeking directors with deep technology expertise to navigate digital disruption, AI, and cybersecurity. Yet boards often learn the hard way that not every accomplished technology executive succeeds as a non-executive director, as the capabilities that drive success in technology leadership don't always translate into effective boardroom contribution.

To solve this problem, RRA created a proprietary, dual-lens approach for assessing technology experts for board roles: **The Tech-Q (Technology Quotient) + Board-Q (Board Quotient) Framework.**

The board's technology challenge: Executive expertise isn't translating into advisory mindsets

Companies today are navigating accelerating disruption from AI, cybersecurity and digital transformation. Our latest [Global Leadership Monitor](#) found that 57% of the leaders identified "technological change" as a top issue impacting organizational health in the next 12-18 months, making it the second most commonly cited threat (ahead of availability of key talent/skills, geopolitical, and policy uncertainty.) Yet only 44% of leaders feel prepared to respond to this threat, making the lowest level of tech change preparedness since 2021.

Facing these mounting pressures, boards are increasingly compelled to bring a technology expert to the table - and for good reason.

Yet over and over, we've found that boards praising themselves for attracting deep technology experts (AI specialists being the most recent examples) are often eventually disappointed by these experts' rather operatic (if not erratic) contributions to board discussions. By contrast, general managers with an aptitude to latest technology are often found to be the better choices for non-tech companies looking to build more tech savviness on their boards.



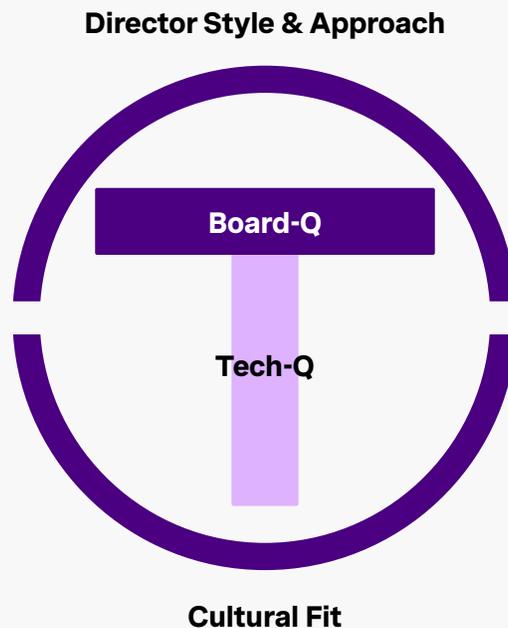
The Tech-Q + Board-Q Framework: Two complementary quotients that determine success in the boardroom

To identify the tech experts who can truly add value to a board, organizations need a rigorous assessment model. Our research and experience suggest that two complementary quotients should guide this evaluation:

- **Tech-Q:** The depth of a candidate's understanding of emerging and enterprise technologies, including AI, machine learning, cloud, cybersecurity, quantum computing, and advanced manufacturing.
- **Board-Q:** The breadth of leadership experience, governance judgement, director style, and cultural fit required to operate effectively in the boardroom.

Together, they form a T-shaped profile - combining deep technology expertise complemented by the breadth to contribute on strategic, financial, and governance matters. As discussed in Russell Reynolds Associates' article, [The Power of Being T-shaped](#), lasting impact comes not from functional expertise alone. Instead, it's from the ability to bridge depth with breadth.

Tech-Q + Board-Q: A T-Shaped Technology Director's Profile



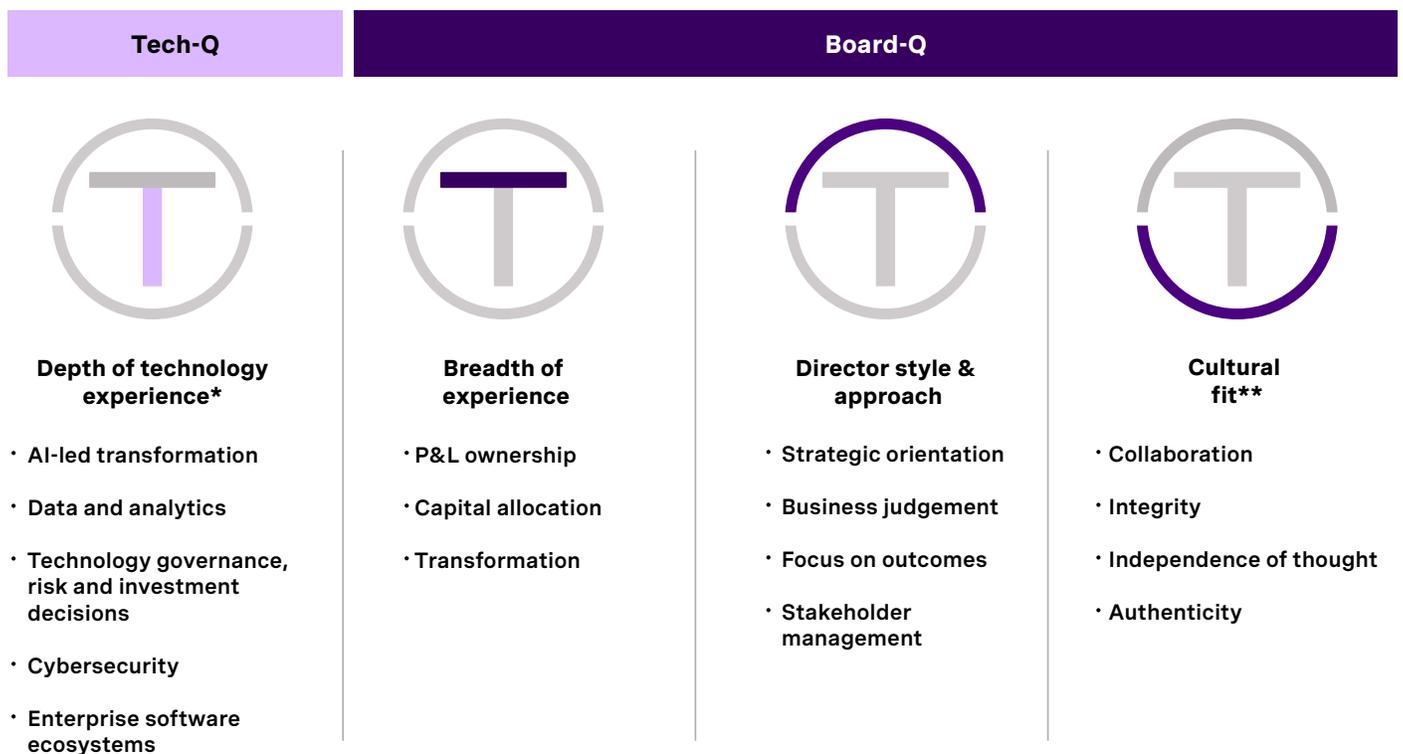
To apply this framework, boards should evaluate candidates against both Tech-Q and Board-Q criteria:

Tech-Q: Depth of technology experience – Sound understanding of AI, data, cloud, and cybersecurity, evaluated through their business relevance and strategic impact.

Board-Q:

- **Breadth of experience:** CEO or divisional leadership roles, P&L ownership, capital allocation, and transformation track record.
- **Director style and approach:** Strategic orientation, commercial judgement, learning orientation, executive communication and the ability to guide and influence rather than manage.
- **Cultural fit:** Values such as integrity, collaboration, independence of thought, and resilience, ensuring a constructive board dynamic.

Tech Q + Board Q: Four Filters for Assessment



* to be adjusted to the organization's technology focus and needs

**reflecting the culture of the organization and board

Tech-Q + Board-Q in action: Case studies from tech-enabled boards

A leading European automotive company recognized the need for a balance of technological depth with leadership breadth

A few years ago, the organization appointed a former technology executive turned AI-startup founder who brought both global experience and deep computer-science roots to the supervisory board. Their impact not only came from technical detail, but from reframing how software, data and AI would shape the industry's competitive landscape.

The director's anchoring in the West Coast technology ecosystem, combined with many years of service on the executive committee of a European technology company, and their experience as CEO of a global business with revenues exceeding \$20 billion was the key to their success. This blend of deep technology exposure and broad general management experience enables the director to make meaningful contributions to board debate, elevating technology discussions to a level at which the board can engage productively.

At the same time, the director is a sought-after sparring partner for the CTO and the broader technology leadership team outside formal board settings, leveraging deep expertise across all major dimensions of digital technology.

A major European industrial board leveraged Tech-Q + Board Q to find their next Chair

The organization appointed a former CEO of a publicly listed enterprise-software company to deepen the board's digital and software competence.

While the company's long-term ambition to evolve from an industrial goods hardware producer into a leader in industrial technology was clearly visible on the strategic horizon, the near-term challenges were dominated by a broad set of very traditional industrial topics, alongside a sensitive shift toward more pronounced software capabilities.

In this context, being a successful chair required more than deep digital expertise and prior experience as CEO of a blue-chip company. Equally critical was a [servant-leadership profile](#); someone with the ability to listen carefully, develop a genuine understanding of the company's culture and stakeholder landscape, and orchestrate the transformation as a shared win, without overstressing the organization's readiness for change.



The board of the future: Striking the tech-depth + leadership breadth balance

The most effective board appointments balance deep technology insight with the governance, judgement, and interpersonal skills required for collective board impact.

This means:

- Looking for evidence of influencing at the enterprise and ecosystem level, not only within a function.
- Testing candidates' ability to connect technology insight with strategic decision-making.
- Paying attention to cultural adaptability and the ability to work as part of a collective board.

By using this assessment approach to measure technological depth with leadership breadth, boards can make more informed appointments, identifying directors who can meaningfully contribute to crucial technological debates.



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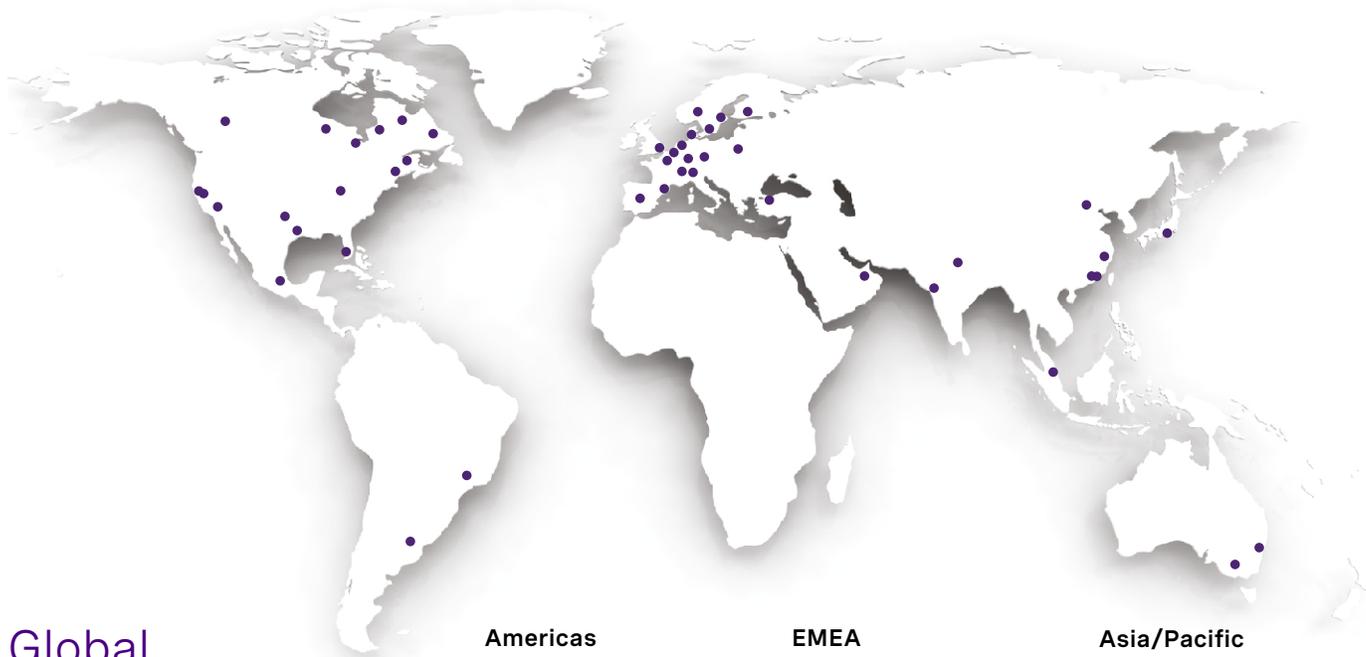
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About Russell Reynolds Associates

Russell Reynolds Associates is a global leadership advisory firm. Our 500+ consultants in 47 offices work with public, private, and nonprofit organizations across all industries and regions. We help our clients build teams of transformational leaders who can meet today's challenges and anticipate the digital, economic, sustainability, and political trends that are reshaping the global business environment. From helping boards with their structure, culture, and effectiveness to identifying, assessing and defining the best leadership for organizations, our teams bring their decades of expertise to help clients address their most complex leadership issues. We exist to improve the way the world is led

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