



The Female FTSE Board Report **2012**
Milestone or Millstone?

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Case Study - Christine Tacon CBE One woman's strategy towards a portfolio career of directorships

Christine is a high profile board executive in the Agricultural and Food sector, known for her strategic leadership of the Co-operative Group's 50,000 acre farming business (the largest in the UK) and her contribution to the farming industry on committees, taskforces and the Agricultural and Food sector. Her opinion is regularly sought by the media and she chairs the BBC Rural Affairs Advisory Committee. Christine is a Cambridge engineering graduate, has an MBA from Cranfield and was awarded a CBE for services to agriculture in 2004.

Her strategy for building a portfolio career is as follows:

- farming NEDs to keep her hand in on the farming side. She has already accepted one such position.
- government committees. She is currently on a Defra committee and has been shortlisted for the Food Standards Agency and the Seafish Board - the latter of the two was a back-up plan.
- charitable concerns. She has a position as Governor of Harper Adams University College and is on the Business Advisory Board of Living with Environmental Change, overseeing the work of the government Research Councils. This is an unpaid role.
- FTSE, or similar, NEDs. This is her current focus. She has written to the chairmen or directors of four FTSE 100 businesses in food and engineering and has had an interview with one chairman so far. She purposefully started by targeting companies who currently have no women on the board.

Interestingly Christine falls into the category of not having either city or previous FTSE NED experience. However, she believes she has a lot to offer in terms of her understanding of sustainability, communication, leadership and government relations.

Christine commented that she has been struck at how helpful other senior women she has contacted have been. She has devoted considerable time and energy to meeting with senior women, with a number of the executive search firms and with former male director contacts. One head-hunter she has spoken with said they liked engineers for the way they treat everything as a project!

Of the 47 new appointments, four were Executive Director positions, the rest being NEDs. The four were:

- Liz Doherty, Chief Financial Officer at Reckitt Benckiser
- Laura Wade-Gery, ED in E-Commerce at Marks & Spencer
- Lucinda Bell, Financial Director at British Land
- Tracy Robbins, ED in Human Resources at Intercontinental Hotels Group

For Lucinda Bell and Tracy Robbins, this is their first FTSE 100 board position and they were internal promotions. Liz Doherty and Laura Wade-Gery were both external hires and had had previous FTSE 350 board experience.