EXPERIENCE IS THE ADVANTAGE FOUNDATION

THE POST 45 LEADERSHIP PLAYBOOK

Pivot with purpose. Prepare for the boardroom.
Build a legacy that lasts.

A practical, comprehensive guide for experienced women 45+

Reflection tools | Scripts | Readiness assessments | 90-day action plan

© 2026 Experience Is The Advantage Foundation. Educational resource.

Welcome: Your Experience Is an Asset

You are not starting over. You are starting experienced. This playbook is designed for women who have built careers, families, businesses, teams, and communities, and are ready to turn that experience into new opportunity and lasting influence.

Use this guide as a working document. Highlight what resonates, complete the exercises, and choose one meaningful action each week. You do not need a perfect plan to begin. You need evidence of your value, a clear direction, and consistent execution.

The three outcomes

- Pivot: Translate your accomplishments into a compelling next chapter, whether employment, consulting, entrepreneurship, or portfolio work.
- Board readiness: Understand governance expectations, identify your board value, and build a credible pathway to service.
- Legacy: Define the people, systems, ideas, and resources you want to influence beyond your current role.

How to use the playbook

- Work through the diagnostic before choosing a path.
- Complete the exercises in writing, not just mentally.
- Build a proof portfolio and begin relationship-building early.
- Review the 30/60/90-day plan weekly and adjust based on evidence.

Important: Board practices, fiduciary duties, and compensation vary by organization and jurisdiction. This is educational guidance, not legal, tax, investment, or individualized career advice.

Contents

1. The Post-45 Leadership Reset

2. Inventory Your Leadership Capital

3. Choose and Validate Your Pivot

4. Positioning, Storytelling, and Visibility

5. Board Readiness Fundamentals

6. Board Search and Due Diligence

7. Your Board Candidate Toolkit

8. Legacy, Sponsorship, and Succession

9. Financial and Personal Sustainability

10. The 90-Day Execution Plan

11. Templates, Scripts, and Worksheets

12. Progress Scorecard and Resource Guide

1 | The Post-45 Leadership Reset

A successful next chapter starts with separating the role you held from the value you created. Job titles are temporary; leadership capabilities are portable. Age bias can be real, but it does not define your strategy. Build a narrative grounded in results, adaptability, and relevance.

Reframe the questions

Old question	Stronger question
Am I too late?	What can my experience solve now?
Will they value my background?	Which organizations have problems I am equipped to solve?
Do I have to start over?	Which assets transfer directly and which skills need updating?
What if I fail?	What small, low-risk experiment can test this path?

Personal leadership reset

- What do people consistently ask me to solve?
- What work gives me energy, and what work drains it?
- Which constraints matter most now: income, flexibility, health, caregiving, geography, or mission?
- What do I want more of in the next five years?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Define your non-negotiables

My minimum income or revenue requirement: _____ | My preferred weekly workload: _____

My top three values: _____

2 | Inventory Your Leadership Capital

Your leadership capital includes expertise, outcomes, relationships, credibility, judgment, and lived experience. Translate each into evidence that a hiring leader, client, board nominating committee, or community partner can understand.

The VALUE inventory

- V - Vision: Strategic direction you have set or influenced.
- A - Achievements: Measurable results, including growth, savings, quality, access, risk reduction, or retention.
- L - Leadership: Teams developed, change led, decisions guided, and conflicts resolved.
- U - Unique perspective: Sector expertise, community insight, cross-functional fluency, or lived perspective.
- E - Evidence: Metrics, testimonials, artifacts, awards, and documented outcomes.

Achievement translator

What I did	Evidence / scale	Value to a new audience
Led a major initiative	Budget, users, sites, adoption, results	Transformation oversight and risk judgment
Managed people	Team size, development, retention	Talent, culture, succession
Built a program	Participants, outcomes, funding	Strategy, stakeholder engagement, impact

Write three signature wins using: Challenge + Action + Result + Why it matters.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Capability gaps

Choose no more than two high-return upgrades: AI literacy, financial fluency, governance, industry credentials, public speaking, fundraising, digital analytics, or another capability tied to your target path.

3 | Choose and Validate Your Pivot

A pivot is a deliberate shift in where and how you apply proven strengths. Avoid choosing solely by excitement or fear. Test market demand, fit, and economics.

Five credible pivot pathways

- Adjacent leadership: Similar capabilities in a different function, industry, or organization.
- Fractional or consulting: Time-limited strategic expertise sold to multiple clients.
- Entrepreneurship: A product, service, or training offer built around a defined customer problem.
- Portfolio career: A mix of employment, advisory work, teaching, speaking, and service.
- Mission-driven leadership: Nonprofit, education, civic, foundation, or community roles.

Pivot decision matrix

Path	Demand (1-5)	Fit (1-5)	Income (1-5)	Feasibility (1-5)
Path A	___	___	___	___
Path B	___	___	___	___
Path C	___	___	___	___

Score each option and write one assumption to validate. Higher totals guide exploration, but do not replace financial reality or personal priorities.

Run a two-week market test

- Interview five people doing or hiring for the target work.
- Review ten current role descriptions, board profiles, or client requests for recurring needs.
- Produce one relevant proof artifact: case study, sample workshop, governance brief, or service outline.
- Ask for specific feedback and track actual interest, not compliments.

Decision rule: Continue, refine, or stop based on observed demand, personal fit, and a viable economic model.

4 | Positioning, Storytelling, and Visibility

A strong leadership brand answers three questions: What problems do you solve? What proof supports that claim? What opportunities are you seeking?

Your positioning statement

I help [audience] achieve [outcome] by applying my experience in [expertise]. My work has produced [specific evidence]. I am now focused on [next-chapter goal].

Build a modern proof portfolio

- A two-page achievement-focused resume or executive biography.
- Three one-page case studies with challenge, action, outcome, and lessons.
- A current professional profile with a clear headline, About section, and featured work.
- A short speaker or advisor introduction and selected testimonials.
- A skills refresh record showing current tools, learning, and industry awareness.

Visibility rhythm

Weekly action	Purpose
One insight post or short article	Demonstrate current thinking
Two thoughtful conversations	Build relationships and market intelligence
One strategic introduction or follow-up	Convert visibility into opportunity
One evidence update	Keep accomplishments and portfolio current

Your 30-second introduction

“I am a leader with experience in [area]. I have helped [audience] achieve [result]. I am now exploring [specific opportunity], where I can contribute [value]. I would welcome a conversation with people focused on [issue].”

5 | Board Readiness Fundamentals

Boards govern; management operates. Strong directors bring independent judgment, mission alignment, financial oversight, risk awareness, ethical conduct, and a willingness to ask difficult questions respectfully.

Understand the landscape

- Nonprofit governing board: Oversees mission, strategy, executive leadership, resources, and accountability; fundraising and ambassador expectations may be substantial.
- Corporate board: Oversees enterprise strategy, management, risk, performance, and shareholder or stakeholder responsibilities; selection is highly competitive.
- Advisory board: Offers expertise and connections; generally does not carry the same governing authority, though terms and liabilities must be checked.
- Public or civic commission: Often appointed under defined public procedures, eligibility requirements, and ethics rules.

Core governance responsibilities

- Duty of care: prepare, inquire, exercise reasonable judgment, and stay informed.
- Duty of loyalty: act in the organization’s interests and disclose/manage conflicts.
- Duty of obedience, especially for nonprofits: support lawful activity and mission alignment.
- Oversee financial health, major risks, executive performance, and organizational direction.
- Maintain confidentiality and understand when to recuse yourself.

Specific legal duties depend on the board type, governing documents, and applicable law. Board service is not simply an honorary title.

Board readiness self-assessment: rate 1 (developing) to 5 (strong)

Competency	Rating	Evidence / next step
Strategic oversight	___	_____
Financial statement literacy	___	_____
Risk and ethics	___	_____
Executive leadership / talent	___	_____
Fundraising or resource stewardship	___	_____
Governance and committee work	___	_____
Relationships and influence	___	_____

6 | Board Search and Due Diligence

Board opportunities should be approached as a mutual assessment. The right board offers meaningful contribution, sound governance, and values alignment. The wrong board can create financial, reputational, or legal exposure.

Build a targeted board pipeline

- Define your preferred sector, geography, board type, mission, time commitment, and compensation expectations.
- Identify 15 to 20 organizations and map board members, committee chairs, executives, and mutual connections.
- Begin with committee service, task forces, nonprofit governance, or advisory opportunities where appropriate.
- Request informational conversations and make your value proposition specific.
- Track each contact, next step, and decision in a simple pipeline.

Questions to ask before accepting

- What are the organization’s top three strategic priorities and biggest risks?
- How are directors recruited, oriented, evaluated, and replaced?
- What is the expected meeting, committee, fundraising, and event commitment?
- Can I review recent financial statements, budgets, audited reports, and governing documents?
- Are there material legal disputes, regulatory concerns, or unresolved conflicts?
- What director and officer insurance, indemnification, and conflict-of-interest policies exist?
- How are dissent, executive performance, and succession handled?
- What would successful service look like after 12 months?

Red flags

Pressure to join without documents; unclear financial reporting; founder dominance without checks and balances; recurring executive turnover; weak conflict policies; or expectations that are materially different from what was represented.

7 | Your Board Candidate Toolkit

Board biography structure

- Opening: two lines on leadership identity and enterprise or community scope.
- Expertise: three to five board-relevant strengths such as strategy, finance, technology, talent, governance, or fundraising.
- Proof: two or three measurable outcomes and decisions influenced.
- Service: relevant committees, volunteer leadership, professional affiliations, or community impact.
- Fit: the types of boards and missions where you can contribute most.

Board value proposition canvas

Prompt	Your answer
Boards I want to serve	_____
Three problems I can help oversee	_____
My strongest evidence	_____
Committee contribution	_____
My perspective and network	_____
Governance development needed	_____

Board interview preparation

- Prepare a two-minute explanation of your interest in this specific organization.
- Describe a time you challenged a decision constructively and what happened.
- Explain how you read a budget, assess risk, and distinguish oversight from operations.
- Be ready to discuss time capacity, conflicts, and fundraising expectations.
- Bring thoughtful questions rather than only promoting your resume.

Board outreach script

“I admire [organization]’s work on [priority]. My background in [expertise] includes [relevant result]. I am exploring opportunities to contribute at the governance or committee level and would value 20 minutes to learn about your board’s priorities and future needs.”

8 | Legacy, Sponsorship, and Succession

Legacy is not only what you leave behind. It is what becomes stronger because you were there: people developed, systems improved, doors opened, knowledge transferred, and resources stewarded.

The four pillars of professional legacy

- People: Mentor, sponsor, teach, and create opportunities for emerging leaders.
- Practice: Document methods, playbooks, lessons learned, and standards others can use.
- Platforms: Build sustainable programs, partnerships, businesses, or community initiatives.
- Provision: Align time, financial resources, and networks with priorities you want to outlast you.

Mentor versus sponsor

A mentor shares guidance and feedback. A sponsor uses credibility and influence to advocate for someone when opportunities are being decided. Both matter. Sponsorship requires trust and evidence of readiness.

Legacy impact statement

“I want to be known for advancing [people/cause] by building [capability/system/opportunity]. Over the next three years I will invest [time/resources] and measure success through [observable outcomes].”

_____

_____

_____

_____

Succession questions

- Who can perform this work when I am absent?
- What relationships or processes live only in my head?
- Whose leadership am I actively developing?
- How will I know my impact is sustained, not just celebrated?

9 | Financial and Personal Sustainability

A meaningful pivot must be sustainable. Avoid accepting a prestigious title, underpriced consulting assignment, or unpaid board commitment without understanding its full cost.

Run the sustainability check

- Calculate baseline monthly expenses, debt obligations, savings, and minimum required income.
- For consulting, price for non-billable time, taxes, benefits, marketing, administration, and gaps between projects.
- For board service, budget travel, meetings, preparation, events, and any expected donations.
- Protect time for rest, relationships, learning, and commitments that matter to you.
- Consider professional tax, legal, or financial guidance before major commitments.

Simple opportunity filter

Dimension	Question	Score 1-5
Purpose	Does this advance my mission and values?	___
Economics	Is the financial impact acceptable?	___
Capacity	Can I deliver well without overextending?	___
Growth	Will it strengthen skills, relationships, or credibility?	___
Risk	Are liabilities and reputational risks manageable?	___

A high score does not override a serious governance or legal concern. Investigate risks before committing.

10 | Your 90-Day Execution Plan

Timeframe	Focus	Concrete deliverables
Days 1-30: Clarify	Self-assessment and direction	Leadership inventory; three signature wins; target pivot; board competency baseline; personal constraints
Days 31-60: Build	Proof and relationships	Updated bio and professional profile; two case studies; 10 conversations; 10 target organizations; one governance learning activity
Days 61-90: Activate	Applications, pitches, and service	Five tailored outreach messages; two board/committee conversations; tested service or career pitch; legacy pilot; next-quarter plan

Weekly execution rhythm

- Monday: select three priority actions.
- Midweek: conduct one outreach or learning conversation.
- Friday: record outcomes, obstacles, and next steps.
- Monthly: review market evidence, readiness gaps, and personal capacity.

Your commitments

My primary 90-day goal: _____

My first three actions:

_____

_____

_____

Accountability partner and review date: _____

11 | Templates and Worksheets

Worksheet A: Opportunity and relationship tracker

Organization / contact	Opportunity	Next action / date	Status
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Worksheet B: Signature accomplishment story

Challenge: What was at stake?

_____

_____

Action: What did you personally decide or lead?

_____

_____

Result: What changed? Include numbers or credible qualitative evidence.

_____

_____

Transfer: Why does this matter to my target audience or board?

_____

_____

11 | Templates and Worksheets (continued)

Worksheet C: Board due diligence notes

Organization and mission: _____

Governance structure / board chair: _____

Financial condition and documents reviewed:

_____

_____

_____

Expectations, risks, conflicts, insurance, and unresolved questions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Decision: [ ] Pursue [ ] Gather more information [ ] Decline

Worksheet D: Legacy pilot

Who I want to impact: _____

Problem I want to address: _____

One pilot action in the next 30 days: _____

Partners or resources needed: _____

Measure of success: _____

12 | Progress Scorecard and Resource Guide

Monthly scorecard

Measure	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
Targeted conversations	___	___	___
Proof artifacts completed	___	___	___
Board / committee leads	___	___	___
Governance learning hours	___	___	___
Qualified opportunities pursued	___	___	___
Legacy beneficiaries / outcomes	___	___	___

Where to keep learning

- BoardSource: Nonprofit governance education and board resources. boardsource.org
- National Council of Nonprofits: Nonprofit governance, financial oversight, and board practices. councilofnonprofits.org
- SEC Investor.gov: Public-company and investor education useful for financial literacy. investor.gov
- LinkedIn Learning / local libraries: Leadership, digital skills, financial literacy, and professional learning.
- Local nonprofit associations and civic commissions: Explore committee, volunteer, and appointed-service pathways.

Resource availability and requirements can change. Confirm current information directly with the organization.

Closing reflection

What will I stop doing? What will I start doing? What will I sustain?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Final reminder: Your next chapter does not require you to minimize the chapters that came before it. Make your experience visible, relevant, and useful. Then create opportunities for others to do the same.

Experience Is The Advantage Foundation | eitafoundation.org