



## Boardroom Ready: *Choosing Your Board*

### Speaker Profiles

**Tuesday 20 September, 6pm – 9:30pm**

**Venue: *London Chamber of Commerce***

[Book your place](#)

Boardroom diversity following the Davies Report about women on boards in the UK is the hot topic of 2011. AWTE's *Choosing Your Board* session boasts a stellar line-up of speakers from both within and outside the industry.

Open to members and non-members, men and women, the session will be moderated by AWTE PR Chair, Karen Dempsey, with panellists: **Heidi Dahl**, Director, Innovation Norway; **John McEwan**, CEO Advantage Travel Centres & Chair, ABTA; **Chris Photi**, Partner, White Hart Associates LLP and Director of UK Travel Awards Ltd and **Emily Walker**, Business Resilience & Emergency Preparedness Specialist.



**Heidi Dahl**

**John McEwan**

**Chris Photi**

**Emily Walker**

Our speakers have a wealth of board-level experience with both corporate and SME organisations, and will be giving their opinions and insights on how to build an effective board - qualities, skillsets, and personalities! Topics will include board selection processes, the role of non-executive directors, women on boards and perceptions of women in the boardroom. This promises to be a very lively debate with plenty of time for questions and comments!

Moderator: **Karen Dempsey, PR Chair, AWTE**

Speakers:

#### **Heidi Dahl, Director, Innovation Norway**

Heidi Dahl has 20+ years experience in working internationally within many different business sectors and has an in-depth knowledge of tour operation, cruise, hotels, transport, publishing and international media. As a director and business manager, she combines branding and business skills with proven success in competitive and service oriented industries.

Heidi has witnessed first-hand the controversial move by the Norwegian government to impose a 40% quota of women on boards, and can speak with authority on the effect this has had on companies in Norway, as well as what the move has meant for women attaining board level appointments.

Heidi moved from Norway in 1986 to join Reed Travel Group Reed provided her the opportunity to work in many different countries in Europe and in the US. In 1990 Heidi moved to First National Finance Corporation as Business Development Manager. She joined the Norwegian Tourist Board in



1993 and held the position as Regional Director UK, Ireland and North America. Since 2003 she has worked with Innovation Norway as Director Tourism International Markets at the same time as she is heading the Innovation Norway office in London.

**John McEwan, CEO, Advantage Travel Centres and Chair, ABTA**

John is a familiar face in travel, having worked in the industry for over 40 years and heading up Advantage Travel Centres for the past seven years. During his time at Advantage, John has successfully led the process of turning Advantage into a profitable organisation, and been instrumental in increasing its standing as the UK's most respected independent travel consortium.

AWTE's "Choosing Your Board" event will give attendees an insight into John's experience in building effective teams to enable substantial growth and profitability. He straddles the divide of corporate and SME's as, whilst Advantage itself is a relatively large organisation, its members are predominantly made up of SME independent travel agents.

John previously served as Retail Director for TUI and MD at both Thomson and Thomas Cook, where he doubled the size of the retail network and launched Thomas Cook Direct.

**Chris Photi, Partner, White Hart Associates LLP and Director of UK Travel Awards Ltd**

Chris is the longest-standing partner of White Hart Associates and in addition to advising larger entities including some FTSE 100 companies in relation to travel regulatory matters, he works closely with small entrepreneur-owned and operated travel businesses. Chris is often approached for Non-Executive Director roles for smaller companies, and amongst others, serves on the board of UK Travel Awards Limited that operates the British Travel Awards.

Chris will provide an overview of the role of an NED, what the benefits are of taking on an NED and what SMEs should expect from any NEDs they take onto the board. In addition, AWTE's "Choosing Your Board" attendees will have the opportunity to explore what a potential NED may be looking for in a company who has invited them to serve on its board.

**Emily Landis Walker, CEO, LANDIS & Co**

Emily brings over 25 years of international experience in both the public and private sectors. She was a member of the US representative's office at the International Monetary Fund Board of Directors and she was appointed US Director at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development - in both cases representing the United States on the Boards of those two institutions.

Emily spent over 15 years working at Citibank/Group in senior managerial positions. During that time, she served on the 9-11 Commission writing the section of the report related to emergency preparedness and business resilience. She also developed the partnership between Citigroup and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) working as Senior Advisor to the Head of WFP.

Emily has most recently been living in Kuwait for a year working for several clients. Her experiences globally in a wide variety of positions will provide a good background for a discussion on successful leadership teams and Boards.