



Advantage All



BALANCE THE BOARD

Guide

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the ITF announced its ongoing commitment to increasing the number of women in professional and leadership roles with the launch of its Gender Equality Strategy, *Advantage All*.

The goal of *Advantage All* is to develop and maintain **tennis** as an **equal advantage sport**.

We believe that achieving gender balance where everyone is provided the same advantage and opportunity across our sport, both on and off court, will make tennis better for everyone. The initiative is overseen by the ITF Gender Equality in Tennis Committee.

OUR GENDER EQUALITY IN TENNIS STRATEGY IS BUILT ON FIVE PILLARS: **EMPOWERMENT, BALANCE, CULTURE, VALUE AND VOICE**.

It is designed to raise awareness about equality within tennis and to provide a framework for ITF initiatives that drive change in this area. The ITF has set short-term actions for specific initiatives as well as long-term goals to ensure that the change we achieve is lasting.

This 'Balance the Board' guide is an 8-step guide designed to help increase the level of women's representation on boards, Committees and Commissions at a national, regional and international level. The guide provides information and outlines practical steps for getting there.



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99.5 YEARS

THE AMOUNT OF TIME TO ACHIEVE GENDER PARITY AT THE CURRENT RATE.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2020.

THE STORY SO FAR

Tennis is in a strong position compared to many sports in terms of gender equality, with women accounting for 47% of tennis participation globally.

Tennis has pioneered equality for professional athletes – from providing earnings for women with the creation of the WTA in 1973 to awarding equal prize money at top-level international competition, notably Grand Slams and the major ATP, WTA Tour and ITF finals events.

However, there is **an imbalance in terms of the number of women holding leadership roles and decision-making positions in our sport.**

As part of its ITF 2024 strategy, the ITF actively encourages more women to seek leadership positions and has seen a rise in the number of women in Commission and Committee roles over the past five years, from 21.3% in 2014 to 33.7% in 2019. Currently, women represent 42% of the ITF's Senior Leadership Team. However, less than 20% of the ITF Board members are women.

Our focus is to work with national and regional associations to foster a sustainable increase in the number of women represented in leadership roles. Our goal is to increase female representation on the ITF Board to 30% and increase the number of women standing for election in the 2023 ITF Presidential and board elections. This can be achieved by expanding the

pool of potential leaders coming up through the ranks at a national and regional association level.

In 2019, only 4 of 34 candidates for ITF Board positions were women. Concerted action is needed to address this imbalance in tennis on a global scale, which is why we are calling on you to generate momentum and fuel positive change.

We recognise that we all face different challenges in achieving this goal and that there may be cultural barriers and discomfort to overcome. However, no matter your starting point and the challenges you may face, the *Advantage All* programme cannot succeed without your commitment and effort, as member nations and regions. **Success depends on all of us.**

THE BENEFITS OF GENDER BALANCE ON THE BOARD

To be effective, boards, Committees and Commissions need to reflect the interests of multiple stakeholders. They need the capacity to consider diverse perspectives from a variety of alternative viewpoints. Shared commitment is the unifying element that enables leaders to reach consensus, make better decisions and achieve the best outcomes for the sport.

There is a wealth of quality research that evidences the benefits of women's representation on boards:

- ▶ Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry average (McKinsey & Company, 2015)
- ▶ The Top 100 companies on the Thomson Reuters Diversity and Inclusion Index reported better return on equity, operating profit margins and dividend yields than the Global Developed Index benchmark. (Thomson Reuters, 2016)

- ▶ Boards with women members are more likely to focus on non-financial performance indicators such as customer satisfaction and corporate social responsibility. They are better able to monitor board accountability and authority, leading to improved corporate governance. (International Labour Organization, 2015)

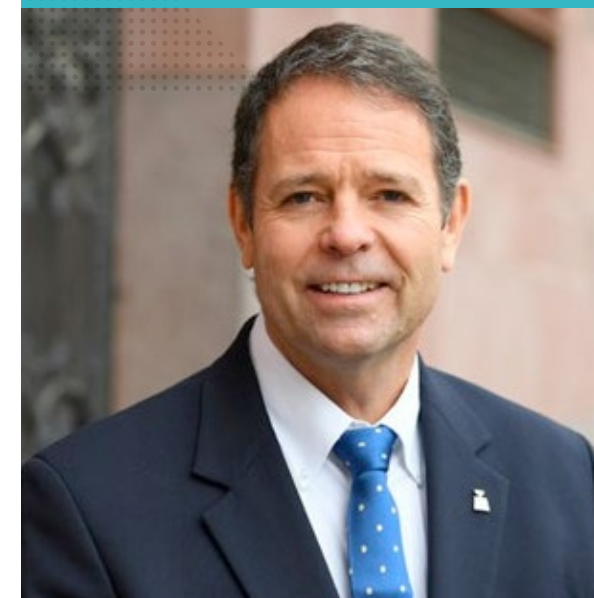
Just as gender diversity in leadership is important to business success, the sports world is no different.

Boards, Committees and Commissions in our sport are missing out on a huge pool of talent. **As women make up 47% of all tennis participants globally, it is only appropriate that the governance of tennis should reflect that. It is our combined duty to work out the best way to redress that imbalance.**

“

There is no question, that a more equal balance of the genders, where everyone is given the same advantage across our sport both on and off the field will make our sport better for everyone”

Kelly Fairweather
COO ITF



DEVELOPING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

In 2019, the ITF completed a 'Women in Leadership' survey in order to:

- ▶ Identify the pathways/journeys that female senior leaders have taken to reach board or Committee positions
- ▶ Gain insights into leadership training courses/initiatives that might be most effective
- ▶ Understand the challenges and experiences of women nominated for positions
- ▶ Inform ITF decisions on potential training, workshops, mentoring

The survey involved an online questionnaire sent to all females holding ITF Board and/or Committee positions.

Overall, there were 106 respondents, of whom 54 women currently hold or have held an ITF, national or regional Board, Committee or Commission post in the last 5 years. The other 52 women either hold or have held other senior roles in tennis.

KEY INSIGHTS

- ▶ The main challenges include balancing leadership positions with work and family commitments, as well as the overall working culture
- ▶ There is a lack of role models and mentors available to young female leaders – promoting role models across all areas of the sport is crucial
- ▶ It is important to provide more information and raise awareness of leadership positions available, along with clear career paths
- ▶ There is potential to recruit women into leadership positions from outside of tennis, including the private sector or from other sports
- ▶ It is important to have male 'champions' of gender equality, with men willing to nominate female candidates for key positions
- ▶ It is essential to mentor and help women on their leadership journey through training courses, materials and on-line resources

DEVELOPING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Some sports have established quotas for gender representation on their boards. This is common with national funding bodies (not to mention large corporations worldwide) and the fulfilment of such quotas is increasingly a condition of funding. There are many differing views on the subject. Some believe that this is the only way to kick start representation at a senior level in order to establish presence and then grow from this position. Others believe that it only achieves the desired result in name, as it could be seen that women have not earned their place in the same way as a male counterpart.

We would encourage you to look at your own particular culture and environment in determining the best way forward. Try and speak to other sports and corporations in your region/nation that have followed this model and assess how successful this has been.

The ITF currently does not follow the quota model. However, this will be looked at in 2020/2021 as part of the Gender Equality in Tennis Committee remit and the Governance Review. For now, we do not require member federations to take this stance. Regardless of the route selected, there is still strong and compelling evidence about the benefits of gender equity on boards.

// We are talking about empowering our girls, mentoring them, training them, building their confidence and tapping their brilliance so they are worthwhile, valuable members of leadership teams contributing to the long lasting and positive growth of our sport"

Katrina Adams,
Chair Gender Equality in Tennis Committee



We have identified a series of steps to help develop a 'balanced board'. These are summarised at a high level below, with more details over subsequent pages

STEP ▶ 01

Discuss imbalance at board level

Start a conversation about your current representation and discuss the case for change. Make a commitment to strengthen Gender Equality in your organisation ▶▶▶

STEP ▶ 02

Review the constitution

Identify any restrictive rules that might create obstacles to attracting and appointing women ▶▶▶

STEP ▶ 03

Review the competency requirements

Think about the breadth of skill and knowledge that you need on your board ▶▶▶

STEP ▶ 04

Seek and invite female candidates

Cast the net wide and raise awareness of the roles to identify and attract quality female candidates ▶▶▶

STEP ▶ 05

Run the selection process

Make sure your process is free of bias and fair to everyone ▶▶▶

STEP ▶ 06

Welcome the new members

Create a positive early experience so the benefits of new talent can be harnessed from the outset ▶▶▶

STEP ▶ 07

Maintain a positive environment

Involve female board members fully in all aspects of the board's work ▶▶▶

STEP ▶ 08

Prepare for the future

Create a healthy pipeline of female candidates to draw from in the future. Provide these women with the information and resources needed to prepare themselves for a position in the future. Assign mentors to help them along their journey ▶▶▶

8 STEPS TO REACH OUR GOALS

We recognise that each association will be starting from a different place. Some will already have a good level of female representation, whilst others will have none. Regional and national cultures also have different beliefs, norms and expectations in relation to women's leadership. Whatever the starting point, the move to greater female involvement is universally beneficial for the game.



DISCUSS IMBALANCE AT BOARD LEVEL

- ▶ Use the information in this guide to start the discussions with your board
- ▶ Invite and listen to all points of view – it's much better to talk openly about doubts and concerns
- ▶ This might require discussion over the course of several meetings so take the time that it needs
- ▶ Reach agreement and make a commitment on what success might look like for your organisation and how you intend to get there
- ▶ Assign a board member with accountability for driving and overseeing the work

01

TOP TIPS

- ▶ Chair to sponsor this as an organisational objective
- ▶ Create a network of male supporters to champion the cause
- ▶ Place gender balance high on the agenda to signify its importance
- ▶ Communicate your commitment to members and stakeholders
- ▶ Address issues head on and don't let this be a reason why things can't be done



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REVIEW THE CONSTITUTION

Identify any restrictive constitution rules that make it difficult to appoint skilled women to the board. Watch out for:

- ▶ Narrow skill requirements. Would these rule out 'non-tennis' women? Do candidates have to be ex- players or previously held tennis positions?
- ▶ Balance of elected versus directly appointed roles. Could some roles be appointed directly to the board, based on the individual's skill and competency?
- ▶ Overly long tenures. Are members able to stay on the board for a long time, resulting in reduced turnover or limited competition?
- ▶ Board size restrictions. Do the number of specified roles enable the full set of competencies required on a modern board?
- ▶ Interpretation. Have some of the rules been interpreted too narrowly in the past? Is there scope even within the constitution to do things differently?
- ▶ Identify the areas in need of revision and begin the process of constitutional amendment

02

TOP TIPS

- ▶ Create a mixture of elected and directly appointed roles
- ▶ Limit the duration of board tenure to encourage turnover
- ▶ Develop a policy on diversity and inclusion, and ensuring it is applied to all decision-making
- ▶ Don't be deterred because of the time it might take to review and change the constitution. It will be worth the effort in the long run



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REVIEW COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

► Review the skills, knowledge and attributes required for board membership. Do they properly reflect the requirements of the role and the organisation's future strategy?

► Learn from other tennis federations, sports or governing bodies that have made good progress in the area. Invite input from any local business advisory groups

“When women get into leadership roles and do well, they attract the other women to come and join them. I found that to be really true for our board - we got two more, then we got two more and now we have such a wonderful and powerful team at Tennis Kenya, and I am very happy to work with them”

Wanjii Karani,
Secretary General of Tennis Kenya

03

TOP TIPS

- Document the revised requirements and make it an annual standing agenda item to review
- Seek external input and advice



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SEEK AND INVITE FEMALE CANDIDATES

- ▶ The search stage is often a point of failure; be proactive to create a competitive field of candidates
- ▶ Develop and update a long list of potential candidates for future leadership positions
- ▶ Think creatively about where appropriate female candidates might be found
- ▶ Advertise the roles widely and enlist the help of business leaders to help identify potential talent
- ▶ Various research studies have shown that women can be less inclined to put themselves forward, so don't be afraid to approach potential candidates directly

TOP TIPS

- ▶ Be transparent and publicise widely the requirements and the process, including in 'non-tennis' places
- ▶ Set up a nominations committee to create a list of candidates. Consider asking them to create a gender-balanced shortlist
- ▶ Assign a current board member to be available to answer potential candidates' questions during the process
- ▶ Promote widely so that women see and know the roles exist
- ▶ Make it appealing and open so women know you don't necessarily have to have been an ex-player or official
- ▶ Keep an ear to the ground as to what is being said informally about the process as misinformed chatter can undermine the best plan



RUN THE SELECTION PROCESS

- ▶ Design an approach for assessing, shortlisting and interviewing candidates
- ▶ Get a second female opinion to ensure it doesn't include any bias or blind spots; perhaps ask a senior HR professional from an unrelated field to help you design the process
- ▶ Make sure you ask the same questions of each candidate, so the process is fair

“When we talk about equality, having just a few individuals scattered around does not fix it. You need to have enough of each gender for it to be completely normal for men and women to be in that space”

Jennie Price,
Chair of the Supervisory Board for the Tennis Integrity Unit

TOP TIPS

- ▶ Include at least one woman on the selection panel
- ▶ Choose a pleasant and neutral interviewing environment that is comfortable and welcoming
- ▶ Avoid settling for only one woman on the board
- ▶ Don't appoint unqualified women into positions – put in place a good search process and this will generate a rich pool of female talent



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WELCOME THE NEW MEMBERS

- ▶ Regardless of gender, new members will have gaps in their knowledge
- ▶ Prepare a pack of relevant background material to help familiarise them with the organisation
- ▶ Set up additional one-to-one meetings with the Chair to build a strong working relationship
- ▶ Actively invite early input from the new members during the first few meetings, so that their voice is heard from the outset. Newcomers notice things that others take for granted over time, so make the most of those early perspectives

06

TOP TIPS

- ▶ Assign an experienced board member to partner with the new member while they build their understanding about the board and its ways of working
- ▶ Assign a mentor to the new member, ideally from a different sport or business board
- ▶ Avoid treating women as if they are somehow different or unusual and don't ignore their input once they are sitting at the table



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MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

- ▶ Involve women board members fully in all aspects of the board's work
- ▶ Keep monitoring progress on personal development plans and create further opportunities for the whole board to learn and advance their skills

“In addition to increasing the number of women on our own committees, we encourage our national and regional associations to continue to increase diversity on their boards and committees so that our future pool of talented leaders has the opportunity to develop and assume senior positions in our sport”

David Haggerty,
ITF President

07

TOP TIPS

- ▶ Meet with new women board members regularly to review their experiences
- ▶ Create a board Code of Conduct that requires respectful treatment of all members, and encourages positive and welcoming environment
- ▶ Listen to female board members on all topics and not only when they speak on women's tennis matters
- ▶ Assign female board members a wide remit and not only topics on women's tennis
- ▶ Don't assign all the junior or administrative work to the women board members
- ▶ Don't allow divisions based on gender to occur
- ▶ Recognise when women do good work – appreciate it, celebrate it, reward it



08

TOP TIPS

- ▶ Schedule a pipeline discussion annually on the agenda, well in advance of any nomination or appointment activity
- ▶ Identify women early on and ensure that they are provided with leadership courses, mentors and resources to assist them on the leadership journey

PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

- ▶ Achieving a balanced board is a huge step forward, but it doesn't stop there. It's important to create a pipeline of future talent so that you are not always beginning from scratch
- ▶ Regularly review the requisite board competencies, learning and applying the lessons from previous experience
- ▶ Identify a pipeline of future talent, whether specific individuals or potential sources of talent
- ▶ Start to work with those younger women who may not be 'board ready' at the moment but will be in the future
- ▶ Think about how leadership courses may assist to strengthen skills
- ▶ Assigning mentors to these women at any stage in their journey can be invaluable especially if the mentor (male or female) has already gone through the process of becoming a board member

WE CAN HELP. LET'S STAY IN TOUCH

We welcome feedback about this guide, along with wider experiences of building greater women's representation on your boards. There is a lot of beneficial learning that can be shared, so please be forthcoming with your views.

Please send any feedback to
AdvantageAll@itftennis.com

*The ITF acknowledges the assistance of
World Rugby in compiling this guide.*

