

# Am I making any sense?

**Martin Farrell discusses why many of us, whether we are trustees, chairs or chief executives, need support networks.**

It took me two days to recover. The emporium was full of all the foods you can imagine and I'd paid my \$26 to eat my fill, so I did, (starting with chocolate cake – to test the wisdom or otherwise of the saying 'life's short so start with dessert'). Not my proudest moment. It took two days to digest and recover.

As trustees, we also have riches laid out before us. In the last few years there has been an explosion of resources of all shapes and sizes encouraging us on the path to better governance.

As a chair and trustee I know there are lots of enthusiasts who want to help me. The pages of

*governance*, Charity Trustee Networks, the Governance Hub, leadership initiatives and more, so much more, offering me a rich diet of networks, toolkits complete with interactive CDs, toolkits with handy downloadable pdfs, reports, conferences, seminars, training courses, leaflets, books, workshops on all the subjects you can think of – diversifying the board, users as trustees, managing risk,

legal compliance, standards, recruiting a chief executive, charity finance, roles and responsibilities, job descriptions and more. So much more. Thank you. It's good to know that all this is there for me.

But there's something not working for me here. I'm in a land of plenty but I'm hungry. It's as if I see all that is laid out before me but it's all too much and don't know where to start. What I try is good, but I'm unsatisfied.

For my taste there's a missing ingredient.

I'm missing the time to make sense of it all and missing the place to relate it to my own experience of governance. I'd love to have the time to network with others to sift, sort, filter and digest and know what it means for me.

And I'd love to share this time with a small group of trustees, fellow travellers, to share my stories, my joys and sorrows, to reflect and to pool ideas. Not a food emporium this, but a table shared with people who come to be trusted friends and colleagues, by the simple process of talking together and offering their knowledge and wisdom.

My relationship with the chief executive and board of Time Banking UK is great, but sometime over the last three years I would have loved to have had a safe place to talk with other chairs.

How is it for you? Maybe you can find all you need. Maybe you're better than me at making sensible judgments about what to put on your plate. And maybe you know not to start with the chocolate cake.

If so, I'm happy for you. If not, find a network of like-minded trustees to help you make sense of things – like the Network of Women Chairs or Chairtalk or one of the other brilliant networks you'll find on the CTN website. Or even start a network yourself.

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**Chairtalk** [www.chairtalk.org.uk](http://www.chairtalk.org.uk)  
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**Network of Women Chairs**  
[www.charitygroundbreakers.org.uk/network-of-women-chairs/](http://www.charitygroundbreakers.org.uk/network-of-women-chairs/)



"I won't be able to make the meeting of chairs. I've got too much on my plate."

*This article is part of a series by Martin Farrell that looks in a light-hearted, but nevertheless serious way, at some of the more subtle issues facing trustee boards.*