



Independent Director

Qualifications, Positive Attributes and Definition

1. Definition of Independence

- A director will be considered as an "independent director" if the person meets with the criteria for 'independent director' as laid down in the Act and Clause 49 (as may be applicable).
- The definition of Independence as provided in the Act and Clause 49 is as follows:

"An independent director in relation to a company, means a director other than a managing director or a whole-time director or a nominee director,—

(a) who, in the opinion of the Board, is a person of integrity and possesses relevant expertise and experience;

(b) (i) who is or was not a promoter of the company or its holding, subsidiary or associate company;

(ii) who is not related to promoters or directors in the company, its holding, subsidiary or associate company;

(c) who has or had no pecuniary relationship with the company, its holding subsidiary or associate company, or their promoters, or directors, during the two immediately preceding financial years or during the current financial year;

(d) none of whose relatives has or had pecuniary relationship or transaction with the company, its holding, subsidiary or associate company, or their promoters, or directors, amounting to two per cent. or more of its gross turnover or total income or fifty lakh rupees or such higher amount as may be prescribed, whichever is lower, during the two immediately preceding financial years or during the current financial year;

(e) who, neither himself nor any of his relatives—

(i) holds or has held the position of a key managerial personnel or is or has been employee of the company or its holding, subsidiary or associate company in any of the three financial years immediately preceding the financial year in which he is proposed to be appointed;

(ii) is or has been an employee or proprietor or a partner, in any of the three financial years immediately preceding the financial year in which he is proposed to be appointed, of—

(A) a firm of auditors or company secretaries in practice or cost auditors of the company or its holding, subsidiary or associate company; or

(B) any legal or a consulting firm that has or had any transaction with the company, its holding, subsidiary or associate company amounting to ten per cent. or more of the gross turnover of such firm;

(iii) holds together with his relatives two per cent. or more of the total voting power of the company; or

(iv) is a Chief Executive or director, by whatever name called, of any nonprofit organisation that receives twenty-five per cent. or more of its receipts from the company, any of its promoters, directors or its holding, subsidiary or associate company or that holds two per cent. or more of the total voting power of the company;

(v) is a material supplier, service provider or customer or a lessor or lessee of the company; (additional provision as per Clause 49);

(f) who is not less than 21 years of age (additional provision as per Clause 49)”

- Current and ex-employees of a Tata company¹ may be considered as independent only if he/ she has or had no pecuniary relationship with any Tata company (due to employment/ receipt of monthly pension by way of Special Retirement Benefits/ holding consultant or advisor positions) during the two immediately preceding financial years or during the current financial year.

2. Qualifications of Directors

- Boards will ensure that a transparent board nomination process is in place that encourages diversity of thought, experience, knowledge, perspective, age and gender.
- It is expected that boards have an appropriate blend of functional and industry expertise.
- While recommending appointment of a director, it is expected that the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (“NRC”) consider the manner in which the function and domain expertise of the individual contributes to the overall skill-domain mix of the Board.
- Independent Directors (“ID”) ideally should be thought/ practice leaders in their respective functions/ domains.

3. Positive attributes of Directors

Directors are expected to comply with duties as provided in the Act. For reference, the duties of the Directors as provided by the Act are as follows:

- 1) *“Act in accordance with the articles of the company.*
- 2) *Act in good faith in order to promote the objects of the company for the benefit of its members as a whole, and in the best interests of the company,*

¹ “Tata Company” shall mean every company in which Tata Sons Limited or Tata Industries Limited or any company promoted by Tata Sons Limited or Tata Industries Limited is promoter or a company in which such companies whether singly or collectively hold directly or indirectly 26% or more of the paid-up equity share capital OR in which the shareholding of such companies represents the largest Indian holding apart from holdings of financial institutions/ mutual funds OR a company which is permitted by Tata Sons Limited to use the Tata brand name.

its employees, the shareholders, the community and for the protection of environment.

- 3) Exercise duties with due and reasonable care, skill and diligence and exercise independent judgment.*
- 4) Not be involved in a situation in which he may have a direct or indirect interest that conflicts, or possibly may conflict, with the interest of the company.*
- 5) Not achieve or attempt to achieve any undue gain or advantage either to himself or to his relatives, partners, or associates.*
- 6) Not assign his office."*

Additionally, the Directors on the Board of a Tata Company are also expected to demonstrate high standards of ethical behavior, strong interpersonal and communication skills and soundness of judgment.

IDs are also expected to abide by the 'Code for Independent Directors' as outlined in Schedule IV to section 149(8) of the Act. The Code specifies the guidelines of professional conduct, role and function and duties of Independent Directors. The guidelines of professional conduct specified in the Code are as follows:

"An independent director shall:

- 1) uphold ethical standards of integrity and probity;*
- 2) act objectively and constructively while exercising his duties;*
- 3) exercise his responsibilities in a bona fide manner in the interest of the company;*
- 4) devote sufficient time and attention to his professional obligations for informed and balanced decision making;*
- 5) not allow any extraneous considerations that will vitiate his exercise of objective independent judgment in the paramount interest of the company as a whole, while concurring in or dissenting from the collective judgment of the Board in its decision making;*
- 6) not abuse his position to the detriment of the company or its shareholders or for the purpose of gaining direct or indirect personal advantage or advantage for any associated person;*
- 7) refrain from any action that would lead to loss of his independence;*
- 8) where circumstances arise which make an independent director lose his independence, the independent director must immediately inform the Board accordingly;*
- 9) assist the company in implementing the best corporate governance practices."*