

During the last decade, several studies examined the benefits and detriments of multiple directorships in listed firms. Recently, more formal governance guidelines for SMEs emerged and strongly recommended the adoption of outside directors, making the discussion about multiple directorships in unlisted SMEs relevant as well. Results reveal that a busy board positively influences performance except for high growth ventures in which a busy board seems to be detrimental to performance. Results also suggest that a busy CEO negatively influences performance. However, the board's busyness and firm growth seem to moderate the busy CEO-performance relationship. A busy board would compensate for the negative performance effect of a busy CEO. Furthermore, high growth ventures seem to require full commitment of the CEO and suffer from lower performance if the CEO is busy. Our hypotheses were tested in the unique Belgian setting with the Belfirst database containing detailed financial and directors' information.