

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

*“You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I’ll rise.” – Maya Angelou*

Foreword

BY WENDY LUHABE Chairman and Director of Companies

After a decade of democracy, supported by a liberal constitution that outlaw’s discrimination, it is useful to contemplate the question: How have women fared in terms of their representation on boards? To understand this question fully we must explore the following areas:

- Do women bring something different to boards?
- What specific challenges do women have on boards?
- Are boards that have embraced diversity more effective?
- What strategies should women adopt to improve their representation on boards?
- What strategies should companies adopt to improve the representation of women on boards?

This project responds to these questions head-on and has produced some valuable insights. It is quite clear from the study that boards that have embraced women have been enriched by the perspectives and forthrightness that women bring. We hope therefore that this study will inspire South Africa’s workplace, particularly the private sector to tap into the under-utilized potential of South African women. We can only improve our economy’s competitiveness and productivity when we value both men and women equally because we think differently about issues. We are honored to offer this study, the first of its kind to share how women approach leadership issues and how we think about business in general.

We expect this contribution to challenge all South Africa’s boardrooms that have missed women’s input, to go out and find them, to improve the quality of discussion, decision making as well as responding to global challenges facing business today. Preferably, they should play a role in preparing the next generation of women to become board members. I am quite confident that those of us who have some experience will be more than willing to provide mentorship. The challenging global context is creating a skills and capacity deficit which is demanding that we leverage all the human capital available, particularly women, who remain under-utilized and undervalued. My own conclusion is that yes, we bring something different to the boardroom, we raise the quality of board effectiveness.

Comment

BY NOLITHA FAKUDE Former President of the Black Management Forum

The Black Management Forum (BMF) welcomes this study as another critical milestone in our collective endeavors to achieve corporate transformation. One of the serious indictments against business as articulated by President Mbeki on women’s day in 2004, is the continuous poor representation of women at senior management levels. This phenomenon manifests itself in a more visible way at board level.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it grapples with the questions that seek to establish not only why there is the low numerical representation of women at board level but also the value that women bring to these boards. Over the past three decades BMF has been at the forefront of

championing the value of diversity in companies. It has always been our position that the representation of blacks and women at the level of management and senior leadership of corporate companies is a business value proposition and an imperative. While there is a steady increase of black representation the representation of women remains a daunting task that business, in particular boards that are committed to transformation, need to tackle from all fronts.

As an organization founded for the development and empowerment of managerial leadership primarily amongst the previously disadvantaged groups and the creation of managerial structures and processes, which reflect the demographics and values of the wider society, BMF is committed to ensuring that women representation is integrated in all strategies of organizational transformation. The myth that there aren't enough capable women for board appointments has been dispelled by the achievements of women representation on boards of state owned enterprises.

BMF will continue to advocate for the eradication of all discriminatory practices and policies that make it difficult to achieve fair representation of women on boards. In addition, we have embarked on a *Women Director Development Program* that seeks to empower women directors and aspiring directors with the skills they need to fulfil their fiduciary duties in a transforming business environment. We hope decision makers and boards that want to achieve a fair representation of women will use the findings and recommendations in this report.

Comment

BY TONY DIXON Former Executive Director of the Institute of Directors in Southern Africa

The Women on Boards Research Project will hopefully expedite the current trends surrounding women on boards. Less than 7% of the 2 550 directors that serve on the boards of JSE Securities Exchange companies are women. By comparison 14% of the Institute of Directors membership is female. Women by their very cultural heritage tend to face challenges before them with amazingly clear focus and a natural intuition of what will work and what will not work.

It is surprising that in today's global environment that ethnicity and gender continue to be burning issues of debate around the board table. What is required around that table is an alert mind, an exceptional intellect, specific skills relative to the business and experiences of life. Whether the wrapping is black, brown, white, male, or female should not be that relevant. Nonetheless gender is an issue and one that cannot continue to be male dominated by 93% of board members into the future.

Contributors

A total of 32 male and 32 female directors of main and subsidiary boards of both listed and non-listed companies were interviewed. A self-completion, open-ended questionnaire was designed to address the questions. After completion, each respondent was interviewed face-to-face to clarify answers and to expand on the various thoughts and views expressed. The validity of this research is justified in terms of the independence of the analysis and the credibility of the sample.

The interviews were content analyzed and this forms the basis of the results of this survey.

Advisory Team Members

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An internationally recognized expert in corporate governance, a member of the King Committee and the principal convener and main editor of the 2002 King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa. Philip had a distinguished and varied career in executive and senior management and currently consults extensively, locally, and internationally, on corporate governance.

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Currently the President and former MD of the Black Management Forum. As MD of the BMF she saw to the delivery of the organization's strategic objectives and gave guidance and support to the Regional offices with respect to their operational plans.

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Council member of the IoD between 1994 / 1999 and past Chairman of the Director Development Committee. Established IoD director development programs in 2001. Previously a Consulting Partner of the Renwick Group between 1986 / 2000 following a 25-year career in the chemical and engineering industries both locally and internationally.

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A multi-awarded businesswoman, Managing Partner of Executive Search & Selection Memela Pratt & Associates is a member of one of the top ten global executive search firms with more than 40 offices internationally. The company is at the leading edge of transformation, gender, and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), in South Africa. It is also the top-rated management selection company in South Africa and the winner of the prestigious July 2004 Golden Arrow Award.

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Research Background

South Africa's new democracy has witnessed dynamic changes in all institution's concomitant with the political restructuring of society. On the economic front, we have witnessed legislation being put into place that seeks to create a conducive environment for all the inhabitants of the country to be able to fully participate in the economic sphere. Special emphasis, in ensuring that this process is effective, has been on previously disadvantaged groups who have been marginalized from fair and gainful involvement in the country's economy. This includes not only people of color but women of all races who are also poorly represented in positions of influence, power and decision making.

While significant strides have been made to include women in the mainstream of the economy, their representation does not yet reflect the demographics of the country. This needs urgent attention, to demonstrate the value that women bring in making institutions more effective and competitive in their operations.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this research was to examine the issues and the leadership role of women on boards in the South African corporate sector. Several important questions beg answers:

- What issues face boards in general?
- What issues face women and how do these compare to other previously disadvantaged groups?
- What special skills do women bring to boards?
- How do men and women's perceptions differ regarding these issues?

Research Design

A self-completion, open-ended questionnaire was designed to address the above questions. After completion, each respondent was interviewed in depth to clarify answers and to expand on the various thoughts and views expressed. A total of 32 male and 32 female directors of main and subsidiary boards of both listed and non-listed companies were interviewed. The validity of this research is justified in terms of the independence of the analysis and the credibility of the sample. Reliability was achieved by way of the fact that the self-completion questionnaire was followed up by a detailed in depth interview in which the views expressed were probed, confirmed and further detail was extracted from the respondent. The interviews were content analyzed to identify and extract emerging themes in the views expressed by respondents. This forms the basis of the results of this survey.

Survey Results Demographic Differences

Some key differences exist between male and female board members. Men are typically aged 46, serve on four boards and have been board members for just over four years. Women are typically marginally younger at 43, serve on six boards and have been board members for just under three years.

Main Challenges for Boards

Both male and female directors believe that ensuring good corporate governance is the main challenge facing boards. While men believe that boards were faring reasonably well with this challenge, women were less positive about the progress being made and feel that only some progress has been made. Men were equally concerned about business factors, especially the development of strategy, which they perceive as being handled well. Men further identify the optimization of shareholder wealth, risk management, profitability, and financial management as challenges. They perceive that boards are handling these challenges reasonably well. The development of strategy, optimization of shareholder wealth, ensuring business sustainability and regulatory compliance are challenges perceived by women, but these are mentioned less frequently than the ensuring of good corporate governance. Again, women are somewhat cynical about how well boards are facing these challenges.

Generally, addressing the Empowerment issue has been deferred or quick fixes utilized owing to business pressure of the day. While maintaining a profitable business is essential, boards have not been proactive about their composition and thus they are under pressure to transform. Heightened investor and regulatory focus on corporate governance has also consumed the attention of boards in recent years. - Tiffany Dunsdon

Under this heading, respondents also expressed their views as to the responsibilities of boards. Men and women have sharply differing views as to the responsibilities of boards. Men believe these responsibilities do entail the provision of a broad range of skills, providing well-informed and independent opinions, nurturing and guiding management and succession planning. They perceive that boards are faring reasonably well in these areas.

Women believe that the creation of a positive work environment, being socially and environmentally responsible, managing stakeholder conflict, providing an independent view to executive management and developing a brains trust are the key responsibilities. Again, a level of cynicism is present in terms of achievements in this regard.

Respondents also expressed differing views regarding the role of board members themselves. Male directors hold disparate views on this topic with issues ranging from understanding of the business by

non-executive directors, remaining relevant and in touch, controlling personal agendas, achieving commitment to shared vision and moving beyond the issues of corporate governance. Women have a more focused view and see the understanding of the role of non-executive directors, the induction and training of new board members and the evaluation of non-executive directors as key issues.

Board Committees

Female directors tend to sit on or chair many more board committees than their male counterparts. In both instances, the most common are audit and remuneration committees. Women tend to also sit on HR committees whereas men tend to sit on Risk as well as HR committees.

Induction

Most men and a large portion of women did not receive any induction into their board roles. Any induction that they did receive related mainly to corporate governance (King II), fiduciary duties under the Companies Act and some tour of the facilities. All agree that training and induction in these areas is necessary but, in addition, women find themselves often marginalized by the unwritten rules of the board.

Measuring Board Effectiveness

Men tend to have a narrow and focused view on how board effectiveness is measured viz. strategy formulation and implementation, financial performance, corporate governance and board structure / diversity. While women concurred, that strategy was the key measure, their range of measures tends to be broader and includes good governance, shareholder returns, decision-making ability, the level of open debate, competence of board members, responsibility for mission and objectives of the organization, board meetings, composition of the board, understanding of the business and bottom-line performance.

Qualities that Women Bring to the Board

Men believe that women bring a different perspective to the board, are less ego driven, bring greater diversity in terms of focus and thinking, sensitivity, raise human capital to the top of the debate, a good strategic overview, and an attention to detail, as well as their own personal strengths. Men see women as more collaborative / consultative, having more focus, giving more attention to detail, more sensitive to relationship issues and more pragmatic.

Mostly depends on the individual but empathy, integrity, reliability, and pragmatism are some qualities to mention. - Selby Baqwa

Non-traditional thinking and a soul added to business. - Shepherd Shonhiwa

Women sometimes have different perspectives on competition to men, tend to be less ego-driven in that regard, bring a perspective balanced with different sensibilities which is more effective in the Board team. - Adrian Toms

Simple as it may seem, those qualities which men do not have and those qualities which supplement mens qualities, i.e., intuition, 6th sense, the ability to see a realistic bigger picture, pragmatism, emotional sensitivity to issues. - Michael Judin

Men see themselves as more ego-driven, run with group culture and focused on financial issues.

Women's self-perception is similar but more focused: they believe that they bring diversity, human sensitivity, attention to detail (thoroughness) and intuition to the board. Women see themselves as more focused on outcomes, concerned with societal issues, understanding the organization, able to extract the best from human capital, think laterally but have a more formal approach.

Resilience, diverse views, emotional intelligence, courageous leadership, the ability to question to broaden their understanding, attention to detail, intuition. - Wendy Luhabe

A sense of corporate responsibility that goes beyond shareholder wealth. - Anne Cabot-Alletzhauser

I would not like to stereotype ALL women. That might be what keeps them off boards, the notion that they are so different. What I have experienced is that women work harder, take it more seriously, get less rewarded and are kept out of the networks and business benefits. - Theresa Oakley-Smith

Women tend to be more thorough and less arrogant egos play less of a role in decision-making; more pragmatic and compassionate. - Diane Radley

They see men as single-minded, methodical, tend to see things in black and white and because of being focused on their egos, tend to make more emotional decisions.

Why Gender-diverse Boards are More Effective

A few men were adamant that gender was not the issue here. The remainder feel that a different range of perspectives would be considered, debates would be livelier and more robust, bring a real world perspective and balance the male financial perspective with the human element.

As businesspeople, women bring perspective to the board that help remove some of the blind spots of hitherto, male-dominated boards. - Laz Zim

I believe that effective boards are people dependent, and gender is a factor but not an absolute. - David Brown

It depends on person not gender. - Johan Bester

With only males you often get group-think. With a good balance of women, you get a challenging of ideas and new ways of looking at challenges and solutions. - Rob Katz

Depending on the individuals concerned, and the quality of their interaction the balance of the different perspectives can add value. Certainly, the culture of a diverse board is less contrived and more representative of the real world. - Adrian Toms

A few women were equivocal in their response believing that other aspects of diversity were important e.g., religion, race, skill specialization. The remainder feel that issues will be addressed from a different perspective, that there will be a better and more rigorous debate because of a mix of styles and focus. Diversity brings different perceptions and approaches to problem solving, business and strategy. It also brings into focus the different target markets and their needs. - Faith Khanyile

A diverse board is more effective gender is but one aspect of diversity (needs, race, background, specialization); leads to richer input, better debate, and therefore better decisions. - Wendy Lucas-Bull

Any diversity is beneficial and leads to increased effectiveness as you address issues from different perspectives and paradigms. - Debbie Farnaby

I think women, over and above the main board fiduciary duties, also represent women's interests on boards. These can be and are sometimes overlooked by our male counterparts. - Bahle Goba

Contentment with Gender Representation on Boards

Most men are unhappy with gender representation on boards and believe that imbalances need to be addressed. Men feel that insufficient action is being taken and that the new regulatory requirements are creating the appropriate pressure.

Some women feel that the situation is acceptable and being addressed. Most women feel that a better balance is necessary but that finding suitable candidates is a problem and that women need to raise their profiles.

Challenges Confronting Women on Boards

Men believe that women must earn their credibility on boards, cope with the old boy network, be tough, realize their relative inexperience and deal with the traditional attitudes of the role of women. The old boy network, broader unfamiliarity with corporate structures / dynamics and general socialisation. - Kojo Parris

Not being accepted / tolerated due to chauvinism. - Shepherd Shonhiwa

Dealing with boards dominated by older males; being respected for the individual skills and experience she brings rather than being seen as a gender representative. - Selby Baqwa

Challenges are lessening but still in South Africa men regard boards as their domain. Women need to be more assertive about patronising behaviour and stay feminine and professional. - Michael Judin

Perhaps male chauvinism and being patronised, which sparks an adverse reaction which can hamper the effectiveness of the woman board member. Perhaps not being taken as seriously as male colleagues, and exclusion from certain cliques. - Adrian Toms

Women believe that they are not taken seriously on boards, that they are in a minority, they have to prove their credentials beyond what is expected, especially to one's white male counterpart. They should not be viewed as tokens and must add value to the board.

Not being taken seriously, having to prove your abilities while your male counterparts do not. Having the guts to speak up and be heard and having your views respected and taken seriously. I believe that once you've managed to do the above, your male counterparts will give you the respect you deserve. - Faith Khanyile

Initial skepticisms about the ability to contribute - Sonja Sebotsa

Building credibility, feeling that one is making a valuable contribution, countering tokenism. - Lilian Boyle

To be taken seriously, not to be viewed as tokens particularly if from within a particular discipline. - Cathie Markus

Marginalization, not being part of the Old Boys Club, being taken seriously by other board members, not being expected to pour the tea and take minutes. - Theresa Oakley-Smith

Making oneself heard in a generally male-dominated environment; commanding respect; joining the club; becoming accepted. In many cases women board members are still trail-blazers. - Joan Joffe

Credentials are only a step in the door. Once on the board, the challenge is to remove perceptions about tokenism and demonstrate competence, commitment, and leadership qualities from the outset. - Bahle Goba

Are these Challenges the Same as for Men?

Men believe that the challenges for women are different because they must prove that they are capable, not as women but as directors and have to break the initial barriers (men tend to have automatic acceptance). The challenges are similar in that men and women directors have the same responsibilities and are required to have the same competences.

Women believe that the challenges are different as men tend to form the core team and that they are often left out as men socialize in the bar and on the golf course. Men are seen as being favored by historical bias, are readily accepted, and have the appropriate confidence and experience levels. The challenges are seen as similar as it is all about making a difference to the organization.

Are these challenges the same as for previously disadvantaged groups?

Men and women concur that black females have the worst of it. In essence, the challenges have both similarities and differences depending on the situation.

Experiences of and Support for Women Coming Onto the Board

Men perceive these as being positive as the contribution is valued and that they provide a different perspective. The experience can be negative if women attempt to compensate by being aggressive rather than assertive.

Women's positive perceptions are that their skills and perspectives are appreciated, and they get the opportunity for networking and relationship building. On the negative side, they found the process of appointment to be highly politicized. They also found it difficult to contribute initially especially if there was a lack of experience as board members relative to their male counterparts.

Most men and women believe that support was provided by way of induction to the business, inclusion in board debate / decision-making and emotional support, business / industry insights and some level of internal mentorship. Men believe that board members have become more polite and respectful, have taken a broader perspective / worldview and taken a more measured approach to decision-making.

Becoming more considerate and achieving more balanced views. - Shepherd Shonhiwa

Boards tend to operate with a greater degree of sensitivity on human issues and are generally better behaved i.e. the whole level of demeanour is more respectful. - Rod Whyte

Women believe that they have instilled professionalism in terms of director responsibilities and fiduciary duties, encouraged diversity and have placed BEE and EE as permanent items on the board's agenda. Empowerment in general and issues of transformation have become part of the dialogue. - Faith Khanyile

Shifting the mindset - Dudu Nyamane

Role Models

A wide variety of names were mentioned about people who have acted as role models to directors. Among men, the following were mentioned more than once: Peter Joubert, Frederick van Zyl-Slabbert and Cyril Ramaphosa. Among women, the following names were mentioned more than once: Joan Joffe and Irene Charnley.

Conclusions

- Both men and women perceive good corporate governance as the key challenge facing boards. It is a minority that see this as a paradox where conformance must be managed simultaneously with performance issues. This is probably because of the many recent spectacular corporate failures both locally and internationally. This unhealthy focus on issues of compliance is aggravated by the fact that the few who have been subject to an induction program have received little training beyond an introduction to King II and their fiduciary duties as directors. The majority understand the need to balance and meet the requirements of performance and conformance criteria.
- Both men and women perceive that women bring the qualities of diversity of points of view, sensitivity, concern for human issues and greater attention to detail to the board. While not all are convinced that gender-diverse boards are more effective, the majority agree that considering issues from a different perspective is helpful and adds value to the quality of decisions at board level. All parties agree that tokenism is the enemy of board effectiveness, although there are instances where it is still alive and practiced. This practice negates not supports gender transformation in the medium and longer term.

- Men, in general, are not comfortable with the gender balance on boards and believe that investors should push for better representation. Yet what are companies consciously doing to increase the talent pool of women that may be potential candidates for these board appointments?
- In contrast, some women are content with the gender representation while others believe that the availability of suitably qualified candidates is a problem. This poses the question: what are women who currently sit on boards doing to support the development of other women to increase the talent pool and to encourage gender representation at board level? What are women doing to market themselves in the broader business community?
- Credibility and being taken seriously by their male counterparts are the main issues faced by women on boards. Not being part of the old boy's club is also a challenge. This is true for women and Black South Africans at board level. It is a subtle process which makes it more difficult to deal with. It is time that the traditional protocols and unspoken rules are broken down openly and consciously. This will create and encourage a more functional board environment practically and psychologically. This in turn paves the way for greater board effectiveness and performance.

The Following Quotes Distil the Essence of Views of the Role of Women on Boards:

Women can make a very real contribution and improve the company image. - Shepherd Shonhiwa

The presence of women on a board provides a broader view on issues and introduces innovative thinking from a fresh perspective. - Rod Whyte

Women should be selected on merit, have a business role to play, have the appropriate skills / experience base; they can be equally effective. - Rod Burn

Women should apply their minds, do their best and have a keen sense of fiduciary responsibility so, as such, they are no different from men. However, women should use their position to encourage the appointment of other women and stimulate board awareness of the company's progress on gender and empowerment issues. The reality is that South African companies and their boards must deal with the challenges of transformation - the diversity and practical experience women directors bring is central to that debate. - Sonja Sebotsa

It's time that women demonstrate that: 1. business is not a game and 2. as such, it doesn't need to be played by the boys' rules. - Anne Cabot-Alletzhauer

Stop worrying about the woman bit; do not harbor a concern that women are not up to the level of their male counterparts just get out there, work hard and apply your skills to ensuring ROI. - Lilian Boyle

Recommendations and Strategies for Women and Corporates

Bob Garratt¹ makes the following poignant comment on training and induction:

When I entered the world of board and director development in 1974, the most surprising revelation for me was that there were no formal processes to ensure that directors and senior executives (and, I realized later, ministers, prime ministers, and national presidents) were trained to a level of competence for their direction-giving role. Naively, I had assumed as a citizen that competence training was given for anyone in a top leadership role in the private or public sectors. Surely there must be some agreed measure of competence, and some sort of rite of passage, because these jobs are obviously crucial for a healthy society?

As disillusionment began to take over, I was less surprised that there were no induction or inclusion processes for directors joining most boards, no training or development budgets for directors, nor any appraisal system for directors or boards. All these processes cut out well below such an exalted organizational level, as it was assumed that such people did not need training. Something mysterious and less assessable called experience was deemed sufficient to get them through to their retirement.

- Little has changed in terms of boards operating in South Africa. Considering their fiduciary duties and the weight of responsibility charged to them by stakeholders, directors are undoubtedly

professionals. A characteristic of professionals is their intense training and the requirement for ongoing learning.

- Irrespective of gender, race, creed, sexual orientation, or any other discriminating variable, it is imperative that directors be thoroughly trained in their duties and carefully inducted to their respective boards. This should be primary concern of every Chair of a board. It is appropriate that companies commit to and formalize a training program for existing and new board members, men and women alike, especially those board members who are less experienced. There are a number of professional organizations that provide director training.
- It is also in the interests of the board collectively and for individual board members to have comprehensive induction programs implemented. Individuals should be proactive in this regard. Prior to committing to a board appointment, one could clarify the specifics regarding the nature and level of board induction. Comprehensive induction is vital in terms of imparting the knowledge, skill and expertise required at board level particularly a full understanding of fiduciary duties, a thorough knowledge of the statutory and regulatory aspects that impact on the business, dealing with the nature and scope of corporate social responsibility investments, comprehending the risks that face boards locally and internationally, understanding key strategic issues and business drivers. This process is essential to maximize the strategic contribution of new board members.
- It is also imperative that all directors understand that their primary duty is not merely ensuring good governance in their organizations. Conformance is of paramount importance, but performance is an equal partner. This dilemma of conformance / performance is one of the toughest paradoxes faced by any board. It is exactly this paradox which brings women, and the role that they can play, to the forefront of effective boards. There should be a focus on conformance only to the extent that diversity in board composition adds strategic value to the business. Given a transforming society and marketplace, there is a new calibre and diversity of directors that is an essential component of the board and its strategic initiatives. The primary focus for any board should be about board effectiveness and business performance.
- Hiram Serretta¹ identifies diversity of approach, engaging in open, honest dialogue and being flexible and adaptable as key competences required for the management of this paradox. It is precisely these qualities that both men and women agree that women bring to a board. This supports the notion that there is a business case for women on boards a broader perspective, a more holistic view of company issues addressing different stakeholders' requirements and hence a greater focus on the triple bottom line. There are strategies and approaches that companies and women can adopt to increase gender representation so that collectively, men and women can raise the performance bar.
- Several men and women suggested that improved representation of women on boards could be achieved by setting targets or quotas. Irrespective of the merits of this sentiment, it will not result in the required changes. Current boards must prepare the next generation for board responsibility and accountability in terms of board succession planning. The development of women in the workplace, early identification as being board material and experience via subsidiary boards were seen as practical strategies that could be adopted.

This is illustrated by the following quotes:

Focus on development of women in the workplace to increase the pool of available skills. - Diane Radley
Concerted efforts should be made to identify high potential women. They should be coached for participation at board level, i.e., expose them to the company's business, bring them within the ranks by appointing them to subsidiary boards. - Abe Thebyane

Boards must actively seek people with potential and assist/ develop them need a pool of people who come up through the ranks. Give people the tools, equip them with the relevant education and experience. - Moss Mashishi

Bring women in earlier on subsidiary / operational boards. Train, develop and promote them to main boards. - Johan Bester

- Companies could fast track the development of women, through the ranks, to make sure they obtain hard core, relevant business experience at a senior management level and understand what makes business tick, prior to being appointed to a board. Like their male counterparts, who get promoted onto boards only after a long, successful management career, women too should have this experience. Leadership development plans could include the promotion of women onto subsidiary boards this will enable more women to gain experience, confidence, and credibility before being promoted onto listed boards and ensure we do not fall into the tokenism trap by parachuting Executive and Non-Executive Directors onto boards without the relevant knowledge, skills, experience and expertise to deal with issues at the board table. This strategy could be implemented to fast track Black South Africans too.
- Companies could integrate specific goals for gender representation at senior management and board level as part of the company's transformation strategy and plan. Include the transformation objectives as part of the CEOs performance mandate and link a significant portion of their performance bonus to the achievement of these objectives. This will focus the mind and the effort. This could be filtered down to other levels of management. One builds into the culture that these transformation achievements are a critical success factor for management to reach the top leadership positions.
- It is important for companies to diversify the recruitment channels to source suitable female candidates rather than the traditional networks which reinforce more of the same. Tap into new and non-traditional networks, source potential candidates via Executive Search firms and Empowerment organizations. This would also make the selection process more objective and transparent.
- Companies could revise and adapt policies and procedures to create greater flexibility to retain top women performers in management and retain a larger pool of talent. This would increase the talent pool for board appointments. Top performing companies particularly internationally, can and do cater for a need to enhance work life balance as a specific retention strategy. This approach has had significant financial advantages and reduced recruitment and training costs as a result of an increase in management retention. It has also measurably increased the number of women available in the talent pool at senior management/ partner / director level. These success stories attract other top women performers into the business. South Africa still has a long way to go to change the mindset and to adopt flexible retention strategies for similar gain. How do we deal with family accountability issues and balance them with work and board expectations? This requires further open and honest debate and a willingness for companies to do it differently.
- Other retention strategies, particularly in the United States, acknowledges and caters for high performing women's needs for ongoing intellectual stimulation and a variety of challenge, even whilst they are balancing family and work needs. The international research demonstrates that women are as ambitious as their male counterparts to get to the top positions. Some of the major corporations are responding to these needs like General Electric, Procter & Gamble, IBM, as well as partnership firms like Ernst & Young, Deloitte & Touché, Booz Allen Hamilton. (Article: Corporations Losing Many to Boredom. New York Times, May 22, 2005)
- Companies and women need to identify, source, and connect suitable mentors for women, men, and women alike, to support the development of women. This can be done from within the organization to support women with potential in the business. One can tap into the resources of professional organizations, for example, retired directors who are members of the Institute of Directors who are often motivated to continue to make a meaningful difference and have the time to do so. The Black Management Forum and the Businesswomen's Association would also be a source for identifying potential mentors. What are we doing to tap into these underutilized resources?

- Women can proactively identify potential mentors from a broad sphere of networks and need the courage to approach individuals one does not yet know, and motivate the what, the why, and the how directly with the potential mentor. Business and personal mentors are important to provide a strong basis of support professionally and personally.
- Men need to get over their old boys clubs, open their minds and start taking women seriously. To a lesser extent, this is true too in terms of how the old boys club responds to men of colour. The Chair of the board is a key individual in setting the culture and tone in this regard. Shareholders abroad and locally can and do play a role. Locally they can by influencing the selection of a suitable Chair who reflects the new thinking and relevant competences in a transforming South Africa. With an increase in the number of Chairs that reflect the new thinking, the greater the impetus will be to create a new climate and culture at board level.
- Board performance and evaluations dealt with professionally and if need be, independently, can deal with inappropriate board behavior generally, including a lack of openness and acceptance for gender and cultural diversity. This is a useful mechanism to neutralize an individual from the issue. The focus should be on performance relative to the board position and not the individual per se. At a fundamental level it is about board diversity and composition in terms of what makes strategic sense and stakeholder representation, how are boards structured and how are they evaluated in terms of their performance.
- On the other hand, women need to learn not to be shy about the perspectives and often different experiences that they bring to the debate. To be taken seriously, they need to be assertive, without being aggressive, demonstrate their skills, remembering that not all problems have gender issues. Competence is at the heart of an effective board. This is NOT a gender issue, and all board members need to demonstrate their worth by adding value.
- Women need to equip themselves with the requisite and relevant skills and competences it is not about poor me, South Africa owes me but rather about what can I do to equip myself with director skills and confidence to add relevant value?
- Besides upskilling themselves, the most common suggestion for women is to promote themselves and so become visible to board nomination committees, as illustrated by the following quotes:
 More publicity of women directors and their success stories. Moral pressure on companies will be the result could be via professional or trade organizations; business leaders should make public statements.
 - Shepherd Shonhiwa
 Women must find other interests outside of their work or professions to raise their profile. They must have effective marketing skills. - Wendy Luhabe
 The onus is on us as women we must stand up, be counted, push to be on boards. When given the opportunity, women must deliver, be heard, and add value. - Connie Nkosi
 Women should lobby. They need to be made more visible. - Theresa Oakley-Smith
 A Message about Women on Boards People would like to share
 Men and women highlighted that corporate South Africa and women alike have a role to play in this process and there is much that still needs to be done in this transformation process. The value of this to the business community at large and its constituents, is to enhance overall board effectiveness so that collectively, the standards of board performance are raised. The following additional quotes highlight some of the sentiments:
 We need to double our efforts to get more women on boards and appreciate the contribution they can make. It is not a compliance or Charter issue; it makes business sense. - Peter Vundla
 Women should go out there and add value in their own way, they should not stand back from the decisions that need to be made and should have the courage to lead. We collectively need to harness

the potential of our country. It is not a numbers game, but it will require creating opportunities for women on boards. - Debbie Farnaby

We collectively need to harness the potential of our people; therefore, women should go out and claim their rightful place by adding value and not stand back for others to make decisions on their behalf. Ultimately equity is not just a number game but is about developing quality leadership including at a corporate level. - Connie Molusi

Corporations that do not have women on boards are missing out on several possibilities that can be created. Women need to trust who they are, it is what defines them uniquely in terms of their contribution. Women bring a wealth of knowledge and experience that has yet to be celebrated. - Namane Magau

Like all Directors, women do not have to know your business, they just must be top notch people, knowledge will come over time. Most men, when asked a question, consider the likely personal / career impact of their answer, The beauty of women Executives and Directors, by and large, is their willingness to call it just as they see it. Their very presence challenges the old boys order which tends to be non-challenging and complies with the unspoken code of behavior and ethics. - Michael McMahon

Women stand your ground, have fun! Women tend to focus the board better in terms of governance because of their detail orientation. - Thabiso Moerane

We (men and women) are the same. Women should not feel a need to overcompensate by being aggressive rather than assertive. Women are capable and competent and should be themselves. - Moss Mashishi

The role of women on boards is important and needs to be encouraged. Diversity enables one to have multiple perspectives on an issue. - Nicky Newton-King

It is self-evident and there should not be any argument for the value of women on boards, or anywhere else for that matter. We need to get on and do it. We are doing it in Parliament, so we should go back to the fundamentals. We need to have women reflected in the strength and depth of all our institutions. On a macro level, grow a larger talent pool with formal training and preparations for women on boards and grow people from within. You create your own destiny, be yourself, bring your own unique qualities to the table! - Pre Rungasamy

Women are at least as good as men; they are tough, and they work hard. Are we as companies missing an opportunity to identify women as Non-Executive Directors, we should fast track the process, especially for Black women, and create greater awareness and dialogue regarding the role and value of women on boards. - George Thomas

Women bring a diversity of thinking, provide a different perspective, focus the human aspect of organizations, and break down the boy's club which has contributed to current board dilemmas. Women help challenge more of the critical issues. More women should be appointed from outside and companies should change the way board members are appointed by using independent external parties. - Futhi Mtoba

General diversity is worthwhile, but we need the right people first. It would be a good thing to have a wider pool of suitably qualified women. We should encourage those women who have succeeded to become visible role models to encourage other women. - Jonathan Leslie

The role of women is the same as any other Director from a business point of view, we cannot stereotype, it depends on the personality. Women have talent and should be given equal opportunities to participate, to reflect the demographics of South Africa, they are a higher percentage of the population. Women, keep it up, we need more of you. For companies, there is a whole reservoir of talent and skills we have missed completely. It is like a pyramid, few people can get to the top and do a great job, we need to select from a wider pool of talent which includes women, rather than go further down the pyramid of men. Companies should take a broader view to attract top talent. - Lazarus Zim

We should never extend ourselves beyond our capacity and we should constantly hone our competence to attract opportunities our way. Ultimately opportunities are offered to people who seem to be effective, reliable, and accountable. We must never accept a responsibility that we are not able to fulfil, our personal and professional integrity is all we have. - Wendy Luhabe

When all is said and done, these findings are not surprising nor are they rocket science. Most of us intellectually understand and know what needs to be done and the economic value of diversity yet the numbers speak for themselves.

So, what will create the tipping point?

How do we get gender transformation strategies from the head to the heart, to the hands?

Will it ultimately depend on more government legislation and industry sector Charters with clear economic benefits built into how companies are awarded business contracts?

It remains to be seen. What is known is that it has the attention of President Mbeki who recently conceded that: '*...government has not done enough to promote women's participation in the South African economy, despite introducing a raft of new laws...*' Mbeki questioned the efficacy of these efforts, saying they were taking too long to filter through to their intended target. He also announced the formation of a presidential working group on women that will inform the presidency on the challenges women faced. - *Business Day, front page, 11 May 2005*