



SPECIAL FEATURE ON INSPIRING FEMALE BOARD LEADERS

Views from Wong Su-Yen

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What progress and positive changes have you observed in the evolution towards gender inclusiveness in governance?

My observation is that companies are at various stages of the Awareness-Acceptance-Action continuum with respect to gender inclusiveness in governance. While Awareness certainly seems to be fairly widespread - even amongst the least progressive boards - translating this into Action is another matter. There has of course been movement, but plenty of room for improvement remains.

Can you share briefly your directorship journey and what has helped you step into directorship position? (any mentoring, shadowing..?)

The operative word here is "journey"! In most professional endeavors, one does not reach one's destination overnight. Rather, it is through learning, experience, and mentoring, that one evolves. For me, I've always taken the long view with respect to my directorship career. While it naturally builds on my experience to date, I have come to appreciate that it is very much a journey unto itself.

What initial challenges do you have to overcome? (any gender-related biases?)

The initial challenge I faced was one that many first-time directors - regardless of gender - tend to face. Which is that boards often favor experienced directors, so one is caught in the proverbial Catch-22. To help mitigate some of the risk (both for myself and for the board), I invested in learning as much as I could about governance and directorship.

What progress and positive changes have you observed in the evolution towards gender inclusiveness in governance?

I strongly advocate a structured nominations process with the support of external parties that can help surface candidates that the board would not otherwise have considered. When potential directors are engaged on the basis of pre-existing relationships, that tends to bias the selection process towards the "same old network".

What are some tips you would give to aspiring next-gen female board directors to be successful in their board appointment and role?

First, serving as a board director comes with great responsibility - you owe it to yourself and to the organization to learn about governance and to stay up-to-date on an ongoing basis. Second, have clarity around what you bring to the boardroom, and seek roles that are a good fit. Avoid the very real temptation to accept the first opportunity that comes your way if that alignment is lacking. Third, read widely and expand your networks. A board needs to have a macro perspective and I have found this essential to discharging my duties as a director.