

HOW MANY WOMEN SHOULD BE ON OUR BOARD?

The answer depends on what the Board seeks to accomplish.

If the goal is to come up with collegial solutions that do not offend, then it is good to have 0-2 women on your Board. Men are more likely going to focus on “solution seeking” and keeping the agenda moving briskly.

One or two women on a 7-9 person Board is not likely to alter the group dynamics: the need for a minority person to “get along” will be too powerful.

If the goal is to provide value to long term shareholders by thoroughly investigating the nature of the problem before closing in on solutions, then a Board might wish to have at least three women on a 7-9 person Board.

According to a study published by Wellesley College, once there is a 33% threshold of women on the Board, they feel more comfortable about asserting a uniquely female perspective that often differs from a traditional male perspective.

That perspective revolves around broadening the focus to examine the concerns of many stakeholders rather than just key stakeholders, and focusing on opportunities for collaboration that might be overlooked.

In 2007, 83 public companies had three or more women board members. In 2008, the number went to 92. It remains a small number, despite the following reality:

An individual white male over the age of 60 will be systematically insensitive to the opportunities/needs of the majority of officers and consumers who make final purchase decisions. These decision makers are often younger, increasingly female and not Caucasian.

Put 7-9 60+ year old white males in a group and they will systematically reinforce each other's world view. No one will use the term Group Think. It will be called “collegiality.”

For more information about this research, go to:

<http://vkramerassociates.com/writings/CriticalMassExecSummary%20PDF.pdf>

What do YOU think? Twitter me or send me an email.

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