

Competitive Advantage

Helen our CEO has been developing a women's leadership programme to support those organisations who have decided to put in place a plan to achieve the targets for women on the board put forward in the Lord Davies report.

Lord Davies put forward a target of 25% of women on boards by the year 2015. So where are you now, and how close will you be to achieving this target by 2015? If you meet it or are well on the way to meeting it by then, what a fantastic competitive advantage that should give you in recruitment, PR, employee engagement and industry standing.

A recent survey showed that 70% of businesses don't yet have a strategy for developing women leaders. Are you one of the 30%? Or are you one of the 70%? Those in the 30% bracket are ahead of the game – but it's not too late to join them if this is only just coming onto your agenda. You could talk to us about developing a strategy and creating a clear plan to enable the development of women. And if you're one of the 30%, why not talk to us about the programme we are developing so you can fast track your business objectives?

And not sure about why you should commit to developing women as leaders? Or perhaps you have individuals in the

business who are adamant that in an age of equality women should not be singled out for specific development? A few of our thoughts...

- ▶ Equality laws are here, in many aspects of life great strides forward have been made in equality, but the stark fact remains that boards of directors are imbalanced and senior management teams are imbalanced – even in those businesses where women make up 50% or more of the customer base. So forget the emotional issues, it is good business sense to have a balanced board i.e. one that reflects both its diverse customer base and also the diversity amongst its staff.
- ▶ Research has shown that by 2020, with a tight recruitment market as we have never experienced before, women could account for up to 80% of all new recruits. More women at all levels of the business is therefore inevitable, but the reality is that the most sought after women will be attracted to those organisations who have visibly gone out of their way to enable the entry of women into senior level positions.
- ▶ Far from just bringing a 'softer' edge to the board table, research has shown that women's presence on the board also brings greater scrutiny, with women pressing for improved audit practices,

greater controls in all areas including finance, staffing, health and safety etc, and agreed risk management strategies. So not always such a soft touch!

- ▶ Social media enables staff – and potential recruits – to highlight the positive and negative traits of organisations in a way never before experienced. With the issue of women on boards the potential for easy and spiralling negative publicity will increase year on year for those organisations that do not grasp this issue or manage it well.

And finally, did you know...

Last year Karen Brady joined Arcadia who owns the likes of Top Shop, Wallis and Dorothy Perkins. She was the first woman appointed to the board of that company – but how many female customers do they have?

50% of FTSE 250 companies do not have even one woman on the board.

36% of survey respondents cited a lack of breadth of experience for women as one of the most critical factors to creating a barrier to promotion – so it just goes to show that it needn't cost the earth to provide some of the development that women need – just a bit more planning and thinking!



In Your Words...

"We were delighted with the training Jaluch recently delivered to our Board of directors and senior management team. All of our team were impressed by the trainers and the found the courses very relevant and inspiring.

We have had very positive feedback and there has been seen a significant improvement in team working and motivation since we invested in the training. We look forward to running more sessions with Jaluch in the future."

**Tim Hancock, Managing Director
- Terence O'Rourke**