

Mission Boardroom: Women Take New Course of Action

More execs are taking up programmes to get 'board-ready'

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women ahead

Sreeradha Basu

Bengaluru: Breaking into India Inc's predominantly male-dominated corporate boards remains a challenging task for a woman first-timer, but a growing number of such senior professionals are signing up for programmes to better their prospects.

Academic institutions, consulting and search firms, as well as private organisations, are among those offering programmes for aspiring women executives to become 'board-ready', providing the necessary knowhow, mentoring

Up the Chairs

Academic institutions, consulting/search firms, others driving gender diversity in boardrooms

Programmes rolled out for women with average 15-20 yrs' experience

HOW THEY HELP



Equip senior women leaders with understanding of the landscape that affects boards' functioning and effectiveness



Mentorship

Networking opportunities

Support in landing corporate and non-profit board positions



and networking opportunities.

There's been a steady increase in women representation on boards. Primeinfobase.com data shared with ET shows women held 26.73% of independent director positions across NSE-listed companies as of August 20, up from 13.56% as of March 31, 2015. But experts feel Indian boards

still suffer from a diversity challenge. Most board appointments are made through informal networks that tend to favour men.

Then there is also the challenge of a small group of women holding directorships in multiple companies.

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Tough Odds

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"The appetite for experimentation with new members is rather low. Companies use the same pool of women leaders," said Madhura Das-Gupta Sinha, chief executive of Aspire For Her (AFH), an organisation that works with leading companies to motivate women to enter and stay in the workforce.

Last Friday, AFH, in partnership with the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs, launched its Women on Boards 3.0 programme, which has, in

the past, seen participation from professionals across Amazon, Meta, Google, HSBC, IBM, Microsoft, Adobe, and BCG, among others. Aspire For Her supports them in landing corporate board positions and non-profit boards, providing mentorship from the likes of Moelis India CEO Manisha Girotra and Sepalika cofounder Sharda Agarwal on the ways to navigate board conversations.

Over 20 of their participants have since gone on to take up independent director positions. These include Neta Mukherji at Fino Payments Bank, Ramya Suresh at Mylan Laboratories and Nupur Mukherjee at Capri Global Capital.