

## **Gender diverse boards essential**

A new report by Nigel Wright Recruitment has found that the overwhelming opinion held by senior executives is that gender diverse boards are a good thing for business.

The report, which is based on data collected from over one hundred senior executives and board level employees also found that businesses are largely opposed to the prospect of imposed quotas from the EU.

Looming in the background for firms with European operations is the 'threat' (as many perceive it) of quotas for the recommended number of women that should make up a board. Currently Norway, Spain and France are the only EU countries that have a legal quota system. In the next few years, if more member states or companies do not voluntarily move to a more diverse board structure, the European Union will begin enforcing quotas. Only 8% of respondents to Nigel Wight's survey believed quotas were necessary to incite change.

Time might be running out, however, for firms to pre-empt this shift in policy. An alarming 79% of respondents indicated that gender diversity was not a top ten strategic agenda at their business. Despite this, the majority agreed that having more women on the board would lead to better decision making, greater awareness of and attention to managing risk, better understating of employees' needs and better understanding of business culture.

Although the move towards an acceptance of the benefits of gender diverse boards has been incremental, it was the view of many respondents that companies that have taken a lead in appointing female board members should do more to promote the benefits of gender diversity.

The report also documents the alternative view - that gender diversity is irrelevant. Proponents of this view argue that creating a team of 'well-rounded' individuals with the best skills, knowledge and experience should be the only important consideration when appointing a board. A discussion is also offered on why there are not currently more women on boards.

The full report which includes a summary of other research conducted into this area and a suggested further reading list, can be downloaded from Nigel Wright Recruitment's website.