

SA without adequate women representation in JSE-listed corporations

According to results of the 2015 South African Women in Leadership Census, South Africa is still without adequate representation of women in JSE-listed corporations.



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Of a total of 293 organisations, only 34 Top Performing Companies were identified, of which 24 are JSE-listed and ten state-owned enterprises (SOEs). A company is considered a Top Performing Company if 25% or more of director positions and 25% or more of executive manager positions are held by women. Absa Bank Limited tops the list of Top Performing Companies.

"While we commend the Top Performing Companies for their increased representation of women, it is very concerning that only 8.79% of JSE-listed companies have 25.0% or more women directors," says Businesswomen's Association of South Africa (BWASA) president, Farzanah Mall.

Adapt strategies

"People are our greatest asset. In a highly interconnected and rapidly changing world, organisations and countries must adapt strategies and innovate in order to remain relevant and competitive. If we are unable to retain and develop our top female talent, South Africa will not be able to compete in a global business landscape. We need bold solutions and workplaces where the best talent can flourish," says Mall.

There is improved representation of women in SOEs and the public sector, with SOEs demonstrating the highest gender parity at directorship level. This trend can be attributed to government's commitment to the development and empowerment of women with gender transformation strategies being more effectively applied than in the private sector.

The census also highlights that director positions are held by 500 women with 70 women directors holding three or more directorships. Fewer women are being more thinly spread across director positions, impacting their overall effectiveness and efficiency.

Recycling same talent

What can also be drawn from these findings is that instead of exploiting the full depth of female talent in the country, organisations are recycling the same talent. This is a huge concern because it means the country and corporations are missing opportunities to empower and develop a wider population of women talent.

Even though much of the data is ominous, Mall believes that consistently monitoring and measuring progress is vitally important. "Without this data and measurement we would not be fully aware of the extent of transformation in terms of gender inclusivity and the real challenges we may face. The census helps us hold the public and private sector accountable and this also means they take it more seriously," says Mall.

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