

To add value to boardrooms, women must understand dynamics of business & industry, ask questions & speak their mind, say elite women professionals

NEW DELHI, 21 August 2015: Women desirous of entering the boardroom of companies as independent directors must understand the dynamics of business, working of the industry, learn about industry's perspective and must be prepared to ask questions and speak their mind to add value to boardroom discussions.

This advice was proffered by **Ms. Pallavi Shroff, Managing Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co** and **Ms. Deepikka Jindal, Executive Creative Director & MD, JSL Lifestyle Limited and MD, JSL Architecture Limited**, both of whom serve as directors on different company boards, at a discussion on **'Women Directors: Roles & Perspectives'** organized by FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) under FLO Women Directors Program in collaboration with Women Corporate Directors (WCD).

Ms. Pallavi Shroff said that while deciding to be a member on a board, women must ensure that there would be scope for free exchange of ideas and ample exposure to varied professional perspectives. She added that one must also look at the culture of the company and consider its financials. Most importantly, one must be clear with the role and liabilities attached to a director.

Ms. Shroff said that one needs to be polite while sharing their views but must firmly stand their ground. Also when issues arise, there should be a concerted effort to resolve them amicably. Women must realize that they are adding value to the board and in the process getting a great opportunity to further their own growth, she added.

Ms. Deepikka Jindal said it is essential to be a part of a constructive board having the right mix of individuals who have expertise in diverse fields and can become a guiding force in times of crisis. Also, it is important for an individual to learn from the experience and always be prepared with the background information to effectively contribute on a board.

Ms. Jindal said that many a times the agenda and information is not received by board members on time and the board secretary misses out on recording the views of a female board member. In such scenarios, women must insist on getting timely information and the agenda and should also notify the board secretary to include the suggestions proposed by her in the minutes of the meeting.

Ms. Archana Garodia Gupta, President, FLO, said, "FLO is looking at creating a pool of prospective women directors as also enhance the effectiveness of the existing ones. The goal of FLO Women Directors (FWD) initiative is to educate potential women executives and professionals who wish to acquire the tools required to face the challenges of corporate board positions." Also, FLO, in a tie up with KPMG and the IIMs, is conducting across all its 15 locations training for existing women directors to increase their effectiveness, and familiarizing them with their liabilities and responsibilities. FLO was also identifying likely women and making them board ready. This list will then be made available to corporates who might like to invite them on their boards, she added.

Giving a brief on 'Women Corporate Directors', **Ms. Ranjana Agarwal, Past President, FLO and Chairperson, WCD India**, said that WCD is the only global membership organization and community of women corporate directors. WCD helps make the challenges of being a director easier, improves international knowledge and connections, and enables

a person to have more impact and influence on public policy and in the boardroom. She added that as WCD provides a platform for turning ideas into action — an impact that reaches to the larger world of corporate governance and its stakeholders worldwide.

The vote of thanks was delivered by **Ms. Poonam Mahajan, FLO Member & Day Chair** and **Ms. Fatima Karan, Consulting Editor, Bloomberg TV India**, moderated the session.

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