

Management

# “A COMPANY PROBLEM”

All companies should have already dealt with the gender balance issue...  
The fact is, there is still a lot of work to be done...

**Interview** Vincent Ruck **Photo** Olivier Minaire



Nastja Raabe and Monica Jonsson (CoachDynamix):  
“As long as we accept that executive management looks for the best typical male talent instead of for the best diverse mix of talents and that family is a women’s affair only, things will not change.”

It seems that everyone agrees that a better gender balance at management and C-level is a good way to help companies create more value... Are there figures, or studies that prove it? **Monica Jonsson:** “There are a number of studies that compare companies with and without gender-balanced executive boards. They show significant differences with respect to bottom-line results e.g. return on sales, equity and invested capital. In fact, one of the strongest correlations between good performance of more than 200 top companies in Europe, the US and Asia-Pacific can be mapped to the percentage of women on their board of directors. As an example, companies in France with most women on their boards suffered less as a result of the crisis in 2008. In addition to the bottom-line results, research tells us that women are less likely to have attendance problems at boards, they have a positive influence on board male behaviour and are more likely to act on matters of audit, governance, monitoring, resulting in a higher accountability of their boards.

**Why has so little been done, in reality?** **Nastja Raabe:** “There are a few possible reasons. The majority of today’s boards are composed of men only with the same backgrounds and they consciously or subconsciously tend to look for colleagues that are just like them. They only welcome women who try to be like men instead of welcoming the valuable assets that women bring to the table. Secondly, the gender balance topic tends to be dealt with as a woman problem instead

of a company problem. The relevant question is not ‘what is wrong with women that they cannot make it to the top’ but rather ‘what is wrong with the companies that fail to attract and retain today’s talented women?’ Thirdly, why do we so willingly accept that the family versus career decision has to be made only by women? Doesn’t the same apply to men?

With respect to who is responsible, it is all leaders and executives that make position decisions. They need to acknowledge the different assets that men and women bring to the table and start benefiting from these. It is far too big a risk for economy and society not to do so.

**Is competition between managers really organised around the gender matter? Isn’t there also a difference between older and younger generations (X, Y...)? MN-NR:**

“We believe that there are old-school behaviours that need to change. Competition between male and female managers is not organised around the same conditions. As long as we accept that executive management looks for the best typical male talent instead of for the best diverse mix of talents, and that family is a women’s affair only, things will not change. What we need is a new approach to career cycles and expected behaviours as well as more social responsibility for our families.

From what we observe we can say that the younger generation deals much easier with working in gender balanced teams. But there is a risk, since they no longer believe that gender is an issue that they do not take any initiatives to promote it.” ❄️

*paperJam Business Club*

## GENDER BALANCE IN THE CORPORATE WORLD

*Women should have already found their way in the business world. Is it possible to make reality closer to what it should be?*

### Workshop:

February 5 from 8.30 to 13.00

### Registration:

[www.club.paperjam.lu](http://www.club.paperjam.lu)

### Speakers:

Monica Jonsson and Nastja Raabe (CoachDynamix)