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9/19/12*

I've long been fascinated with the lack of women on company boards. I don't wonder if having them leads to better returns (apparently it does) or if the mix on the board matters as much as the mix in senior management (I'd argue it doesn't). What's odd is that the numbers are so low when this should be an easy gap to close. Instead of grooming someone for years, you just pick them. If nobody wants to oust other directors, the board can simply add a few seats. And even if boards as a whole have more power these days, the damage that one director can do remains small. So why do not get a woman? Why do companies like Urban Outfitters, Burger King, and Del Monte think it's okay to have none?

For years, the answer was that people didn't care. Just the word "governance" made people's eyes glaze over. Of all the gender issues out there, why focus on an elite club of wealthy people who get a quarter of a million dollars for a few weeks of board work?

But things have changed. There's been a groundswell of interest worldwide in this issue, from quotas and proposed laws in Europe to new players taking up the fight here. The collateral damage of dumb board decisions shows that it matters. The reaction to Facebook's all-male board shows that people care.

That's what made this event so powerful. The people in the audience were as high-powered as those on the panel. It reinforced my sense that we're at a tipping point in this issue with new data bases of candidates, a new responsiveness from companies, and a shift in attitude.

The challenge now is getting rid of the obstacles. Among them: the lack of term limits and our obsession with analyzing the "business case." Why does a woman have to prove she'll raise your stock price or profits to get a seat on your board? Schools don't have to prove they're performing better to open their doors to minorities. If the quality of play at Augusta doesn't measurably improve, should the club revert to all-male status? Isn't it enough to prove that diversity doesn't destroy value? Doesn't a board with only white American men pose risks to the brand?

As a journalist, I'd rather focus on the folks who don't get it than celebrate those who do. Whether CEOs and directors react with embarrassment or shrugged shoulders is up to them. But I think their customers, shareholders, and employees would love to hear a leader explain how he stays competitive with a boardroom of people like him.