

IESE-CREADE-CUATRECASAS FORUM OF FEMALE BOARD MEMBERS

Women account for a mere 4% on Boards of Directors in Spain

If there are hardly any women in upper management, on boards of directors they are virtually nonexistent. With the goal of overcoming this inequality, this year the IESE- Create- Cuatrecasas Forum has launched a series of conferences on the presence of women on boards of directors and the Law on Equality being passed by the Spanish Parliament.

The first issue addressed in these sessions was the impact of the Law on Equality on companies, as well as the working status, shields, and responsibilities of board members.

Luis Ferrándiz, a partner in the human resources consultancy firm Spencer Stuart, explained that only 4% of the total of 1,066 board members in Spain on the 90 boards of directors of Spanish companies included on the IBEX are women. In fact there are only 19 women on the IBEX, plus many of them are so-called “dominical” board members, that is, the holders or representatives of family shareholdings. The others – called independent board members – come mainly from academia or politics.

According to Ferrándiz, “the number of female resúmenes received is a scant 20% of the total, which is the same as ten years ago. The majority of the resúmenes come from marketing, finance, and professional services, and to a lesser extent from sales and human resources. In reality, of the professionals that have achieved a high managerial position, 84% are men and 16% are women.”

However, if the presence of women in upper management is scant, on boards of directors they are virtually nonexistent. Part of the problem lies in the system used to appoint independent board members, yet there are other issues that also hinder women from getting a place on the Board, mainly women’s underuse of networking; their lower presence in forums, associations, and public opinion; and the system of nominating/appointing board members, which will probably change with the publication in May 2006 of the “Unified Code of Good Governance in Publicly Traded Companies”.