

Cornelia Edding

Vielfalt ins Topmanagement

Erfahrungen und Empfehlungen aus der Vorstandsetage

Abstract

In today's world, diversity in the workplace – from entry-level positions to executive boards – signals not only tolerance and openness, but is also a marker of an economy's progressive and innovative capacity. Bringing a variety of values, ideas, cultures and mentalities to the workplace, diversity is now acknowledged as a driver of corporate success. Ensuring inclusion, that is providing equal opportunity for everyone, regardless of age, nationality or cultural background, should therefore be an obvious choice.

However, in Germany, this does not reflect the reality for women in particular. Highly educated and accomplished, women today match their male counterparts in terms of job performance and outcomes. Many women are therefore more than ready to take on top-level management positions. Competency levels clearly cannot account for the continued male dominance of German executive boards. This study explores the obstacles to equal opportunities for women in the German workplace.

Drawing on interviews with men and women of German executive boards, renowned author and coach Dr. Cornelia Edding has identified the factors fostering the sustained integration of new board members and effective teamwork within top-level management. These include:

- demonstrated support on the part of shareholders, the supervisory board or CEO for the new member;
- determining in advance the cultural fit between a candidate and organization (mutual vetting);
- timely communication with and involvement of other board members in drawing lines of responsibility, determining entry criteria and defining the job profile;
- conduct due diligence while onboarding by ensuring that the executive board, supervisory board and new board member get to know each other early on;
- both sides clearly formulate their expectations and are concrete in their agreement regarding the terms, objectives and tasks involved with the position;
- the CEO takes an active role as a leader e.g., in committee meetings and by steering team dynamics;
- new member demonstrates care when criticizing prevailing state of affairs and introducing new ideas and methods;
- new member exercises diplomacy in internal and public activity, demonstrating a good mix of visibility and restraint;
- new member builds a power base by being present among mid-level management and regular meetings with staff;
- recognizing and overcoming “unconscious bias” when selecting and integrating a new board member;
- a change in perspective regarding the situation of “extreme minorities” as a prerequisite to respectful behavior among board members;
- demonstrating the courage to say “no” in situations where stereotyping arises during integration and training.