

# Women and MBAs

Fewer women than men take MBAs. Brenda Trenowden, global chair of the 30% Club, explains why this matters and what's being done to change it

The step up from being a divisional leader to the C-suite (senior executive level) can be daunting regardless of gender. Aside from the requirement to operate at a significantly higher level, the move from, in effect, being an expert in a specific aspect of the business to requiring deep understanding of the breadth of its activities, challenges new board directors to build rapidly on existing knowledge - some of which may have been learned several years before.

Advanced management courses and postgraduate programmes can help individuals to make that jump. They provide an opportunity to step away from the day-to-day business, exposure to the latest thinking and, crucially, an environment in which to share learnings and build mutually beneficial relationships with peers from other sectors, disciplines and countries.

However, while such courses are widely used by the corporate sector, only 20% of participants are women. As part of our objective to develop the pipeline, the 30% Club has created a number



of activities across a 'schoolroom to boardroom' continuum, including one with business schools.

Graduate management education and executive programmes act as accelerators to promotions and ultimately to senior leadership roles. However, female representation on many of these programmes remains low. As a result, we have developed partnerships with a number of leading business schools to offer scholarships to women for senior executive programmes, MBAs, executive MBAs and other Masters programmes.

To date, we are working with London Business School, Cambridge Judge Business School, Imperial College Business School, the University of Oxford's Saïd Business School, the University of Reading's Henley Business School, the Irish Management Institute and the Stephen J.R. Smith School of Business at Queen's University in Canada.

As recent research such as the Cranfield School of Management's *100 Women to Watch* report has highlighted, progress at bringing women into FTSE100 boardrooms has not been matched by structured investment in the pipeline of talent that should be providing the next generation of female chief executives. The impediment is a cultural one within corporates rather than a lack of suitably high-achieving female candidates.

Women at all levels of an organisation need to know that they're being invested in as much as their male peers are. Encouraging their personal and professional development, at all stages of their career, sends a powerful message both to candidates as individuals and to other women in the organisation or sector.

Brenda Trenowden is global chair of the 30% Club, and head of financial institutions Europe and head of banks & DF Americas at ANZ bank. The 30% Club launched in the UK in 2010, with the aim of ensuring that women made up at least 30% of board members at FTSE100 companies by the end of 2015. For more information on its alliances with leading business schools, visit [www.30percentclub.org/initiatives/business-schools](http://www.30percentclub.org/initiatives/business-schools)

