



Tech

Women only have 10pc of board seats among ASX tech small caps

September 4, 2019 | [Nick Sundich](#)

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If you thought mining was the biggest boys club in corporate Australia or Silicon Valley sexism didn't reach Down Under, think again.

Stockhead analysis has found that of 729 board positions in the ASX tech scene only 73 (just over 10 per cent) are held by women.

Moreover only four out of 164 companies have women comprising over 40 per cent of their board seats.

These companies are **Elmo Software (ASX:ELO)**, **Jaxsta (ASX:JXT)**, **Smart Parking (ASX:SPZ)** and **Trimatium Growthops (ASX:TGO)**.

Here are all 164 ASX small cap tech stocks and their current board composition:

Swipe or scroll to reveal the full table. Click headings to sort

Code	Name	
3DP	POINTERRA LTD	0
4DS	4DS MEMORY LTD	0
8CO	8COMMON LTD	0
9SP	9 SPOKES INTERNATIONAL LTD	0
360	LIFE360 INC-CDI	1
AD8	AUDINATE GROUP LTD	1
ADA	ADACEL TECHNOLOGIES LTD	1
ADJ	ADSLLOT LTD	1
AMO	AMBERTECH LTD	0
AO1	ASSETOWL LTD	0
APT	AFTERPAY TOUCH GROUP LTD	2

It is common knowledge that women are underrepresented in the tech sector in the Western world both Down Under and in Silicon Valley.

This is despite technology leaders taking steps to look progressive such as giving office perks or ~~parental leave~~ granting leave for welcoming pets.

Stockhead spoke to Women in Technology (WiT) board adviser Carrie Hillyard about the issue. WiT supports and recognises women in technology, particularly those that want to become directors.

“Boards are beginning to realise that technology skills are a must in this digital age,” Hillyard told *Stockhead*.

“Nobody wants to be left behind, when disruptive technology is making inroads into a traditional market.

“There is a particular need to understand cybersecurity and risks, as well as digital marketing and direct to consumer sales strategies.

“This is where our technologically trained and savvy women can provide a skill a board needs.”

What can companies do?

Australian Institute of Company Directors’ Manager of Advocacy Louise Petschler told *Stockhead* companies were missing out on the benefits of diversity.

However she did caution that smaller companies were a different kettle of fish than the larger companies.

“It’s important to acknowledge there are differences between the ASX 200 and smaller companies,” she said.

“Smaller companies are far more likely to rely on their existing networks when appointing new directors as opposed to employing professional search firms to provide a balanced list of candidates for a board position.”

WiT runs a 10-week program designed in a similar fashion to Australian Institute of Company Directors certification – 200 women have undertaken the program in 10 years.

“While quotas may sometimes be necessary, it is much better if a board decides for itself that it needs diversity – not solely gender equity but to bring on a range of backgrounds, skills and experience as well,” Hillyard said.

What can aspiring directors do?

Despite company inertia, Hillyard said aspiring directors themselves could take some proactive steps to help themselves.

“One of the big lessons for women is to demonstrate self-confidence and not hold back if a board advertises preferred requirements and they don’t tick every box,” she said.

“Women are more likely to want to show that their applications comply with every advertised requirement, whereas men will often ‘wing it’.

“The right training often gives female applicants the added confidence they need to compete successfully.”

There is also optimism that things will change over time in conjunction with other generational shifts.

“We expect a generational change as millennials make their way up the ladder,” Petschler said.

Last year Silicon Valley was rocked by Emily Chang’s book Brotopia: Breaking Up the Boys Club of Silicon Valley.

She blamed a culture of hypermasculinity, as well as an idea from psychological personality testing used by companies that only antisocial male nerds were good at computer programming.

“I think everybody needs to lead on this issue,” she said in an interview with Recode.

“We all have to pay more attention to it; everybody needs to take a closer look at how they’re running their companies, how they’re behaving.

“Men aren’t going to do this by themselves, women can’t do this by themselves.

“If robots are going to be running the world they cannot be programmed by men alone.”

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