

Right gender mix cocktail for success

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The way to get the most out of a business meeting is to invite more women than men, although complete feminine domination of the room will probably backfire.

Research in the latest *Harvard Business Review* looked at the collective intelligence of 192 teams aged between 18 and 60 and found those with more women outperformed those with more men.

The study, by professors Anita Woolley and Thomas Malone, adds weight to the business case for gender diversity in the corporate world and the push for more women on boards and in senior management.

But companies don't have to find women with high IQs to boost their bottom lines. The study found that the overall intelligence of a group had little to do with how brainy the individuals were.

Indeed, some organisations may be relieved to find out that they don't have to rethink the value added by John, Paul and Ringo. Team performance was found to flatten out if gender diversity was lacking, male or



female. An all-Barbara group was not smarter.

Some women in the business world think the research, which has been published in the *Financial Times* and other publications, adds to a conclusive case for gender equity.

Colonial First State's general manager strategy, Nicolette Rubinsztein, said that from her experience male egos were toned down by having more women in a group, and collaborative behav-

iour increased. "In practice where you have one woman in a group her ideas won't be listened to as much as when there are other women in the group," she said.

Women on Boards director Claire Braund said meetings required the presence of at least 30 per cent women to remove gender imbalance as an issue.

"If this research is accurate then it is another strong argument to increase gender diversity on boards and at all levels in your organisations, with a particular focus on senior leadership teams," she said.

In Australia at present there is no requirement on how many women a company should employ.

The study builds on research by Renee Adams of the University of Queensland in 2008 that looked at women in the boardroom and found that women who got to the top were not remotely risk averse.

She studied a group of Swedish company directors and found that they appeared to be more gung-ho about risk, more than the average woman, and even more than their male boardroom colleagues.

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