

# PUGET SOUND BUSINESS JOURNAL

## EXCLUSIVE: Finance executive Deanna Oppenheimer's new startup aims to get more women on boards

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The subject of diversity on corporate boards is getting increased attention, with investors encouraging companies to address the issue head-on.

Now, Seattle business executive Deanna Oppenheimer, one of the leading women in international finance, is launching BoardReady, a company whose mission is to promote the inclusion of women on corporate boards.

The new company was created to help women fulfill their potential and encourage them to bring their talents and skill sets to corporate board positions.

Oppenheimer, who serves on a number of corporate boards, among them Tesco PLC, Worldpay, Whitbread, AXA, Brooks Running, and the Joshua Green Corp., says increased diversity of thought and experience help businesses compete in today's rapidly changing environment. Different points of view, which come from people of varied life experiences and backgrounds, she said, lead to better corporate decision making.

Oppenheimer, who headed up the retail bank at British banking giant Barclays for six years, and has for years been working to get boards to appoint more women, says while progress is being made, it is slow.

"When I started this, about 17 percent of local boards had women on them and 14 percent in the Northwest," she said. "Now it's up to 17 percent in the Northwest and more nationally."

Alaska Air Group's Brad Tilden, J.P. Morgan Chase's Phyllis Campbell and the Nordstrom family have been leaders in pushing for change, she said.

But Oppenheimer wants faster results, and saw the need to apply high-tech innovation to the problem.

The challenge, she says, is in the match, and making that unbiased connection to identify a potential board candidate. To do that, she partnered with a Bellevue-based company called VettD, which offers research-based analytics to come up with the perfect fit. VettD has developed the software that will power BoardReady, she says.

Through its patent-pending technology, VettD



Seattle's Deanna Oppenheimer is launching BoardReady, a company whose mission is to promote the inclusion of women on corporate boards. With her is Mike Buhrmann, CEO and chairman of VettD, a company that has developed the software to power BoardReady in its mission.

can, in short order, analyze a company's mission, audit the knowledge and experience of each member of its board of directors and see how they align with the company's present and future objectives, VettD Chairman and CEO Mike Buhrmann said.

VettD can identify the knowledge gaps and then evaluate and rank the ideal prospective candidates, which come from BoardReady's extensive database and relationships with women executives, as well as its ability to link into any other databases.

Buhrmann is also the founder and CEO of FinSphere, a Bellevue payment services company, and has more than 20 patents related to cellular services including voicemail, speed dialing and call forwarding.

"In this fast-paced society," says Buhrmann, "companies are continually shifting to respond to an ever changing marketplace. Because of that, a board can easily fall out of alignment with new

strategies and remain focused on what was."

Buhrmann says VettD's methodology is relatively straightforward.

"We take investor documentation and board members' resumes, and through unbiased data science, we come up with actionable insights that can help any sized company improve its board selections," he said.

Oppenheimer says VettD's methodology brings real efficiency to what she called an almost failed process – the ability to match up the needs of a board with potential candidates.

In a fitting move, Oppenheimer has also joined the VettD board.

"There will always be this opportunity to diversify boards and so I want this to be a lasting effort," she said.

BoardReady, powered by VettD, launches formally June 26, at a private launch party at the World Trade Center building in Seattle where the business will also be headquartered.