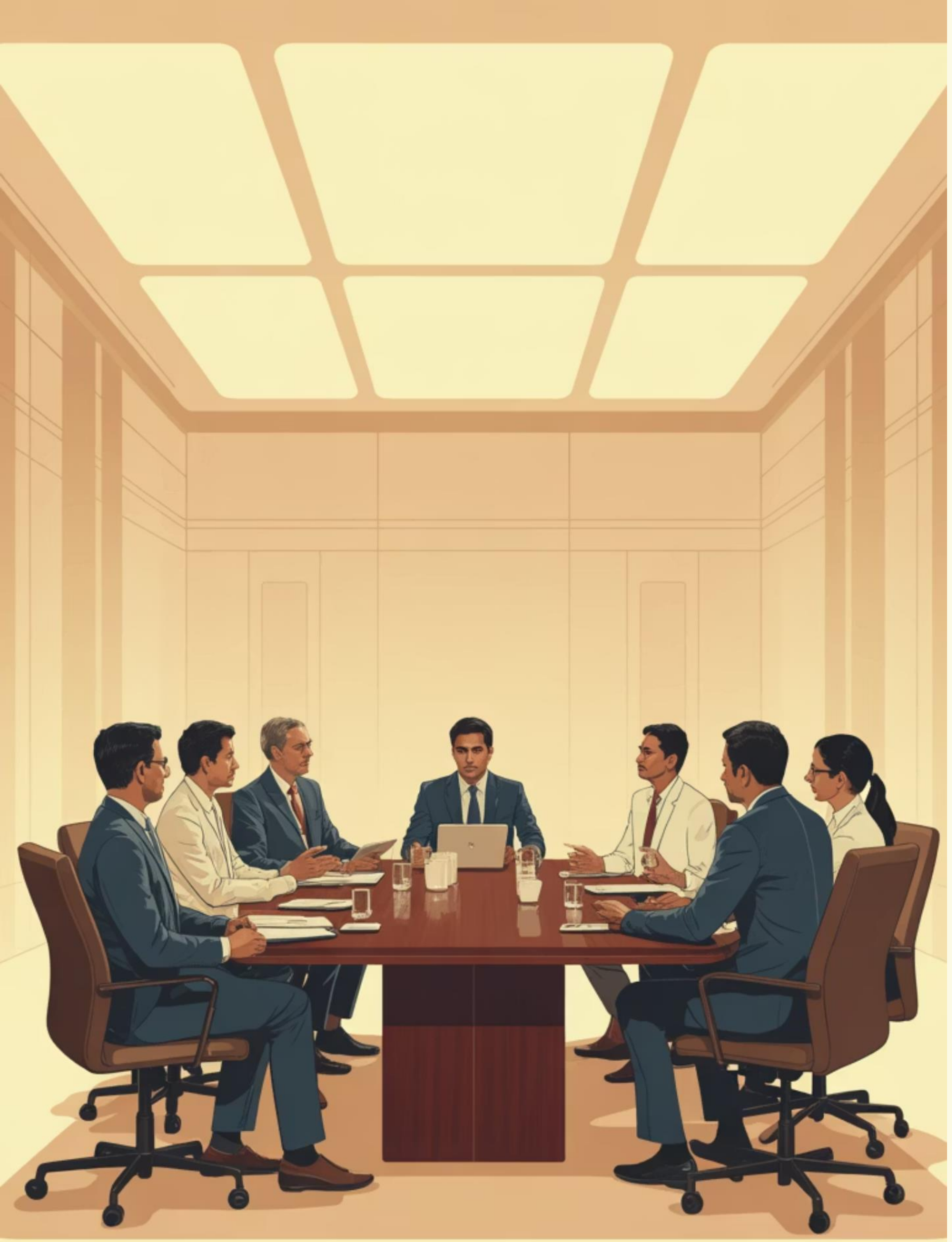


India's Boardroom Paradox

Qualified talent exists, yet access remains the critical challenge in independent director appointments across India Inc.

The Access Problem, Not a Talent Problem

India Inc. faces a peculiar imbalance in board appointments. Whilst large listed companies face mounting regulatory and investor pressure to appoint qualified independent directors, a growing pool of experienced professionals from consulting, legal, and advisory backgrounds remains on the sidelines.

The issue isn't capability—it's access. Board appointments typically hinge on personal networks and connections rather than merit, leaving qualified candidates overlooked despite their expertise.

The Numbers Tell a Stark Story

118
Vacant Board Seats

Across 61 Nifty 500 companies, highlighting the appointment gap

225
Total Vacancies

In 143 NSE-listed companies awaiting qualified directors

792
Directors Holding Multiple Roles

Individuals holding 1,328 independent directorships in Nifty 500

Data compiled by Prime Database Group reveals a concentrated pool serving on multiple boards, whilst numerous qualified professionals remain untapped.

How Networks Trump Merit

01

Network Dependency

Companies primarily access directors through search firms or commonly known contacts, with the former mechanism deployed less frequently

02

Relationship Constraints

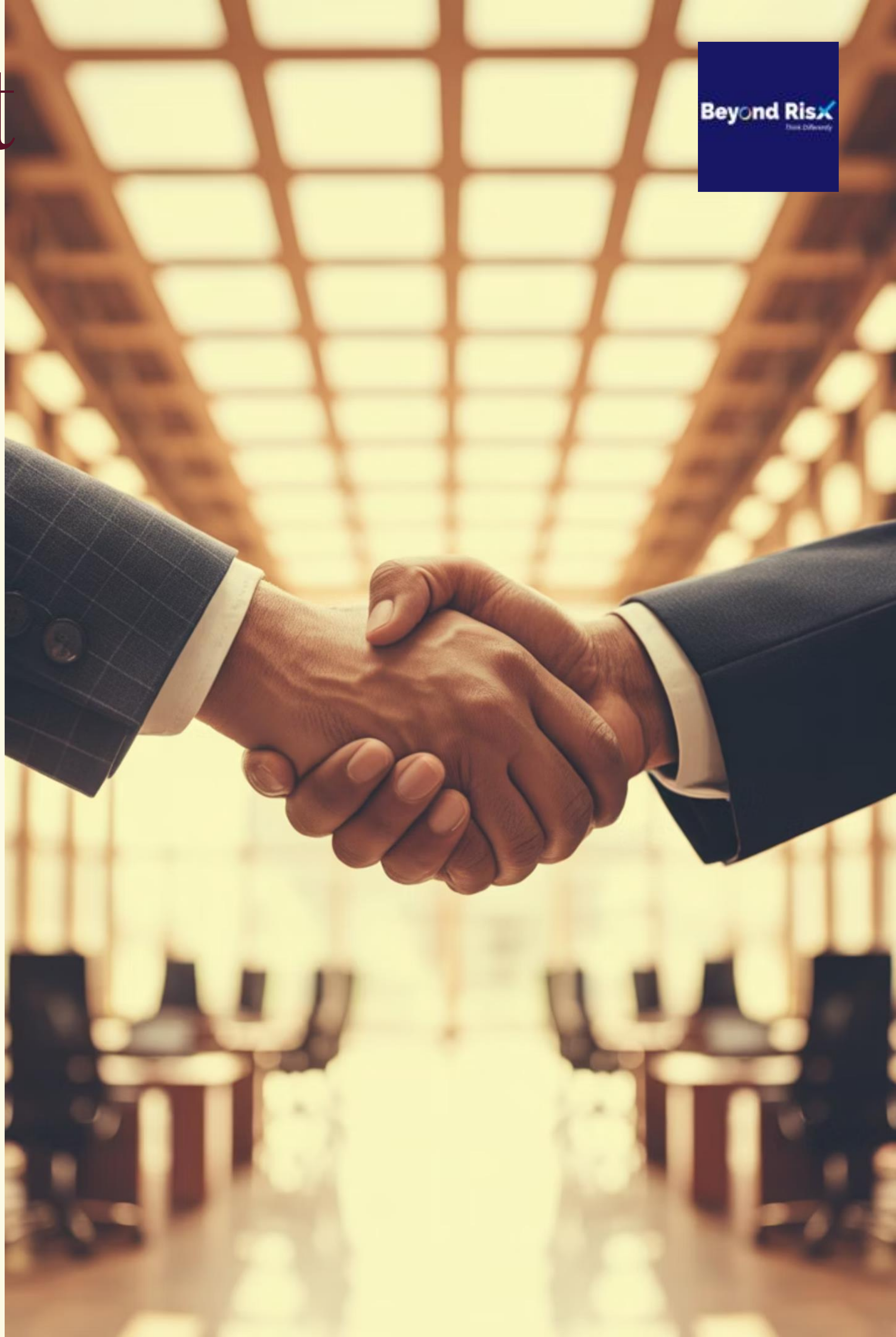
Talented professionals lacking established networks struggle to connect with companies where they could add genuine value

03

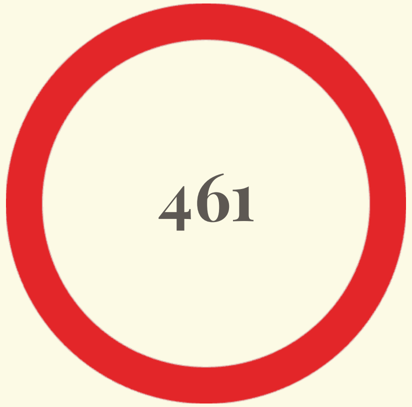
Access Barriers

The dual impact: companies cannot access qualified directors, whilst capable candidates cannot find suitable board opportunities

Expert Insight: "No promoter wants to appoint a stranger to their board. Either they need to know them directly or have a firm reference." — Pranav Haldea, Managing Director, Prime Database Group

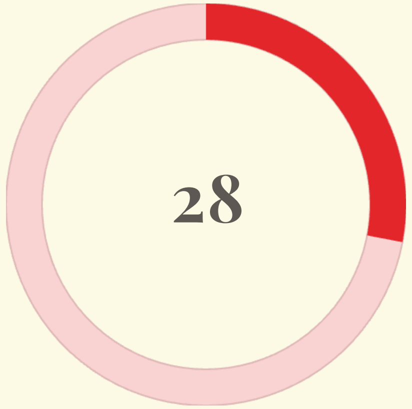


The Gender Gap Persists



Women Directors

Serving on 642 independent directorships



Companies Without Women

Out of 500 Nifty companies have no women on boards

Regulatory Requirements vs. Ground Reality

Companies Act Mandate

Independent directors must comprise at least one-third of boards at every listed public company

Gender Representation

Mandatory requirement for at least one woman director on all listed company boards

Top 1,000 Companies

Additional requirement for at least one independent woman director by market capitalisation

Expert Recommendations: Breaking the Access Barrier

Widen Search Processes

Companies must embrace structured search processes and treat board appointments with the same rigour as C-suite hiring decisions

Look Beyond Networks

Move past familiar networks and prior experience to access professionals with regulatory, ESG, digital, and risk backgrounds—critical for addressing today's complex challenges

Prioritise Governance Skills

Focus on corporate governance knowledge and the ability to protect minority shareholders' interests, rather than domain-specific expertise alone

Build Personal Brands

Aspiring directors should actively build networks, sharpen personal branding, and establish thought leadership in their areas of expertise

The Path Forward: Access Over Availability

Beyond Risx

Companies that embrace **merit-based selection** over network-based appointments can not only access untapped talent but also strengthen governance and elevate strategic decision-making.

The solution requires a fundamental shift: from viewing board appointments as relationship-driven exercises to treating them as strategic governance decisions that benefit from diverse, qualified perspectives.

Structured processes, broader searches, and genuine commitment to merit will bridge the boardroom gap—transforming access barriers into opportunities for exceptional governance.