



Recherche

# Family businesses



## WOMEN DRIVERS, DANGEROUS BEND AHEAD

THE INSTITUTE FOR FAMILY BUSINESSES (INSTITUT DE L'ENTREPRISE FAMILIALE - IEF), UNDER THE DIRECTORSHIP OF LAURENT WEERTS, COMMISSIONED HEC-ULG TO CARRY OUT A SCIENTIFIC STUDY ON THE THEME OF THE "PLACE OF WOMEN IN FAMILY-RUN BUSINESSES IN FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM IN 2012".

Nathalie CRUTZEN (picture) presented the results of this study, carried out in collaboration with Fabrice PIRNAY and Zineb AOUNI (SME Research Center, HEC-ULg - Centre de Recherche PME, HEC-ULg) on June 7th, 2012 during the annual IEF conference at Namur.

### OUR STUDY COMPRISED TWO PARTS:

- A quantitative study enabling a better understanding of the "roles" played by the women of the family in the family business (FB), the functions they carry out and the professional career to which they aspire. The study was based on an analysis of data collected from more than 130 family businesses, who responded to a questionnaire sent to a database of family businesses located in French-speaking Belgium. It identified trends regarding the place of women in the family businesses.
- A qualitative study focused on a better understanding of the experience of nine women working in a management role in family businesses.

### THE STUDY REVEALS THREE MAJOR "TRENDS" IN FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM:

- First, the study reveals the fact that there is at least one woman on the Board of Directors (60%), the Management Board (77%) and among the shareholders (62%) of businesses in French-speaking Belgium. However, it should be observed that, even though this is so, women often remain in the minority within these three management bodies!
- Secondly, women more often fulfill administrative and human resource management roles while men are more often in the majority in operational, financial, marketing and sales positions or as CEO.
- Thirdly, 40% of people asked thought the daughter of the current manager would not take over the business. Among these, 10% justified this choice by the simple fact that their daughter was a girl!



## AD OR HIGH-PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT?

THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FOCUSED ON FIVE FACTORS DETERMINING THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT ROLES IN A FB:

- **The trigger factor:** women often became managers after a request from a male member of the family.
- **Motivation** - why had the woman accepted (or sought) a management position in the FB?: certain women expressed an idea of "duty" (a sort of moral obligation). The others expressed either "positive" motives linked to the advantages they saw in their involvement in the family business, or "negative" motives linked to a lack of better options.
- **Obstacles encountered:** obstacles were revealed in relation to the technical or "masculine" character of certain professions, to their work/life balance, to the mother-daughter relationship, to the roles traditionally attributed to women in society or to specific stereotypes from previous generations.
- **The contribution of women to the family business** (ability to listen, communication, dialogue, rigor, sense of detail, particular attachment to the family).
- **The advantages of a woman managing the family business** (flexibility, responsibility, independence, meaning, value, legitimacy).

Our study also offers a typical profile of women managers in family businesses and highlights practical recommendations for family businesses.

For more details about the study, visit the website: <http://www.institutentreprisefamiliale.be/news.php?news=45>

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Left to right : Delphine Bourguignon, Administrator, Bourguignon Bois ; Virginie Dufrasne, Administrator, Lixon ; Nathalie Crutzen, PhD, Assistant Professor, Accenture Chair in Sustainable Strategy, HEC-ULg; Nathalie Marly, Marly Productions