Seniority in the boardroom is a valuable asset for companies, so too young leadership.

In the U.S., boardrooms have the second longest-serving members in the world, 16 year tenures on average.

This is important for companies in a litigious market like the U.S., says Hamish Dodds, president and CEO of Hard Rock Cafe International and a non-executive director of a leading, publically traded retailer. He says "companies need experienced board members who can manage through issues. Without such depth and continuity on their boards, companies can get bogged down and distracted in executing their business plan".

An example is Uber. The U.S. firm, which connects passengers to taxi drivers through a smartphone app, has faced widespread criticism for its tough tactics, getting accused of sexism, ignoring regulations and using unfair tactics against critics and rivals.

Daniel Hamburger, president and CEO of DeVry Education Group, argues that companies imposing length of service limits or mandatory retirement are doing themselves a disservice. "The issue of having experience is positive," he says. "Board members have lived through multiple business cycles and are able to provide meaningful and appropriate guidance and leadership to the benefit of the company."

But experience is not enough, says Christie Hunter Arscott, a World Economic Forum Global Shaper. In the World Economic Forum newsletter Agenda, she wrote recently about the importance of younger directors. "An emerging leader can challenge 'groupthink' and thereby have a transformative impact on the way an organization operates," she wrote.

This potential is measured by a candidate's curiosity, determination, engagement, insight and motivation, Hunter Arscott wrote, citing Claudio Fernández-Aráoz's "21st-Century Talent Spotting" article in the 2014 Harvard Business Review.

Until companies take the focus off of skills and experience, boardrooms will continue to diversify "at a snail's pace," Deborah DeHaas, vice chairman and chief inclusion officer for Deloitte LLP's Center for Corporate Governance wrote in a recent CEO Magazine blog post.

The less obvious benefits – but ones not to be overlooked – are those associated with opening up board positions to the fresh thinkers of the younger generations, themselves a growing talent and consumer group. DeHaas argues that boards are lacking generational diversity, posing "a risk for nearly every business and industry." With millennials expected to account for 75% of the workforce by 2025, their perspectives in the boardroom could help shape talent strategies and practices while simultaneously driving marketing and product innovation towards this growing consumer group.

TENURE - STAYING OR GOING

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