How to smash the glass ceiling

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As a partner of Blue Ocean Associates (a private investment firm with a Pan Asian focus), Ng Shin Ein assesses investment opportunities before investing and helping businesses grow. Meeting companies, their founders and other investors, are all part of the “daily fun” for the 39-year-old mother-of-three. “My work brings out the curiosity in me. It keeps me discovering, innovating and creating. It’s a wonderful feeling,” says the private equity entrepreneur, who also sits on the boards of NTUC Fairprice, Yanlord Land and Eu Yan Sang International Limited.

So intrigued, in fact, was Ng by the potential of the philanthropic and social enterprise sector that she took a year off in 2010 to travel the world, attend courses and engage with philanthropists, foundations and corporate leaders. Her aim? To discover how effective sustainable giving can maximise social impact. Since her return, she has made the Asia Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy at the National University of Singapore Business School one of her pet projects, adding yet another hat — that of adjunct research fellow — to an impressive list of engagements.

Often singled out as one of the poster girls to have breached the glass ceiling, Ng also sees it as part of a broader responsibility to champion board diversity as a whole. “Like other men and women who care about diversity, I sometimes take it upon my self to be the contrarian in a meeting, just so that a different perspective would have been considered. It’s a slow process, but increasingly, others see the benefit of having considered varied options and perspectives. The idea is to always be professional and mutually respectful in the process,” she says.

“I enjoy what I do very much because it’s not merely about investing in businesses, but more importantly, people... I’m proud of, yet humbled, my occasional ability to bring out the best in others,” she shares.