



A CSR initiative led by Altavis Pvt Ltd

Challenges and strategies for retention of women talent in India

PART I: Based on roundtable discussions conducted in Jan'15

PART II: Results of on-line survey conducted in Jul-Aug'15

Executive Summary

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INTRODUCTION

The need for a comprehensive strategy- *an essay*

Retaining women talent over a potential career span of 30 years is a common challenge for organizations. Except perhaps public sector enterprises, most companies are facing a situation where the business case for diversity is well acknowledged but the various means deployed to achieve it are proving ineffective as shown by statistics.

The need of the hour is to examine the challenges in detail and explore strategies which are being used with some degree of success. We held a series of roundtable discussions in Dec'14 –Jan'15 across different cities to study these challenges, compare best practices and come out with solutions that can truly help organizations attain their goal of creating inclusive and diverse workplaces.

Why is retention of women employees a challenge?

An employee is an invaluable resource for an organization. Considerable time, effort and funds are spent in finding and developing this resource. The organization in turn expects good performance, loyalty, ethical behavior and adherence to policies. Yet we let go an employee easily. In case of women employees, organizations cannot afford to be complacent.

Perhaps the business manager feels there are easy replacements available in the market. This may not be true in case of women candidates. All new hiring comes at a cost- project time loss, loss of business contacts and a risk attached to it. Further some investment has already been made in the exiting employee's development and training.

If the employee is unable to meet expectations, we need to investigate where the problem lies. Is the selection process to blame? If an employee started off as a good performer in her earlier role / job, why has performance declined? Has something changed in the work or personal environment? Are the Manager and the team providing adequate encouragement and co-operation?

Even for extremely talented women employees surprisingly little is done to retain. Perhaps the need is to help them deal with life stage changes and provide support at crucial times. The Manager may be uncomfortable in dealing with a lady team member. There may even be resentment in the team itself around availing flexibility options. Hostile work environment is a valid reason for exit.

Thus retaining women talent is not solely about policies and ratios. With this paper, we hope to provide some answers to this persistent problem.

STATISTICS FOR INDIA

ON AVERAGE, WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA ARE*

30.3% OF JUNIOR LEVEL EMPLOYEES

16.4% OF MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS

10.6% OF SENIOR LEVEL LEADERS

*SOURCE: GENDER DIVERSITY BENCHMARK FOR ASIA 2014, COMMUNITY BUSINESS

Across Asia, organizations are facing the issue of leaking pipeline but in India the problem seems acute.

Women in Total Workforce - A Regional View

Country	Average
CHINA	56.7%
HONG KONG	50.9%
INDIA	26.6%
JAPAN	42.6%
MALAYSIA	58.1%
SINGAPORE	48.2%

Source: Community Business-Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2014

APPROACH

Through round tables conducted in four major corporate hubs of the nation, we investigated the reasons for a leaky pipeline at a generic as well as local level.

We delved deep into these challenges via a case study in our round tables, using Conversation Café methodology. Key insights were derived which we are presenting here in a three-pronged approach namely: Organization, Team and Individual.

We realized that a robust solution for retention of women staff can only be achieved if there are changes at these three levels. We further broke down the actions specifically targeting hierarchical structure that we see in a widespread manner in Indian organizations.

In Part II of this exercise, we conducted an on line survey of working women across functions, age and experience to understand key motivators and challenges.

DEFINITION OF CAREER LEVELS

Junior : This career stream ranges from entry level through to technical or subject matter experts

Middle : This is broadly the supervisory level ranging from team leader level to general manager

Seniors: Heads of programs, divisions and functions (VP & above)

PART I : SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

We began the roundtable discussions by first dissecting the issues faced by working women which hindered their growth and created impediments in their work environment. It emerged that women at different levels face unique challenges.

Juniors “I am a young executive with work as the chief priority. I am hungry for varied experience, learning latest technologies and new projects. While I am as good as male colleagues at work, they are more articulate and confident. Changes are happening on the personal front too.”

- **Traditional roles**- some roles are still considered unsuitable for girls
- **Change in environment from campus:** They face a huge change in environment from campus to the workplace partly due to emphasis on academics alone in education system.
- **Lack of role models and protected environment at home** lead to lack of maturity and confidence in asserting themselves and in dealing with male managers
- **Landmark events in personal life** –marriage etc.
- **Lack of clarity** and aspirations with respect to career goals

Middles: “I have lots of work at home after my workday ends. I am well-entrenched at work and my career is on an upward spiral, I want to be able to avail of all the opportunities that are opening up for me. My hard work has put me in a position of responsibility, I dread falling short”

- **Increasing load** both at work and at home so dual pressure
- **Inability to manage after return from maternity:** year after return from leave is crucial with high risk of exit. Women are having children later when at middle level.
- **Personal issues** of child care, spouse relocation etc. Paternity support is tokenism
- **Biased culture** -Bias with respect to ability to manage work- life and perception of being ‘pampered’

Seniors: “I have achieved what I wanted to. I have worked very hard and I am financially comfortable. I need something different to interest me and to put in further effort. I want to share my experiences and would like to give back”

- **Challenges on home front** are still there with husband also very busy, adolescent children and old parents
- **Change in priorities**-(why am I doing this, am well off) & health issues mean stress takes greater toll. Likely to listen their heart, want to give back and need more “me time”
- **Increased assertiveness**- system has made them more assertive, dislike repetition & need challenges to motivate.
- **Lots of job opportunities** available
- **Lack of top team commitment** for women leadership

Key question 1: What can the *Organization* do to retain women employees at this level?

- **Analyzing available data:** In order to come up with solutions, each organization first needs to analyze all available data; women candidates interviewed per vacancy, reasons for offer acceptance /decline, women in different functions, exit interview data, competition numbers etc. The emerging issues should be addressed
- **Emphasis on hire** is important (mandatory number of women candidates screened per job) but focus should be on retention too
- **An effective mentorship program** and access to other women via a network can help the new joiner imbibe the organizational culture and feel connected
- **Information about policies** on flexibility, education/ skilling options, career path, maternity benefits and complaints mechanism (with 'go to' person) should be provided
- **Clarity on vision & values** : Organization culture and vision should be clear on appropriate behavior and this message should percolate down to all employees at all levels

Key Question 2: What efforts need to be taken at the *team level* to provide a favorable environment?

- **Detailed on-boarding:** On boarding should not be a brief formality but a well- planned session. The new employee needs to understand team structure and cross functions, on-going projects etc. before starting work. She should be introduced to key personnel and encouraged to reach out.
- **Awareness sessions** to make team members sensitive to issues faced by women and to bring out unconscious biases
- **Buddy system** and regular team bonding exercises to be introduced

Key question 3: What must the *individual* do to build a long and successful career?

- **Emphasis on learning:** Young individuals need to push themselves and channelize their energy into increasing functional knowledge and making use of any opportunities to learn new skills or technologies.
- **Clarity on goals:** They need to be clear about career goals and enquire about career paths available in the organization
- **Personal development** : Trainees come from varied cultural backgrounds, they need inputs on self- development including strengths & weaknesses analysis, speaking confidently, building executive presence, asserting themselves, presentation and negotiation skills.

Key question 1: What can the *organization* do to retain women employees at this level?

- **Diversity councils:** In a patriarchal social setting, organizations can help build an inclusive culture via a council with fair representation. This council can help fix objectives, review achievement, engage men in the dialogue and identify diversity campaigners from senior management
- **Promoting role models** and showcasing them as real women who made use of flexibility options and supportive company policies to move up the corporate ladder
- **Providing enablers** like career mobility (alternative roles if flexibility not possible due to nature of work), addressing grievances, freezing rating during maternity etc. & infrastructure support like crèches
- **Potential leadership programs** (workshops and mentoring)

Key Question 2: What efforts need to be taken at the *team* level to provide a favorable environment?

- **Increasing employee engagement** via campus tours, family day and family participation in celebrations
- **Creating awareness** to help team leaders recognize and guard against biases like role suitability for women, flexibility seen as shunning work etc. This would influence decision making in appraisals, allotting key assignments & promotions while creating a healthy work environment
- **Clarity on roles:** Providing clear definition, requirements for each role and ensuring transparency in appraisals and transfers
- **Including people with different functional expertise** in projects

Key question 3: What must the *individual* do to build a long and successful career?

- **Career planning-** envisioning career path and long term goals according to skills and interest
- **Skill enhancement** : Working towards achieving career goals by enhancing skills, networking, managing expectations, using an entitlement approach and availing of leadership training programs
- **Seeking clarity on career progression** : Initiating dialogue with management with respect to career path and new opportunities
- **Building a supportive ecosystem** and learning to prioritize

Key question 1: What can the *organization* do to retain women employees at this level?

- **Sponsorship** :Organizations should look at Sponsorship with CXO level leaders as a means to engage and motivate senior women
- **Defined career path**: Senior women should be conscious of moving along a well-defined career path as part of organizations talent pool.
- **Key performance indicators** should be well articulated
- **Hiring of women from industry** should be a priority at senior levels also
- **Reverse mentoring** should be introduced to help senior women gain perspective on customer preferences, new technologies and operations
- **Think tank**: The expertise and perspective of senior women employees can be well utilized in innovative projects. In a wider social context, their inputs would be valuable and could prove to be the organizations strategic “Think Tank”

Key Question 2: What efforts need to be taken at the *team* level to provide a favorable environment?

- **Project senior women as role models** in forums where junior women can connect with them or request them to volunteer in forums for junior employees
- **Involve them in parallel projects** (other than regular work) where their expertise would be useful and reinforce their positive perception as guides and mentors

Key question 3: What must the *individual* do to build a long and successful career?

- **Executive Coaching** : Senior women should avail of executive Coaching and prepare for board level and senior management positions
- **Build executive presence** : Work on their executive presence and public speaking skills
- **Personal brand** : work towards building their personal brand
- **Confidence in taking on big roles** : Senior women should be confident of taking on large roles and free themselves of the self-limiting mindset
- **Networking**: Network both within and outside the organization

INNOVATIVE BEST PRACTICES

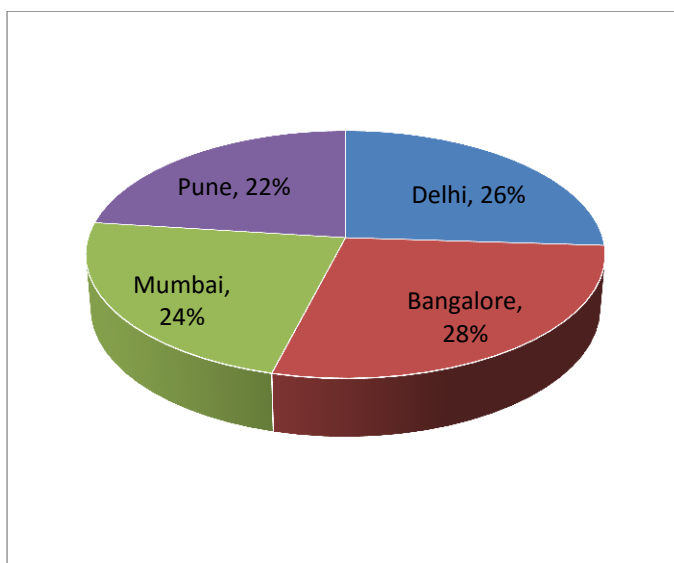
Another revelation during these roundtables was that there are some innovative practices that have been successfully implemented in various organizations to curb the loss of female talent, like:

- **Junior** level:
 - Connect with families at the time of confirmation (like parents visit)
 - Opportunities for subsidized higher education
- **Middle** level:
 - Leadership programs to groom women who value it as an investment from the organization
 - Structured policy/program on flexible options during the return from maternity phase
 - Move 'back-from-maternity' women to 'day shift' as a rule
 - Offer childcare in the work premises
- **Senior** executives:
 - Structured coaching interventions for senior women to help them with professional/personal career challenges
 - Gender diversity linked KRAs for leadership team ensuring personal attention to the organizational goal on diversity

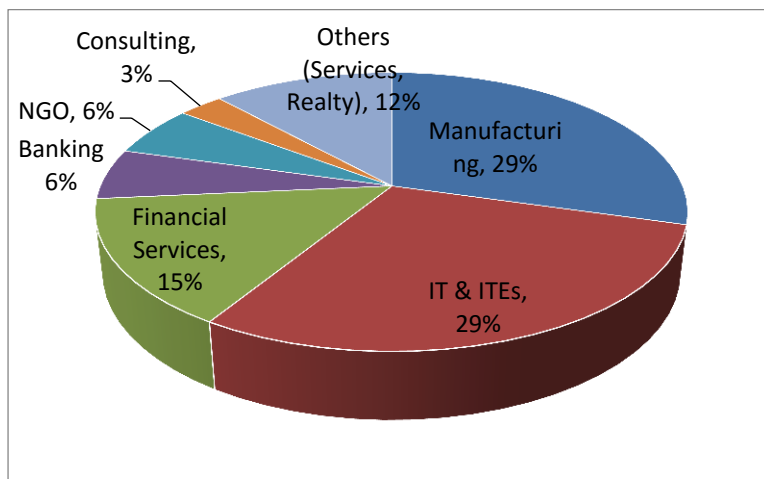
PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The discussions were conducted across 34 participating organizations (listed below) in four cities with over 60 individual participants.

PARTICIPATION ACROSS CITIES



INDUSTRY WISE PARTICIPATION



LIST OF PARTICIPATING COMPANIES:-

1.	EY SHARED SERVICES
2.	HONEYWELL
3.	GOLDMAN SACHS
4.	CAPGEMINI
5.	HAPPIEST MINDS
6.	DELL
7.	JDA SOFTWARE
8.	HP
9.	ATOS
10.	SKF
11.	AMDOCS
12.	WNS
13.	JOHN DEERE
14.	LEAR CORPORATION
15.	KPMG
16.	RBS
17.	JLL
18.	L & T SEAWOODS
19.	ICICI BANK
20.	AVENDUS
21.	NEW LIFE
22.	GE
23.	BIZ DIVAS FOUNDATION
24.	AMERICAN EXPRESS
25.	SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC
26.	ENCORE
27.	BLACKROCK
28.	ERICSSON
29.	PEARSON
30.	NESTLE
31.	TCS
32.	XEROX
33.	VALVOLINE CUMMINS
34.	ROYAL DSM

PART II: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM ONLINE SURVEY

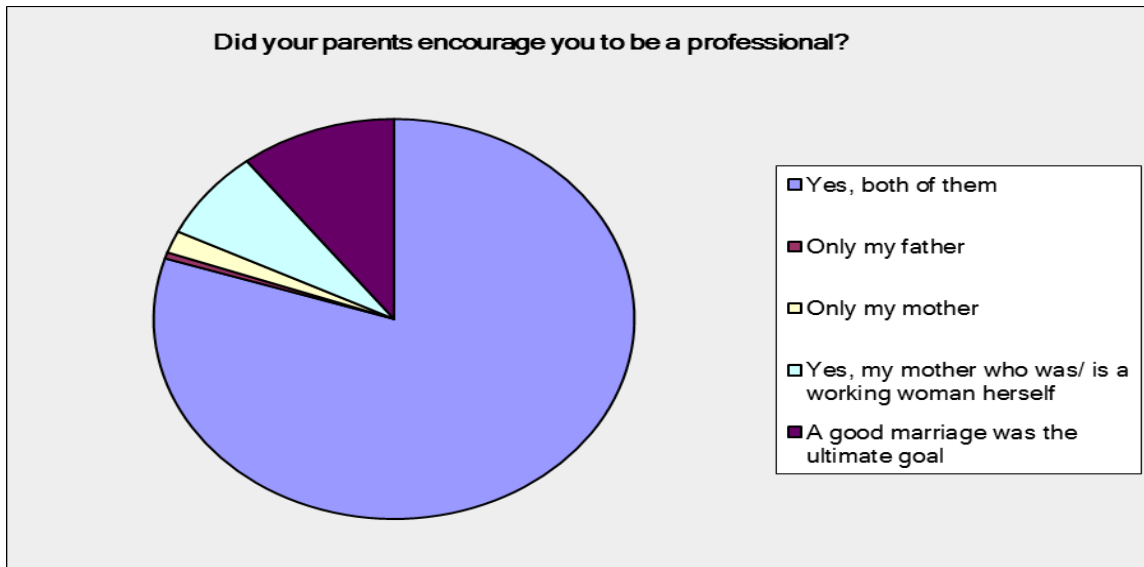
Introduction

We conducted a survey on social media and invited working women to share their experiences. The exhaustive questionnaire was designed to bring out the factors that motivate working women, challenges they face and elements contributing to stress in the work environment. Some questions appear to be similar but actually bring out significant subtleties that merit examination.

Majority of the respondents had at least five years of experience (86%). The survey was concluded with the respondents identifying some key changes in the corporate work environment that could create a more equitable environment for working women and help retain them in the workforce. The data was also analysed qualitatively.

DATA DISTRIBUTION		
Number of Respondents		850
Gender	Female	100%
By years of experience	0-5 years	13.8%
	5-10 years	19.8%
	10-15 years	32%
	>15 years	34.4%
By function	IT/ ITES	19.3 %
	FMCG	6.8 %
	Manufacturing	6 %
	BFSI	20.1 %
	Travel / Hospitality	8.9 %
	Consulting	18 %
	Media / Publishing	9.3 %
	Law / Accounting	7.6 %
	Others	4 %

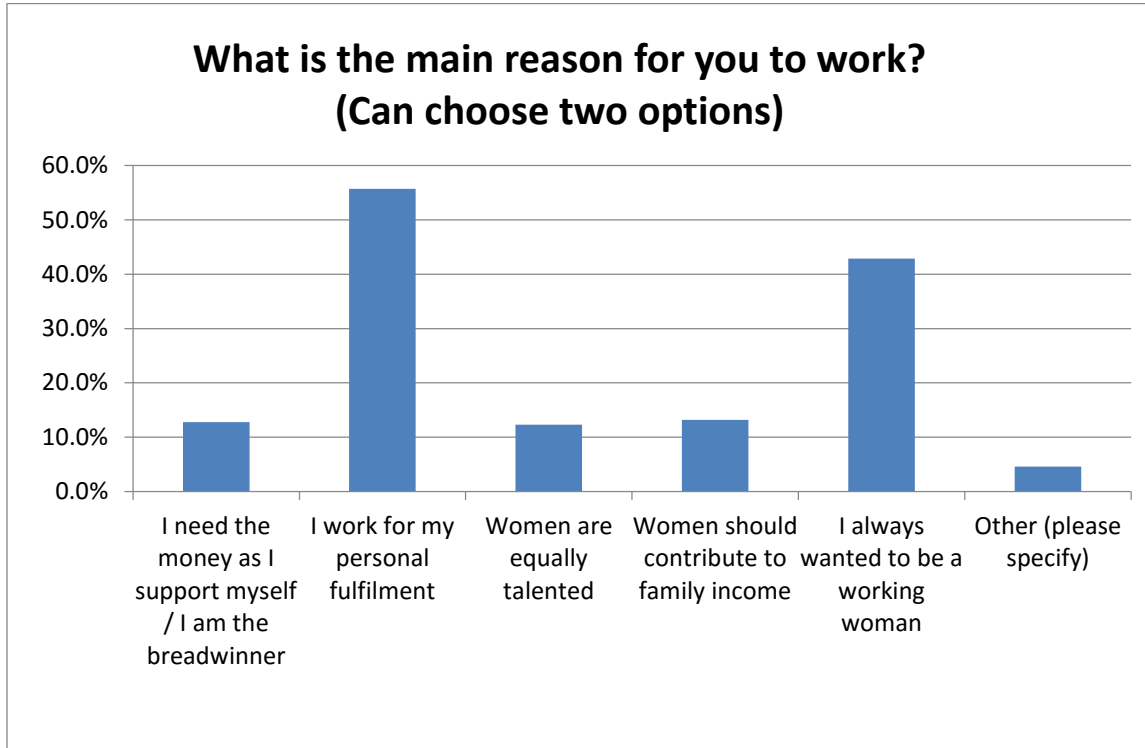
Q1: Did your parents encourage you to be a professional?



Did your parents encourage you to be a professional?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Yes, both of them	79.9%
Only my father	0.5%
Only my mother	1.8%
Yes, my mother who was/ is a working woman herself	7.3%
A good marriage was the ultimate goal	10.5%

Commentary: A huge 80% of respondents reported that both parents encouraged them to pursue a career. This is significant if we note that only 41% of students in higher education in India are women (Indiastat.com). In total women in India are only 30% of economically active people (International Labour Organisation, 2009-10) with women as 26.1% of rural workers and only 13.8 % of all urban workers.

Q2: What is the main reason for you to work?

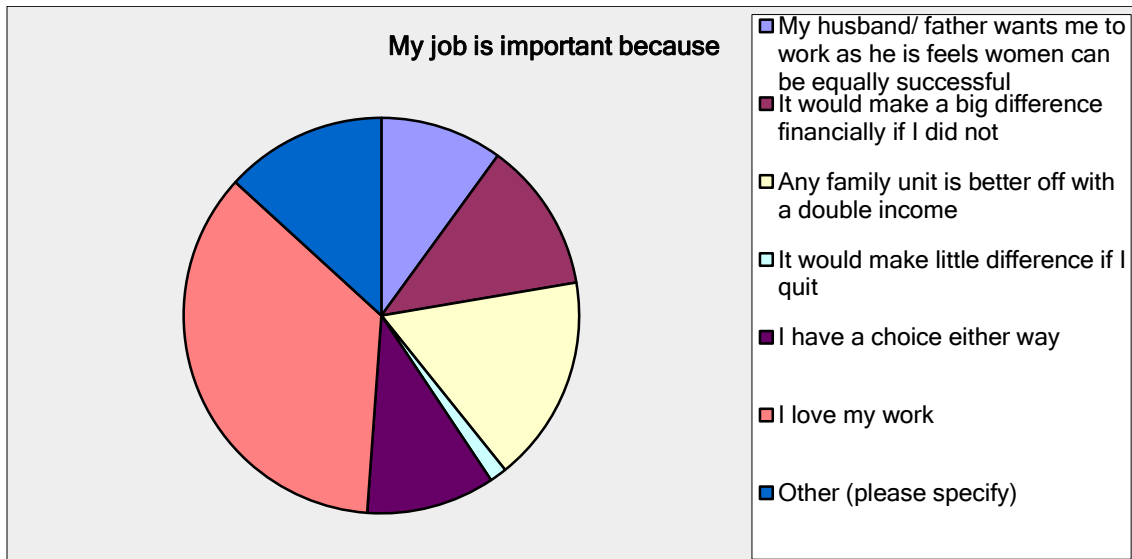


What is the main reason for you to work? (Can choose two options)	
Answer Options	Response Per cent
I need the money as I support myself / I am the breadwinner	12.8%
I work for my personal fulfilment	55.7%
Women are equally talented	12.3%
Women should contribute to family income	13.2%
I always wanted to be a working woman	42.9%
Other (please specify)	4.6%

Commentary : Interestingly, 55% of women surveyed say they work for their personal fulfillment. Only 13 % of respondents felt that women should contribute to family income. 42% of all respondents had always aspired to be working women. Only 13% of women worked to support themselves or were sole breadwinner. This statistic showing only 13% working to support themselves may be a relevant factor contributing to organisation’s difficulty in retaining women talent.

Under ‘other reasons’ cited were “women empowerment is the only way to save the nation” and ‘simply enjoy working’ were stated.

Q3: My job is important because

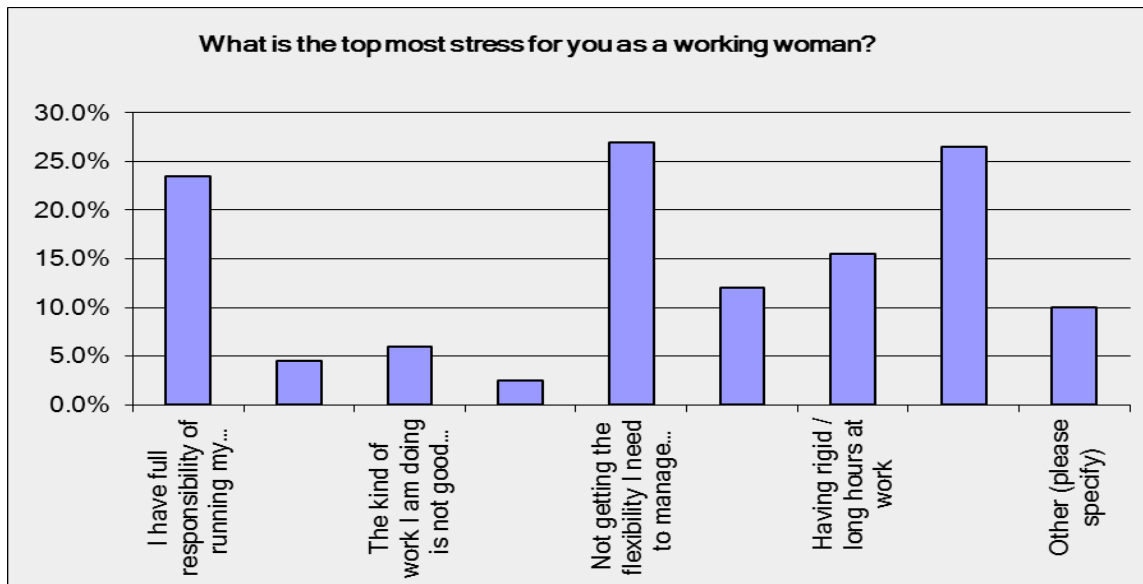


My job is important because	
Answer Options	Response Per cent
My husband/ father wants me to work as he is feels women can be equally successful	10.0%
It would make a big difference financially if I did not	12.3%
Any family unit is better off with a double income	16.9%
It would make little difference if I quit	1.4%
I have a choice either way	10.5%
I love my work	35.6%
Other (please specify)	13.2%

Commentary : We asked the respondents to state the main reason why their job is important. More than 35% stated that their job was important because they loved their work. Another 35 % reported that the money made their job important. 10 % felt they had a choice whether to work or not.

We next posed a series of questions designed to delve into the reasons working women quit after putting in a few years. According to statistics, India has the one of the highest leaking pipelines of working women as they move from Junior to middle level to senior levels. With working women constituting around 28% of workforce at junior level, going down to around 14 % at middle level and further falling to less than 9% of workers at senior level; retention has become a major issue faced by organisations across the board.

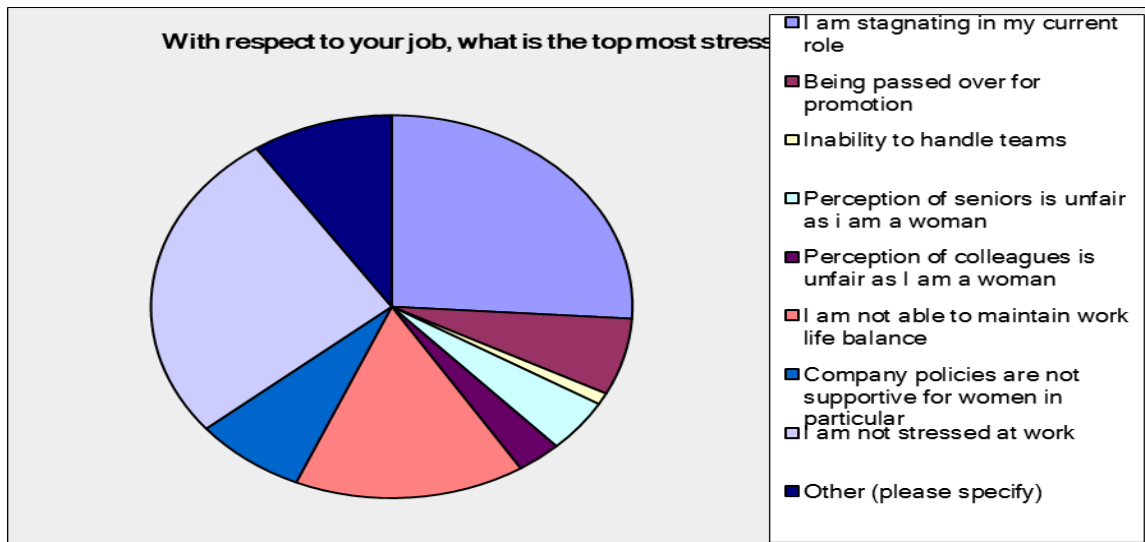
Q4: What is the top most stress for you as a working woman?



What is the top most stress for you as a working woman?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
I have full responsibility of running my house as well	23.5%
Not earning enough to meet loan payments in spite of working hard	4.5%
The kind of work I am doing is not good enough reason to stay away from my child	6.0%
I may get fired anytime since my role as a woman might be made redundant	2.5%
Not getting the flexibility I need to manage both home and work	27.0%
Travelling to and/ or for work	12.0%
Having rigid / long hours at work	15.5%
I dont feel stress of a working woman	26.5%
Other (please specify)	10.0%

Commentary : We asked to what was the biggest stress factor for them as working women. 27% of women cited lack of flexibility and thus inability to manage work and personal life as the biggest stress factor. Interestingly nearly the same number of working women said they did not feel any stress related to work at all. Another 23 % of women said that the factor that made them feel stressed was that they had the full responsibility of managing the household in addition to work. A point to note here is that these 23% do not cite “lack of flexibility “ from organisation as a factor but rather seem to point out at complete lack of support systems at home or no help from family members. Long hours at work (15.5%) and travelling (12%) were other maximum stress producing factors to be stated.

Q5: With respect to your job, what is the top most stress you face?



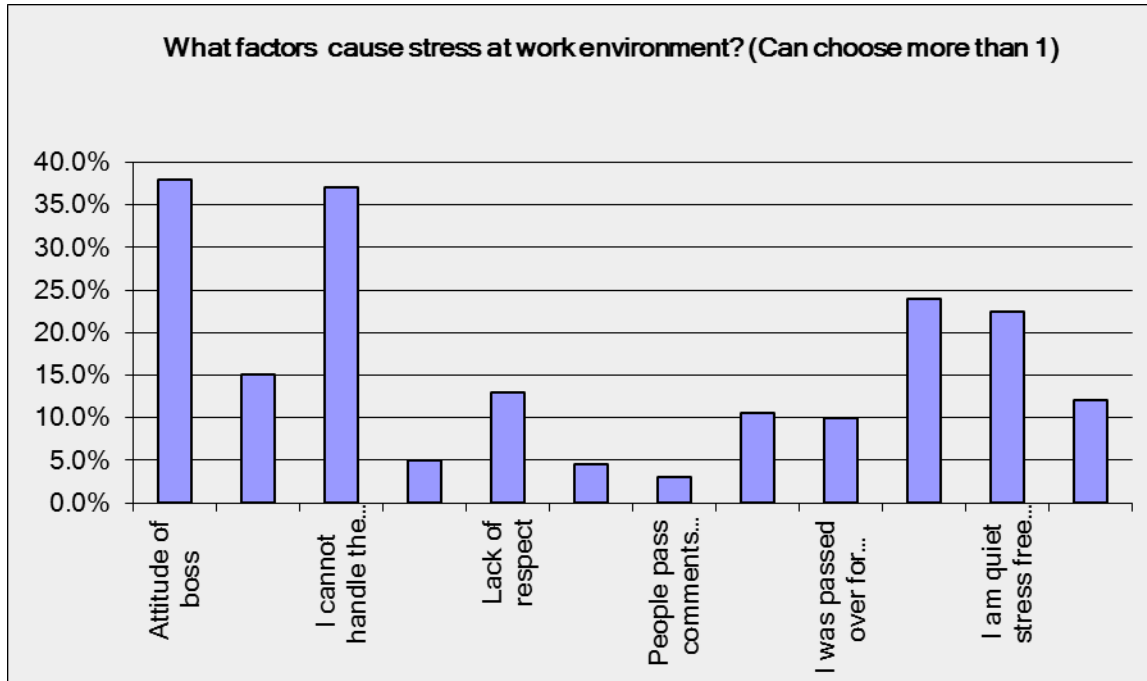
With respect to your job, what is the top most stress you face?

Answer Options	Response Per cent
I am stagnating in my current role	26.0%
Being passed over for promotion	6.5%
Inability to handle teams	1.0%
Perception of seniors is unfair as i am a woman	4.5%
Perception of colleagues is unfair as I am a woman	3.0%
I am not able to maintain work life balance	15.5%
Company policies are not supportive for women in particular	7.5%
I am not stressed at work	26.5%
Other (please specify)	9.5%

Commentary : The respondents were asked to analyse what was the most stressful part of their current job. While majority of respondents (26.5%) said there was nothing stressful about their jobs, almost an equal number reported feeling stagnated in their work. This must be studied taking into account the fact that 65 % of our sample consisted of women with over 10 years of experience.

This would imply that middle and senior level women need organisational support in career planning, leadership or perhaps they themselves need to work towards reinventing their skills and evolving with changing trends. Here again inability to maintain balance was stated as a factor that makes their job itself stressful by 15% of women. Also noteworthy is that Company policies were cited as a stress factor by only 7% of the respondents.

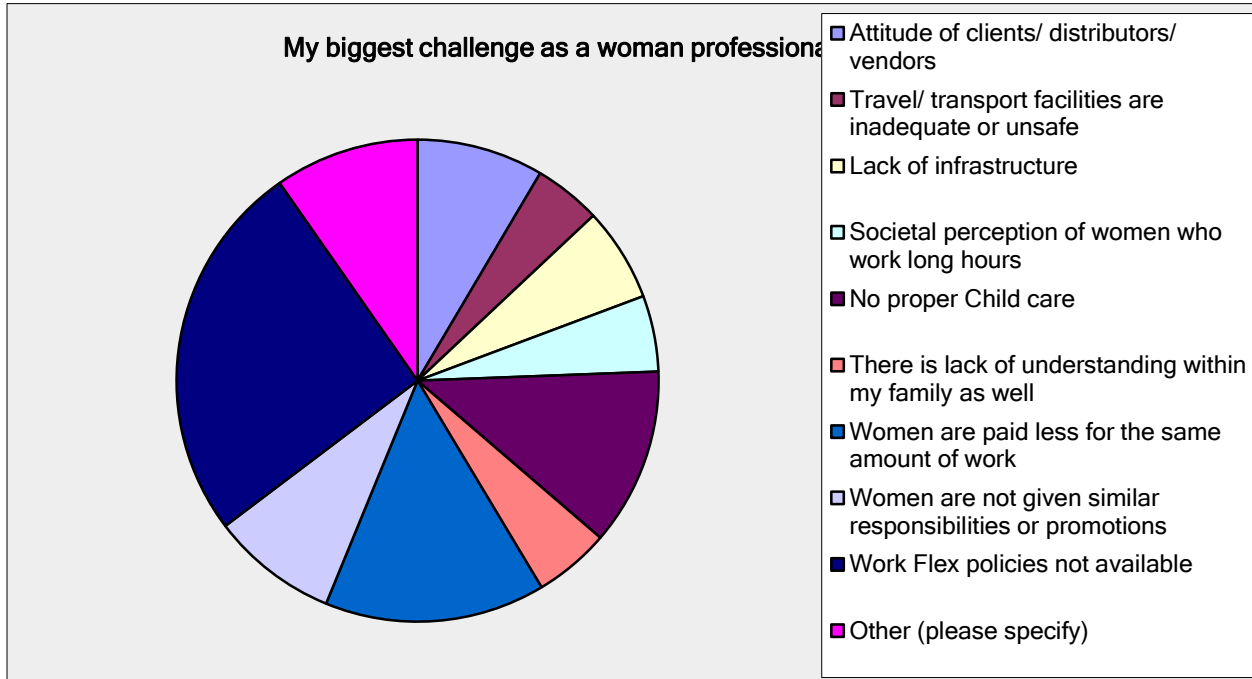
Q6: What factors cause stress at work environment? (Can choose more than 1)



Answer Options	Response Per cent
Attitude of boss	38.0%
Lack of team work	15.0%
I cannot handle the politics	37.0%
I feel alienated	5.0%
Lack of respect	13.0%
No one asks for my opinion	4.5%
People pass comments about me	3.0%
The office is male dominated	10.5%
I was passed over for promotion/ raise	10.0%
Lack of mentor/ sponsor	24.0%
I am quiet stress free at work	22.5%
Other (please specify)	12.0%

Commentary: We asked women to analyse their work environment and culture to see if it was conducive for them to perform to their best ability. Of the factors listed “attitude of boss” and “office politics” were chosen as negatives maximum number of times. This was followed by “lack of mentor/ sponsor” as a negative factor. However, nearly 23% of women reported a stress free work environment. Another factor affecting work environment was lack of team work (15%) . Lack of respect was cited by 13% of respondents

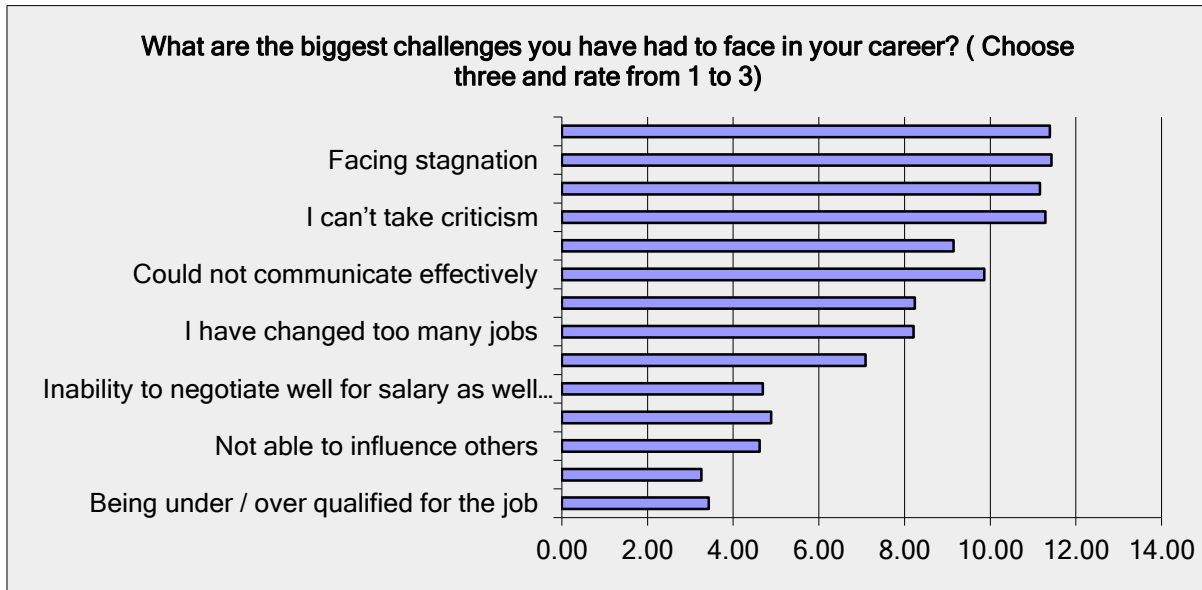
Q7: My biggest challenge as a woman professional



My biggest challenge as a woman professional	
Answer Options	Response Per cent
Attitude of clients/ distributors/ vendors	8.5%
Travel/ transport facilities are inadequate or unsafe	4.5%
Lack of infrastructure	6.3%
Societal perception of women who work long hours	5.1%
No proper Child care	11.9%
There is lack of understanding within my family as well	5.1%
Women are paid less for the same amount of work	14.8%
Women are not given similar responsibilities or promotions	8.5%
Work Flex policies not available	25.6%
Other (please specify)	9.7%

Commentary : Respondents were asked to state what was the biggest challenge a woman professional would generally expect to face. 25 % felt lack of flexible work policies was the biggest challenge. Being paid less than men for the same amount of work was the next challenge stated by respondents. Lack of proper childcare was stated as a problem area by 11% . Other significant factors were ‘attitude of clients/distributors/ vendors’ and the fact that deserving women may not be given the same responsibilities and promotions as men.

Q8: What are the biggest challenges you have had to face in your career?



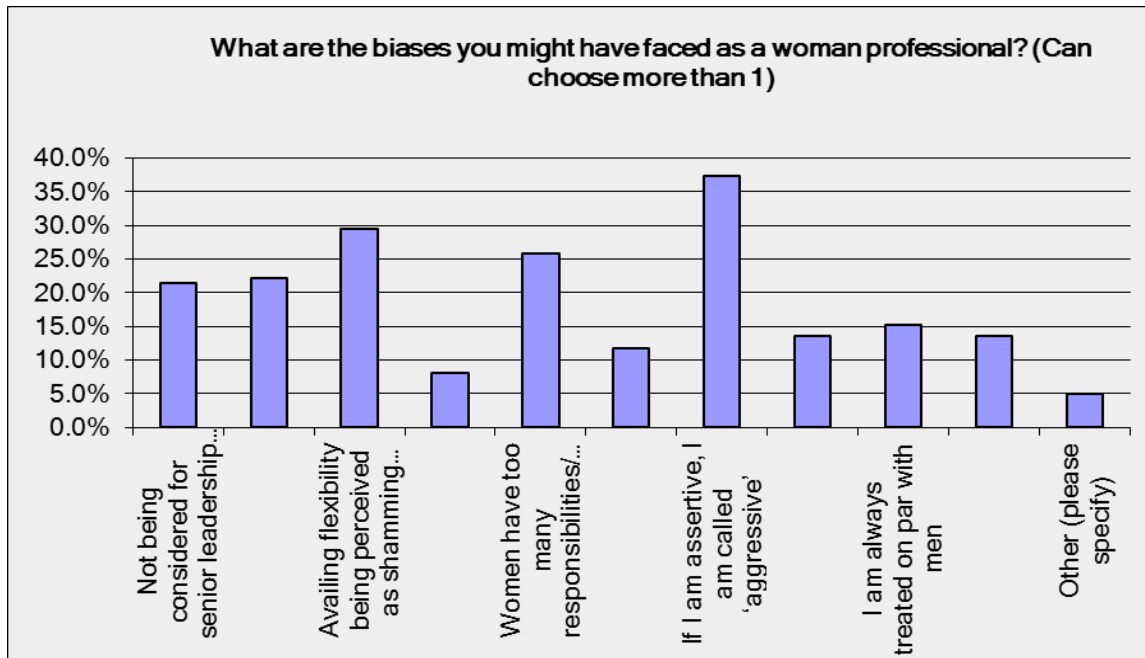
What are the biggest challenges you have had to face in your career? (Choose three and rate from 1 to 3)

Answer Options	Rating Average
Being under / over qualified for the job	3.43
Insufficient training to move towards new roles	3.26
Not able to influence others	4.62
Wrong career moves in the past	4.89
Inability to negotiate well for salary as well as job role	4.69
I am invisible at work, no one seems to know me	7.09
I have changed too many jobs	8.21
Managing relationships at work and personally	8.24
Could not communicate effectively	9.86
Lack of direction in career	9.14
I can't take criticism	11.29
Not able to move up the ladder	11.16
Facing stagnation	11.43
I have not faced any problems that I could not handle(if you choose this, then cannot choose any other option)	11.39

Commentary : Here women were asked to be specific to their personal experience and skill set in rating the three biggest challenges they have ever faced in their career so far. Of the factors listed “ Insufficient training to move towards new roles “ had highest probability of being chosen as most significant challenge. This was followed by “being under or over qualified for the job”.

The next most significant challenges in order of importance were “not being able to influence others” and “inability to negotiate well for salary and job role”. Relatively few women stated that they did not face any challenge that they could not handle.

Q9: What are the biases you might have faced as a woman professional?

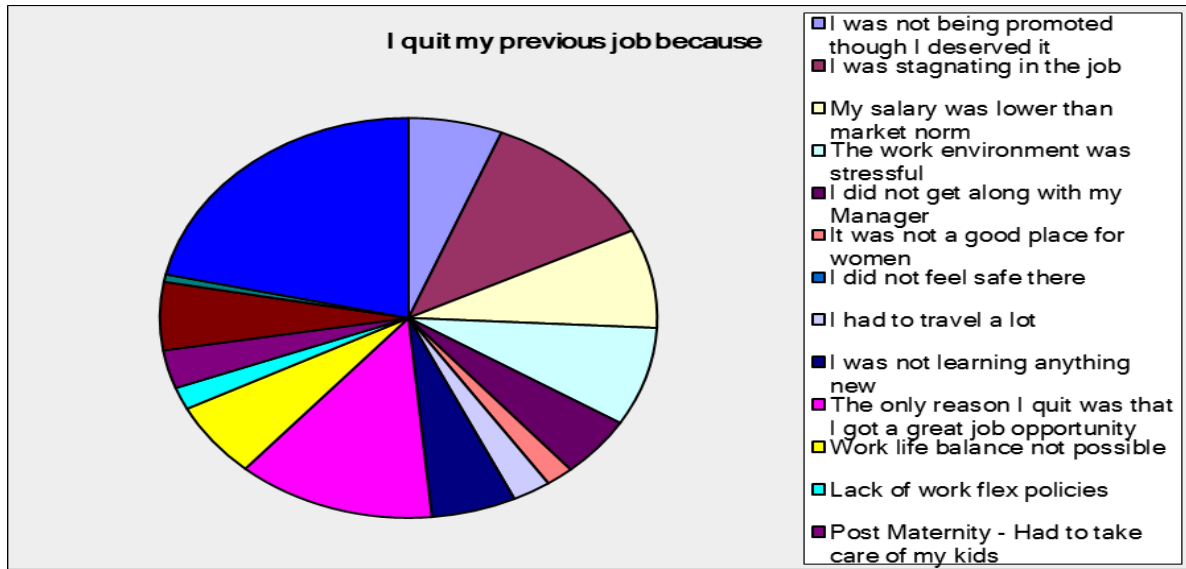


What are the biases you might have faced as a woman professional? (Can choose more than 1)

Answer Options	Response Per cent
Not being considered for senior leadership roles	21.5%
Maternity leading to perception of being about to quit	22.1%
Availing flexibility being perceived as shamming work	29.4%
Women are perceived to be unpredictable	8.0%
Women have too many responsibilities/ problems in personal life so can't give equal attention to work	25.8%
Women are too emotional and Managers find it difficult to deal with them	11.7%
If I am assertive, I am called 'aggressive'	37.4%
If I am low key, I am not taken seriously	13.5%
I am always treated on par with men	15.3%
Women are different and my organisation knows how to support me	13.5%
Other (please specify)	4.9%

Commentary : Respondents were asked to pick out any biases they have faced. “If I am assertive, I am called aggressive” was chosen maximum number of times (37%). This shows what a fine line working women have to walk on at work. “Availing flexibility seen as akin to shamming work” was chosen by 29% of the women. “Women cannot give equal attention to work due to personal responsibilities at home” was seen as another significant bias. Women on maternity seen as being about to quit as well as women not being considered for senior leadership roles were other biases cited by more respondents.

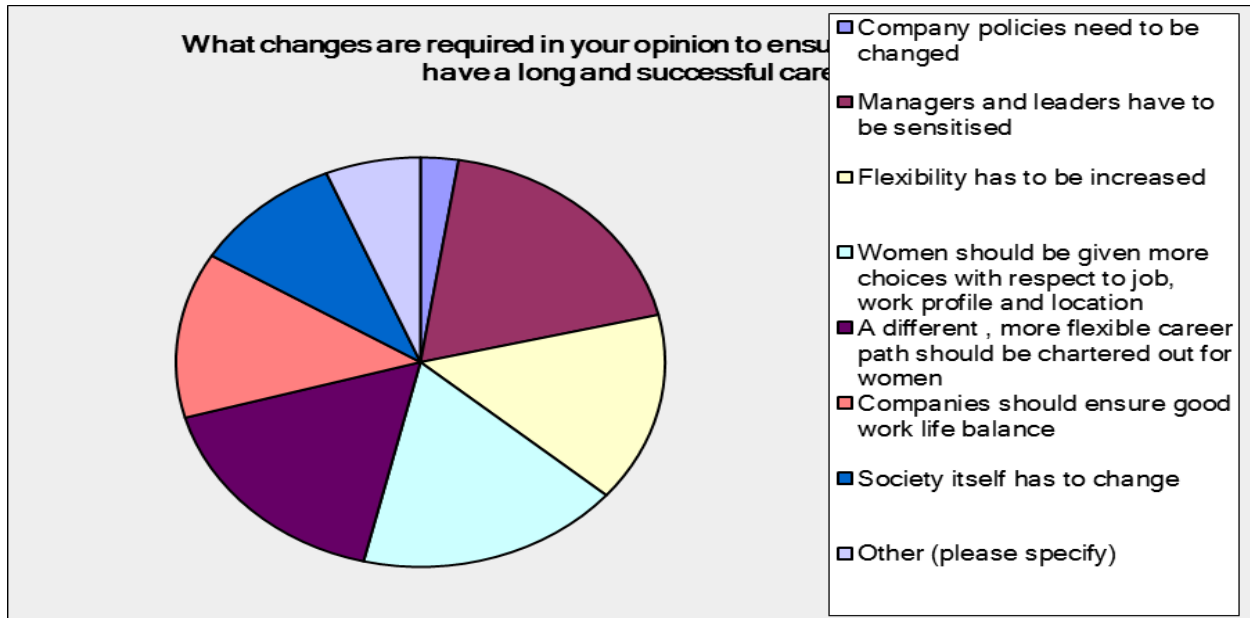
Q10: I quit my previous job because



I quit my previous job because	
Answer Options	Response Percent
I was not being promoted though I deserved it	6.1%
I was stagnating in the job	11.7%
My salary was lower than market norm	8.0%
The work environment was stressful	8.0%
I did not get along with my Manager	4.9%
It was not a good place for women	1.8%
I did not feel safe there	0.0%
I had to travel a lot	2.5%
I was not learning anything new	5.5%
The only reason I quit was that I got a great job opportunity	12.9%
Work life balance not possible	6.1%
Lack of work flex policies	1.8%
Post Maternity - Had to take care of my kids	3.1%
My husband got transferred	5.5%
Post marriage - my in laws family did not support my work	0.6%
Other (please specify)	21.5%

Commentary : We wanted to know why each respondent quit her previous job as an indicator of current trends. A variety of reasons were stated with the “better job prospects” or “stagnation at job” stated as main reason to quit by around 12% each.

Q11: What changes are required in your opinion to ensure working women can have a long and successful career?



What changes are required in your opinion to ensure working women can have a long and successful career?

Answer Options	Response Per cent
Company policies need to be changed	2.5%
Managers and leaders have to be sensitised	18.8%
Flexibility has to be increased	15.0%
Women should be given more choices with respect to job, work profile and location	17.5%
A different, more flexible career path should be chartered out for women	16.9%
Companies should ensure good work life balance	13.1%
Society itself has to change	10.0%
Other (please specify)	6.3%

Commentary:

Finally we concluded the survey by asking the respondents to come up with a wish list of changes they feel would enable working women to have a long and fulfilling career. In order of importance the top five changes were:

1. Managers and leaders have to be sensitised to issues of working women
2. Women should be given more choices with respect to job, work profile and location.
3. A different, more flexible career path should be chartered out for women.
4. Flexibility at work has to be increased
5. Companies should ensure healthy work life balance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings from the round table discussions with senior leaders and results of the on-line survey, together throw light on the entire gamut of factors relevant to this issue. Each aspect and question was studied qualitatively and in detail to come to a proper understanding.

On the basis of the two sets of data we realized that retention of women employees is an issue which cuts across all organisations and is a focus area for them with senior management committed to address this concern. As the corporate world is a subset of the society, change is taking place albeit at a slow and steady pace.

The round table discussions highlighted that working women at each particular stage in life face somewhat similar challenges. However, the ways and means used to address this issue vary widely across organisations. Several innovative methods are being employed to retain valuable talent. With growing experience, women face significant changes in their personal & professional lives as well as a change in key motivators. Herein lays the need for women employees to take cognizance of these changes and prepare themselves well in order to ensure smooth transitions in their career. In turn the environment has to be conducive and flexible to accommodate their changing needs. A lot of effort is still required to create a healthy culture but fortunately the gender piece is already a significant part of the inclusion agenda in most large establishments. However, the momentum has to be maintained and the message needs to be reinforced constantly.

The survey brought out that dual responsibility of work and home combined with inadequate flexibility remained the most often cited stress factor. There is a noticeable change in team dynamics with emergence of women leaders. A need for continued sensitization of teams and team managers is emerging as more significant than further requirement of change in policies. Fair policy *administration* is the real issue now.

Another important point is the increasing assertiveness of women workers. As is probably always true in a move away from patriarchal culture, this assertiveness is being seen as 'aggressive' (viewed as a negative only for women). Conversely, not being assertive enough is often seen as "being weak". The working woman has to decide whether effectiveness be compromised on the altar of perception or not.

An encouraging trend was that a significant number of women across functions and experience reported feeling either no stress at all or said there was **"nothing I can't handle"** at work. This is a refreshing attitude indeed!

Authors



Priyanka Awasthy is co-founder of Biz Divas Foundation and Altavis Consulting. She has over fifteen years' experience in banks and multinationals. As an avid campaigner for inclusive leadership and a firm advocate of women's economic empowerment, she develops and facilitates programs that sensitize organisations to the needs of diverse groups. She is involved in research projects on topics relevant to inclusion and is a qualified qualitative researcher. Altavis Consulting is a Diversity and Inclusion consultancy supporting entire employee life cycle including engaging and retaining talent.

Biz Divas Foundation advocates inclusive growth within organisations and helps senior women leaders reach leadership and board level positions. Biz Divas is the CSR initiative of Altavis. Priyanka is also a Mentor with FICCI Swayam for women entrepreneurs. She is also Trustee on board of Sudeva sports organisation.



Garvita Chaturvedi is a Women's Coach and Human Resources Professional with direct and in-depth exposure to a wide swathe of Services industries, within marque MNCs like GE and MetLife. Her current focus is to leverage the breadth of her corporate experience to work with leaders, teams and organizations on a variety of inclusion efforts. Earlier, in the corporate sector, Garvita worked in various HR functional roles across IT/ ITES, Financial Services and Insurance sectors. She also led multiple process improvement efforts, gaining proficiency in methodologies like Six Sigma, Lean, Change Acceleration and Project Management. She is most passionate about working with women in various stages of the employee lifecycle as well as transitioning or growing entrepreneurs.

OUR TEAM

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