

Successful women hr in india assignment

[Business](#), [Management](#)



The women of India Inc. have proved in more ways than one that their sensibilities and leadership acumen are here to stay and pave the way for more women to make it to the top of the corporate ladder. On the occasion of International Women’s Day Women In HR As people management practices in corporate India come of age, organisations, today, are displaying a propensity towards employing more women in their HR departments as compared to men. After all, managing a large number of people, keeping them motivated and listening to their grievances are all a part of the modern HR manager’s job.

And it’s a known fact that listening and empathising come more naturally to women, right? From home managers to human resource managers, these top women in HR have proved that there is no one who can do it better. [pic] Mandeep Maitra, country head-HR & corporate services (admin, infrastructure & CSR), HDFC Bank Ltd “ Like everyone else, I had the same apprehensions, the same concerns about being accepted, heard and majorly, about work-life balance. ” I was all set out to be a “ shrink”... ..and therefore had taken up Psychology Honors in college.

One of my aunts was a clinical psychologist and her insights on people and ability to make a difference fascinated me. When I came to Mumbai from Delhi for my post graduation, I learnt about the Personnel Management and Industrial Relations Specialization (as it was known in those days). With my keen interest in people and psychology combined with a strong call to make a difference, I soon realised that HR and I were made for each other. It was the most natural choice for me and I must add here that I love what I do and haven’t looked back a day!

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I believe that empathy is the key to understanding people... However, I have seen some male managers who empathise very well and some women who can be insensitive. Equally true is the fact that some people relate better with women managers and others with male managers. I think we are moving beyond typecasting people into professions based on gender. It is especially true of HR where some of the leading HR professionals in the country are men. But looking at the large number of women opting for HR in recent years, I am confident we are likely to see many capable women in the country as HR heads going forward.

Women are blessed with excellent multi-tasking abilities... Most women are gifted with tremendous resilience and are equipped with a great quality to have to survive the corporate world. Two, they can empathise with people well and tend to collaborate more often than not. And finally, they multi-task with ease. And these are primarily the most essential personality traits of an HR manager. There are many challenges to being a woman leader... Like everyone else, I had the same apprehensions, the same concerns about being accepted, heard and majorly, about work-life balance.

Being a perfectionist, I strive for excellence in all spheres. I overcame it by being an excellent time manager and never being afraid to speak my mind. I lived by my convictions and went after my career goals. I learned about the business and worked so hard at everything I did that I became accepted as a business leader, not just an HR leader. My family means everything to me and I ensure I spend quality time with them. When my daughter calls, I take the call irrespective of who I'm with and people have come to respect that.

It is not about whether the glass ceiling exists or not... The truth is that more women need to pursue their ambitions and rise to the echelons in their career. You have to make sacrifices and invest the time and energy required to grow. There are women who have made it to the top and other women should interact with and learn from them. It is wonderful to see how the Generation Y speaks up and asks a lot of questions. I think they are a lot more confident of themselves and it will be interesting to see how they shape the HR arena.

I would only like to say that it is very important to have integrity and be who you are. Have the courage to stand up for your beliefs and convictions. If you manage to remain authentic and true to yourself, you are bound to have a great career. My HR style Fortunately, as a bank, we weren't impacted by the economic slowdown last year. However, the timing of the downturn coincided with the merger integration process of the bnk with Centurion Bank of Punjab (the largest merger in the private banking space).

One of the most challenging tasks I had was to address “ town-halls” (large gatherings of employees) on key issues like impact of re-organisation on jobs, revised branding, ensuring everyone had a job and that the process was fair and transparent, etc. Mergers create tremendous anxiety and uncertainty in any way and communicating such decisions on behalf of the organisation in front of such large groups required tremendous courage, presence of mind and resilience. It was a real ‘ high’ when employees appreciated my honest and candid approach to resolving issues. [pic]

Madhavi Lall, regional head-HR, India & SA, Standard Chartered Bank “ I would advise job aspirants to be driven by their passion for a field and not merely by prevailing stereotypes. ” The beginning... While I pursued Mathematics in college, I always harboured an interest in psychology and human behaviour and therefore, chose HR as a profession. When I applied for my MBA after college, I was clear I wanted to specialise in HR. I wouldn't say that gender is a differentiating factor when it comes to excelling in any profession... Hence, it may not be correct to infer a stereotype that ‘ women make better HR managers than men’.

Each individual would have unique qualities that define who they are and such elements may also manifest in their professional endeavours – and those need not and are not gender defined. The three skills women are equipped with that make them great HR managers... • Their ability to connect with people at an emotional level. • Their ability to drive higher inclusiveness. • Their ability to manage multiple stakeholders and multi-task with relative ease. Follow your heart

I would advise job aspirants to be driven by their passion for a field and not merely by prevailing stereotypes of what constitutes a ‘ suitable’ profession for a woman. I feel it would be incorrect to say that the concept of the glass ceiling has completely turned into a myth... I think it still exists in some pockets of the corporate world. However, in the last few years, with the emergence of corporate professionalism and organisations proactively driving the diversity and inclusion ideologies, things will be better in the future. My HR style

In Standard Chartered, we follow a leadership and team management framework called KFCI (Know Me / Focus Me / Care about me / Inspire me) – an approach that helps in interactions with staff to build engagement and enable high performance within teams. I strongly believe in this philosophy and my leadership and team management style also reflects this. In general, the style I use during crisis is to – be decisive, keep people involved, communicate openly and honestly and as much in advance as possible. This helps in providing people with a sense of direction and involvement.

For instance, during the recent economic slowdown, we proactively launched an Employee Assistance Programme and encouraged staff and their families to leverage this tool. In fact, we also encouraged functions to ride the storm by being cautiously optimistic – for instance, we positioned the value proposition of providing exposure within the Standard Chartered Group by encouraging international staff to come for stints to India and vice versa. This was a good way to balance the economic sentiments by way of providing opportunities within our area of influence. [pic]

Saagarika Rai, chief people officer, Reliance BIG Entertainment “ I have seen women battling it out with pregnancy, childbirth, child rising, heart break and handling families; at the same time, also being a fulltime career woman. ” In my opinion, it all comes down to competence, emotional intelligence, positive attitude and not gender You can't really say one or the other gender is inherently better at this. The common belief is typically, when comparing managers; the dialogue is framed as men's command-and-control style versus women's team-building or consensus approach.

In short, if men can be ego driven, women too can be ego blinded. Although women certainly have the inherent quality to be strong minded but soft hearted, exhibit a high level of integrity and possess the ability to overcome obstacles and find balance in life, some of us also tend to take minor things very personally and are not matured to handle complex business situations. To start with, successful women should not use being a woman as an excuse for not succeeding... It is easy to resort to because –I am-a-woman mentality when things are not going your way.

Instead, take pride in your abilities and stand up for your competence and strength. Women entering work today do realistically accept that the entire society, is not restraining and constraining, nor are all the men. We accept if we want equal opportunity, we have to perform equally, so it will be wrong to say we don't get the opportunity. But then, it also depends on how efficiently one uses this opportunity; although, I don't deny there are some elements which are anchored in archaic and traditional social structures. My HR style...

There were many challenges and I moved on positively and today, when I look back at my experiences with Jet, RPG and Bharti, and at Reliance BIG, I simply say each experience has been unique and excellent; I proudly say that most of the HR practices introduced by me are still practiced in my past organisations; most of them have been replicated across the group and in other industries, as best practice. In short, you learn with time that not all decisions you make can be right and one failure can never fail you as a person. Women today have carved distinguished places for themselves in all spheres of life...

They have taken risks and have achieved success in almost all spheres; viz. swam across the English Channel, reached the space and even become the Prime Ministers and Presidents of the country. But the irony is we also still hear that women do not get what they deserve at their workplace. I will be politically correct if I say the phenomenon of “ glass ceiling” doesn’t exist in the corporate world, creating an artificial barrier in a women’s career. Some of us usually suffer from the fear of success phenomenon and this often results in the taking a step backwards in our career aspiration, often to maintain domestic harmony.

However, things have improved and a woman’s ability to enter and succeed in management is unquestioned. The challenge lies in trying to be the best at the workplace, trying to be a super mom and the world’s best wife... I have learnt that the key to work-life balance lies in time management and setting realistic expectations. And of course, be content with the choice I have made and enjoy quality time than quantity. Enjoy every moment at home as well as at work. Also, continuously reminding myself that I chose this life for myself and I have to be happy with it.

I have come across different women who have struggled to make their presence felt and are successful in the corporate world. They are resourceful, determined, dynamic, resilient and compassionate. I have seen them battling it out with pregnancy, childbirth, child rising, heart break and handling families at the same time being a fulltime career woman. In today’s corporate scenario, women have better opportunities than they ever did in

the earlier millenniums; however there is a need to create more spaces, opportunities and interface for women, with dignity.

Women play multiple roles and they can evolve into dynamic roles given the education and more so as they enter the work streams. [pic] Iti Kumar, vice president, people development, GlobalLogic “ When I entered the industry, I had to manage both, my married life and prove myself as a strong HR professional. ” Since childhood, I have been a social individual... I knew my core competence was to enter a field where I could interact with people, understand their challenges, help them grow, coach them and provide them guidance and keep them motivated. This always motivated me to pursue HR as a profession.

Besides, I feel I am blessed with a unique knack of reading people’s mind based on their statements, body language and gestures. This is one trait of mine, which always helps me in my profession. Women listen... It is a common fact that women do possess the natural traits of listening, understanding issues and empathising with people. These traits are imbibed in most women in our country as this is the way we have grown up.

Gradually, these personality traits get converted into core skills when the same woman performs the role of an HR professional.

This helps female HR managers to engage employees effectively. It also helps them to play effective roles as a friend, co-worker, mentor, and a counselor so that they can motivate people. Besides, I also feel that female HR managers are far effective as compared to HR male managers as the mentioned traits help them connect with people and help resolve their

grievances and empathise and make them feel comfortable in interaction. At an age where women today focus on career and plan marriage at a later stage, I began my career in exactly the opposite direction...

When I entered the industry, I had to manage both, my married life and prove myself as a strong HR professional. That was the time when you have the zeal and passion to grow and reach the top and it was a daunting task to do both. When a woman has the responsibility of kids, it's very important for that woman to understand how to prioritise one's life. Time management and prioritisation, both have made me reach the stage where I wanted to see myself when I began my career. With the help of an understanding family and motivation and support, only can a woman rise.

Also, peace of mind, patience, self motivation and inner strength help you to remain level-headed and does not make you succumb to the pressure of being on top. Wanna be a female HR manager? Women job aspirants who want to pursue their career in HR and would like to make a mark in this field need to possess patience, good communication, interpersonal skills, assertiveness, self confidence and a positive attitude. She should have the ability to listen to people, understand them and have a knack to attend to people's problems.

Professionally, they need to understand employees as humans rather than resources and should understand the importance and value of various employee friendly policies. Few critical values like integrity, honesty and team work also need to be there in women if she chooses HR as a profession. My HR style At GlobalLogic, we understand the importance of sports and

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fitness as an important aspect of work-life balance. Therefore, our Employee Activity Club (EAC) was executed that comprises core groups of sports, culture, music, etc.

The sports group of EAC regularly organises sports events like table tennis championship, badminton and cricket tournaments, basketball games, carrom and chess tournaments and various other in-house events like Chinese Whispers, 60 Minutes Roller Coaster events, Antakshri competitions, Tambola competitions, etc. in almost all the locations of GlobalLogic worldwide. From Football World Cup to Twenty-Twenty world cup, the special telecasts are occasions when all our employees gather at the cafeteria to cheer for India and catch the action live on the large screen, which we arrange to telecast these matches.

GlobalLogic's Soccer Team won Airtel Soccer tournament defeating other participants. Even our CEO and senior management participate actively in the sports tournaments which are a part of our management meetings. Sporting success also impacts on working relationships. Employees often mention that it helps them to get along better with colleagues and facilitates breaking down of barriers with senior colleagues. Sports often help to build productive relationships among teams, especially when our teams are spread across geographies. [pic] Sujaya Banerjee, chief learning officer, Essar Group Women are naturally 'nurturants' given the roles they play personally, (wife, mother, daughter), have the ability to connect emotionally with ease and have an intuitive ability to connect with the unsaid/unspoken. " The beginning... I was clear headed towards an MBA program when I took

Industrial Psychology as an elective at graduation. I knew I had my calling! I was fascinated with studies on the psychology of people at work and intuitively knew I would be good at this. I took HR as a specialisation at MBA school when it was not a popular career option.

Women are naturally 'nurturants'... ..given the roles they play personally, (wife, mother, daughter), have the ability to connect emotionally with ease and have an intuitive ability to connect with the unsaid/unspoken. All these strengths enable them to become successful HR managers. Yes, I had many apprehensions in the early stages as I went up a steep learning curve which is always stressful... I was deeply committed and very demanding about the quality of my assignment and making a mark in a very male dominated world.

I overcame most of this by remaining focused on my learning, committed to delivering a great job and never asking for any concessions on my performance by virtue of having responsibilities as a wife/mother. I have always been simply committed to my own learning and see my career as a journey of actualisation... Being a student of management, I believe one must manage the home well to focus on achieving on the job without domestic stress or dilemmas. Work/ Life balance is a challenge, particularly with the demands of today's workplaces which are complex and fast-paced.

Effective management of time, a health and exercise regime and ensuring family vacations are never compromised are key to ensuring a successful career and family happiness. My HR style I have very successfully driven the Coaching & Mentoring initiative within Essar Group under the theme of " Find

the Guru within". This has enabled us to integrate large numbers of new talent that joined the organisation by anchoring them with a Guru or Mentor. This has enabled the leaders to do their true leadership work by enabling us to build a culture of nurturing and offering the binding glue for retention.

By creating a community of 650 committed coaches/mentors, we have enabled the organisation to become a learning organisation that is committed to developing capabilities. Another important initiative I drove actively during the slowdown was the ' Fulcrum Employee Engagement' workshops for line managers. This was a crucial and timely input for acknowledging the key role of the supervisor in delivering the employer value propositions of the organisation to the employees. [pic]

Seema Arora Nambiar, director - people resources, McDonald's India (South & West) " We empathise and this comes from the fact that by nature, women are the ones more geared to understand and compromise in their personal lives and hence, have the ability to make hard calls fairly unemotionally when needed yet balance with support when needed. " ' People', as a subject, was always something I was passionate about... I have had line experience in various parts of the business, including the operations role and found that the people function was a natural culmination of the skills attained.

I also feel that in the end, people/intellectual capital will be the only key differentiator any business will have that separates good organisations from the average ones. In my view, one of the key competencies that an HR manager must have is a strong sensing capability... Having said that, there is

a need for the person in that position to have strong empathy yet not get emotionally involved. I am unsure if that is specific to the gender and I have, in my career, met as many great male HR leaders as female ones. As mentioned, the ability to sense (simply put, gut about people), empathise with problems (this comes from the fact that by nature, women are the ones more geared to understand and compromise in their personal lives and hence, have the ability to make hard calls fairly unemotionally when needed yet balance with support when needed) and communication tailored to match the situation, are a few traits that make women better HR leaders. I would like to give the following tips to women HR aspirants...

- Understand the complexities of the labour/people market you operate in prior to taking on the job. Have a passion for wanting to develop people at all levels without feeling the loss of power; HR is more than personnel management - you shape the future of all the human capital in the organisation and that has far reaching financial impacts on both, the short- and the long-term.
- Understand the business you operate in to ensure that solutions are relevant. In HR, while concept is important, tailoring the application of the concept to suit the environment you operate in is even more critical.

The biggest challenge was inheriting a role that people are wary of as it impacts them personally... They normally believe that trusting people in HR is dangerous as it could impact their performance/salaries and position in the organisation. Not being used to the wariness as I have been with the organisation for a while prior to taking the HR role, it was tough to accept the change and then work towards changing that perception. My HR style

Managing people and ensuring productivity levels were maintained and targets met during the slowdown period was truly challenging.

Since there were job cuts and a decrease in compensation/remuneration throughout the industry, the sentiment internally amongst the employees was very low. We did not have job cuts/pay cuts, etc but managing the workforce and motivating them during such a period was indeed challenging - as there was uncertainty around. We could not afford a dip in our productivity levels. I communicated the same through various sessions across different audiences through a very simple statement of facts, thus displaying a transparent correlation between organisation performance and the individual performance (bell curve).

Post that, with the other functional people managers, having sessions with a sample of people to continue to take feedback and also constantly communicate the organisations' plans for the year so as to ensure they understand the company's vision and their role in it, was also vital. [pic]
Rajita Singh, head - HR, Broadridge Financial Solutions (India) Private Limited " You can achieve what you want to - it's about building your ' own brand' and there is no harm bragging about how good you are. " While pursuing MBA...

I was not too sure if HR is better than Marketing and fortunately my institute provided me with a dual specialisation that theoretically showed me both worlds. Post completion of my Masters, I decided to go ahead with HR as I wanted to try it out. I was smitten by it in less than a month of joining Wilco International Pvt Ltd. The impact that HR, as a function, has is huge and this

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realisation came to me very early in my career and since then, there has been no looking back. " It's a matter of perspective... I wouldn't say that women are better than men at this and that.

To me, it's about core competency. For some women, recruitment happens naturally while for some, back office HR operations are good and for some, meeting people, catering to grievances is natural and the same applies to men as well. It's more about maturity, handling stress, counseling, etc. I have seen a good mix of men and women play this role fairly well. The time is now - don't let go off the moment... You can achieve what you want to - it's about building your ' own brand' and there is no harm bragging about how good you are.

We can influence easily and should capitalise on it, especially as HR managers and facilitate the progression of an organisation towards success. I did have a few apprehensions in the beginning... .. whether I will be able to achieve my goals, because the natural tendency is to say that if I have eight of the 10 ticks for a role, I was able to take more risks and progress, thanks to my mentor and boss V. Laxmikanth, MD, Broadridge India, who has been a great support and responsible in getting me to the position that I am at today. He proves that with respect, trust, empowerment, nothing is impossible.

Women Power Trained to excel [pic]Priya Kumar - CEO & chief facilitator, Priya Kumar's Training Systems (PKTS) has not only proved her mettle as a trainer, speaker and coach but also has the credit of writing a best-selling book ' I am Another You' to herself. The journey so far... My journey until this

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day has been a rather long one. I started working by teaching my friends at school. And that grew into a movement as in the nine years to follow, I taught 1900 students. Even when I got into training and became a speaker and coach, I always focused into becoming an example of inspiration.

I feel that words don't inspire as much as actions do. When I authored my first book ' I am Another You', I stepped into the literary field with the humility of a first time author and not with the arrogance of a successful corporate trainer! And that humility opened doors that drove my book to the best seller status in less than six months. What I take pride in, is my journey to reaching where I have come today. I know there is yet a long way to go and I know as long as I keep growth, contribution and excitement as a part of my agenda in all that I do, I will get some place worthy of my own doing.

The corporate world is mainly male dominated and that sometimes can intimidate women entrepreneurs... Fortunately for me, since the training industry comprises of largely men, I came as a refreshing surprise! I have never experienced any kind of discrimination for being a woman entrepreneur and I have felt encouragement from people because my effort, cause and intention was genuine. That has literally been one of the keys to my success. I guess if your attitude is right, if your work adds value and your style of dealing with people is humble, then people accept you with more eagerness than defense.

My greatest achievement I guess the person that I have become as a result of my work is my greatest achievement. Someone once said ' you become what you repeatedly do' and my work revolves around creating possibilities,

pursuing excellence, moving beyond boundaries, delivering results, discovering your own potential and re-inventing yourself! I then, am the greatest beneficiary of my work. Women's Day to me is... Women's day is a reminder to rejoice my womanhood. Being women, we are so occupied about tending and serving others that we forget to celebrate and recognise our own divinity.

Women's Day is a day which urges us to reflect upon our own greatness and to acknowledge our power as creators and to re-think the limitations we have bought ourselves into. 'IT' is in [pic]Suganthi Shivkumar, MD, ASEAN and India, Informatica started her career after graduating with a degree in Accountancy and a CPA qualification. She took the well-travelled path, beginning with public accounting/auditing, financial and management accounting at the KPMG and Sembawang Shipyard where she ran the finance department of a subsidiary.

Later on, she became a lecturer in a local Polytechnic and joined Hyperion Solutions as a lead trainer in 1997 which was her first encounter with the software industry. • The journey... I started my career with teaching organisational behaviour and shifted into consulting. It is during consulting that I experienced the power of change and helping people make that change. I worked with Godfrey Phillips and Cairn India before joining Schneider Electric. It is at Schneider, that I felt the passion and intensity of the company towards diversity, respect for the individual and integrity. The gender imbalance in any profession creates some glass ceilings for the fairer sex... In my opinion, some jobs lend themselves a lot more to gender

imbalance (engineering, IT, etc) than others (banking and finance, teaching, etc). However, every woman who chooses her career in either type needs to rise above and firstly destroy any ' mental glass ceilings' she perceives.

Having said that, I have always believed, challenges are all self-made and to some extent, a creation of what has traditionally happened. Fewer women remain in the workforce for a variety of reasons and consequently there are fewer women leaders no matter what industry we are in. I truly believe that no matter the gender, the most successful persons and leaders need the passion to succeed, gain the respect of the people they lead, through example and strong proven track record, and most importantly be inspirational leaders. • Globally, on an average, about three per cent of top CEOs are women... Demonstrating mastery of your area, dependability, reliability, steadiness, decisiveness, leadership by example and inspiring the team become pivotal in managing different people, men and women alike, are vital. Great results are an outcome of great leaders... Being a minority naturally puts pressure to prove one's worthiness and to earn respect. Hard work, the urge to try and to succeed, capitalising on opportunities when presented, dispelling any notions of a glass ceiling, never giving importance to gender differences, etc are all critical success factors when building one's career path or job. In that sense, I have always been blessed with the good fortune of working with organisations that encourage gender equality.

At the end of it, great results are an outcome of great leaders plus great teams. Ladies only [pic]Dr Shalini Sarin, HR Director, Schneider Electric India

• The journey... I started my career with teaching organisational behaviour and shifted into consulting. It is during consulting that I experienced the

power of change and helping people make that change. I worked with Godfrey Phillips and Cairn India before joining Schneider Electric. It is at Schneider, that I felt the passion and intensity of the company towards diversity, respect for the individual and integrity. The challenges I faced... and managed to a large extent to overcome was the perception about HR itself. The more HR was perceived by line managers as a support function, the greater became my resolve to change it. It required a deeper understanding of strategic and business understanding and then to create a partnership with an empathic understanding of business challenges. This is always a tight roped balancing act. Too much tilt would dilute the value of HR and too little would isolate it from business functions. Surprisingly, I never faced any challenges working with men.

Though I don't wish to generalise but I never felt the presence of a glass ceiling. • My greatest achievement... .. is effectiveness that is making things happen. I have consistently maintained execution of focus and often responded with flexibility to shifting priorities and rapid change. This has developed a strong bond with my peers leading to mutual trust. • Women's Day to me... represents equality, mutual respect and interdependence between man and woman. We believe in diversity and Women's Day is celebrated where contribution made by women employees is appreciated and applauded.

Colouring success [pic]Ranjana Kanti, founder, India Redefined and director, Clay n' Color She founded a movement called India Redefined in 2009. She has worked for various social causes independently. Free tuition to children

of illiterate parents, awareness programmes in slums, working for visually handicapped, teaching children of migrant workers, street children and helping riot affected people are some of the activities she has been involved in. • The urge to ‘do something’ In my early years, I got a chance to go to my house-helper Kamla’s slum ‘basti’.

It was then that I saw this part of India so closely. That day, when I was nine years old, standing in Kamla’s slum, seeing the life of a person who keeps our house so clean, I was just more than shocked. I had never seen such filthy atmosphere. I wanted to channelise my strong urge to ‘do something’, which is one of the reason why I am doing what I am doing. We all have seen lots of trauma in our lives. I learnt about death by experiencing the death of my mother in a road accident. I was then 25 years old and she must be 48.

My experience in life is that when one is exposed to painful situations, we have to turn those experiences become useful and create positive things out of them. • Success breeds motivation... Love for India, passion to be the catalyst of change, belief in your actions, trust in others to become as committed and being able to act, to change yourself and others around you are critical success factors. In my opinion, it is not enough to use one’s economic freedom only. It is nice and generous for people to donate money, but that alone cannot be satisfying.

There needs to be a sense of involvement. • Women’s Day is an initiative to break the stereotypes. Looking back at history, leaders are stereotypically viewed as male. In respect of a few women leaders like Joan of Arc

and Jhansi Ki Rani, who made it to the pages of History, their gender has always been noted or made an issue. To break the stereotypes, strong action and force is needed. Women's Day is not (or should not be) a feminist initiative. A Woman Of Substance [pic]With more than 30 years of experience in the field of law, Kranti Sathe, is a name to reckon with.

From handling film industry clients to working for the upliftment of women, she has done it all. On the occasion of Women's Day, we talk to her to find out more about her • I have been practicing law since 1984... I got my license in 1977, but since my kids were young then, I didn't want to miss out on my kids' childhood, so once I was sure they were old enough, I started my practice. I come from a family of lawyers. My grandfather was a famous lawyer and used to practise from Nagpur. My husband is a lawyer, so this field was nothing new to me.

I used to see my grandfather talk about his cases, his clients and how he used to handle his proceedings. So I guess, it just came naturally to me. I have been practising family law since the start of my career. • I was actively involved in various women's organisation... .. working for the betterment of the women and fighting for their rights, even though I wasn't practising law till 1984. In 1973, I also contested the BMC elections, though unsuccessfully. I was active in the electoral practice. And even though I lost the election, I didn't give up and just decided to further my cause and ideas. Being a family lawyer... I am used to seeing home's breaking almost everyday. At first, I used to always feel that probably the couples coming to us should try to work it out, after all marriage is not child's play, is it? But then, people don't

come to us for counselling; it is always when they have made up their minds about the relationship. So I guess with the years I have also tuned myself to not get too emotional when I am handling any divorce case; you have to become like that after a certain point or else you won't be able to do justice to your clients. • Apart from practicing law...

I am actively involved in various other programmes as well like environment issues and women upliftment. I contested the BMC elections again in 1997 and this time I won and was a corporator for five years. At that time, I was constantly working on issues regarding environment, cleanliness and even today I am actively involved with causes like afforestation and water conservation. I am also in the governing council of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), for two terms. RMK is a committee set up by the central government which gives micro-credit to women to set up their own business, so that they can be independent.

I pursue all this with all my energy to get out of my daily routine of being a lawyer. I know with my law background and experience, I can do something in these fields. So, I give my heart and soul into it. Though I am 60 now and a doting grandmother... I have no near future plans of retiring. I strongly feel that the administration system has to speed up, as it is at times really slow. Also, a more practical approach needs to be adopted with terms to technicalities. Some of the technicalities are so vast, that the human aspect is totally forgotten and the client is the one to suffer.

Banking on success [pic]Neetu Bhatia, ex- investment banker, recruiter, and current CEO, Co-Founder and Chairman of Kyazoonga. com • The journey Till

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two and a half years ago when I turned entrepreneur, I was an investment banker. I did a small stint as a management consultant with Mackenzie in the beginning. After that I became an investment banker on Wall Street, Lehman Brothers and Bank of Montreal. I was leading their new media - Internet and telecom before I moved to India. I've done 40 billion dollars worth of transactions.

The creation of Kyazoonga was very personal. I had no plans to return to India that time. I was pretty well ensconced as an investment banker but the idea came when I was visiting my family in the summer of 2006. Movies and cricket are the two main forms of entertainment in India and yet there was no main aggregated way of selling tickets. Thus, both of us quit our careers and began Kyazoonga. com. • Challenges faced At a place like Wall Street, you don't tend to think of yourself as any different from the others around you. Of course, it's mostly a male dominated place.

However, having worked there for 12 years - my personal philosophy is that if you think you're different, you'll be treated differently. But if you don't and you work as part of the team, whether male or female, then you won't be treated any differently. You need to be one with the rest of the team. • Today, we're about 50% women in the organisation I've not had a lot of experience with companies here. But today, we're about 50% women in our organisation. This is not because we've sought women out or anything but we have a healthy environment. Hiring more women is increasingly becoming the case.

My guess would be that equality comes easier after you get to a certain level. It is different at junior levels. I believe it's easier in corporate India to move upward than abroad because people treat you with respect as you're one of a few. It's easier to get recognised and noticed. • People respect you for your professionalism I don't think there ought to be a difference if you know what you're talking about, and if you're a good team leader. People respect you for your professionalism, intellectual capabilities and your ability to deliver.

The queen of the ramp! [pic]Ritu Kumar, one of India's foremost designers has developed a unique style of her own, reflecting the ancient traditions of Indian craftsmanship in a contemporary vocabulary. With a background in art, history and museology (that enriched her horizons), Kumar's understanding of ancient designs and the innovative use of traditional crafts has created a new classicism. I was embarrassed by how little I knew about my country... While studying in the Lady Irwing college, I was lucky enough to get a scholarship to study in America.

In a way, this was the phase where my actual education started in the direction of the interests I wanted to pursue. I studied the history of art and drama and that actually steered the course of my future. I returned to India with the realisation of how little I knew of my own country and heritage. I had been quizzed about India while in America and that had pushed me to make an extra effort to know and understand my country better. Initially, I was embarrassed by how little I knew about my country. So I was actually forced into studying about India and its rich past.

I began my work with four hand-block printers and two tables in a small village near Kolkata forty years ago. I was the first woman to introduce the 'boutique' culture in India under the brand name 'Ritu'. I did scale up the business but not without the initial teething troubles... Even my small factory in Kolkata started having a troubled union. There was a strike and CPI(M) did a closure on it, despite it being a cottage industry. We couldn't figure out how we could face a closure of such intensity but they managed to get us to shut shop. So we moved to Delhi.

In 1966, my first boutique opened in Delhi in Defence Colony, which also happened to be the first ever boutique in the capital. But something kept taking me back to Kolkata. I kept re-visiting the villages and realised there was little work there and the people I knew were slipping economically. So I collected enough courage and started the Kolkata store again – this time the people who had worked with me earlier started managing the store and it's still on. When I started off, 'fashion' was almost non-existent... People like me and Rajiv Sethi were barefoot doctors pursuing craftwork – all of us working in different disciplines.

People like Kamla Devi Chatopadyay and Pupul Jaykar would show us the way. They would tell us to go to some remote place where we could find a printing village and our gang would start working in the village, incorporating their craft forms into our work and calling. There was no glamour and no magnified mention of the work that we did in contemporary media. It was a simple means of livelihood – just another calling. I was asked to participate in

an exhibition mounted at the Lalit Kala Academy by Swantantra Prakash. The theme was researched contemporary versions of patterned fabrics of India.

I was in awe of the invitation and left Kolkata with the few scarves and saris that I had designed reinterpreting an older genre. Those were the days when, if you did get a mention in any of the media articles that were published about the exhibition, it would only be focused on the zardosi and the art form. There was no recognition of the designer or the brand and no one got page three rocking just because they were designing costumes.

Women Friendly HR policies Work from home Many organisations have now introduced work from home policies for their employees, giving them enough time to create a perfect work-life balance.

Here are a few organisations that have put in place some great options to work from home

- 24/7 Customer “ We believe that women are a huge asset to any company. A conscious effort is being taken to encourage women to re-join the organisation after their sabbatical. To support and encourage women employees to manage their work-life better, initiatives like the option to make lateral moves across the company, preferences to rejoin after long leaves and even flexible timings on specific requirements are being provided.

Work from home option is a practice that is being driven to benefit the employee, as it caters to her professional as well as personal needs,” informs Nina Nair, VP - HR, 24/7 Customer.

- Cisco “ Cisco realises that women need flexibility at various stages of their career. While maternity leaves and leave of absence are typically available in large multinationals, the current

research by National Centre for Women in IT (Women in IT: the Facts by Ashcraft & Blithe) indicates that we have to make flexible scheduling and work-life programs a norm.

We realise that offering formal policies may not be enough but we also need to implement flexible practices at the executive and supervisory levels. Our COO, Wim Elfrink, is a role model for us and often says, ‘ don’t commute to compute’. What he means by this is to leverage our technology to be productive and innovative and that one doesn’t necessarily have to be in office to work. In India, we are in the process of regionalising and implementing our global flexible work practices policies.

Telecommuting, flexible schedules and part-time work are all part of our culture,” shares Tracy Ann Curtis, inclusion & diversity champion, Asia Pacific & Japan, Cisco. • CSC India “ We have a tele working policy, an alternative work arrangement that allows an employee to work part of their day/week work schedule at a location other than a permanent CSC or client facility (example while travelling, at home, or at a multiple CSC client location). This is primarily to encourage work-life balance among a diverse workforce,” informs Laveena Bhatia, senior manager – human resources, CSC India. • IBM IBM recognises the special needs of women employees once they have children and owing to other family commitments. The three flexible options provided to employees, wherever there is an opportunity in the business to do so are individualised work schedules, part time work and work from home,” says Seema Ajwani, chairperson for IBM’s India Women Leadership Council (IWLC) and leader – work force relations and diversity for IBM Daksh.

-Yasmin Taj Extended maternity leave Giving birth to a child is said to be the best thing that can happen to a woman, but motherhood comes with a bag of higher responsibilities, priorities and compromises.

Understanding this very need of a new mother to take care of her new born, many organisations are now giving the options of taking extended maternity leaves to their women employees. • 24/7 Customer: “ At 24/7 Customer, women employees are given maternity leave of 90 days. In case they wish to extend their leave due to childcare, they can. There have been some women employees who have taken a sabbatical for over a year and rejoined as preference is given to ex-employees, when they plan to rejoin,” says Nina Nair, VP – HR, 24/7 Customer. • Broadridge Financial Solutions India Pvt Ltd:

At Broadridge, extended maternity is offered for those associates whose tenure is greater than two years or whose spouse is in armed services. “ Extended maternity helps the women employee to take the required break and resume back, rather than quit the job. This policy has allowed us to leverage on our women leaders,” says Rajita Singh, head HR, Broadridge Financial Solutions India Pvt Ltd. • Cable & Wireless Worldwide: The company has constantly reformed and altered policies for improving and enhancing the existing scenario for women colleagues. A women employee is entitled to three months of paid leave but at Cable & Wireless Worldwide, we give an additional two months leave where the mother has an option to work from home. In today’s competitive environment, when technological advantages are short-lived, we have implemented flexible working time for mothers who have toddlers back home,” shares Sunanda Das, MD, Cable &

Wireless Worldwide. • CSC India: CSC India has India specific policy of extended postnatal care like sabbatical for three months. Coverage lies to extended childcare after the maternity leave. Employee is eligible to get 50 per cent of her gross salary for these three months over and above the maternity leave, under sabbatical for extended post natal,” informs Laveena Bhatia, senior manager – human resources, CSC India. • Symphony Services: “ We provide our women employees with comprehensive maternity policies along with an established support system and network connectivity to stay connected with the company and work during the period of maternity.

At Symphony Services, we have an extended maternity leave policy that can be availed in case of an emergency. The company has the technology infrastructure so that women can work from home when needed, operate on flexible work schedules, especially during the pre- and post-natal periods,” says C Mahalingam, EVP and chief people officer, Symphony Services. - Yasmin Taj Diversity Management With more and more organisations going global, diversity at work is increasingly becoming an integral part of every organisation.

Diversity refers to any perceived difference among people like age, race, religion, profession, sexual orientation, geographic origin and lifestyle.

Diversity is more than equal employment and affirmative action. Diversity management is all about providing a work environment wherein all employees feel valued and empowered. Here’s how a few organisations practice diversity management at workplace. • Accenture India: “ At Accenture, our commitment to diversity and building, sustaining and

expanding an inclusive culture is a key ingredient in helping our clients and company achieve high performance levels.

As our workforce grows and becomes more diverse, this commitment will continue to help us build an inclusive culture of confident individuals who work seamlessly on global teams. Individuals of diverse talents and backgrounds, unified by our core values and common methodologies position Accenture to deliver high performances with the best mix of world-class capabilities and experience,” expresses Rekha Menon, executive director, Accenture India. • Infosys: At Infosys, women are employed in all possible roles, both in technical as well as support functions in all Infosys locations,” says Srimathi, chief diversity officer, Infosys Technologies. Infosys has set up an Infosys Women’s Inclusivity Network (IWIN), which is a forum that looks into the various issues that women face in the organisation like part-time working option, enabling connectivity at home, etc. In addition, to ensure a safe and conducive work environment, Infosys has taken several steps to strengthen processes and training procedures,” explains Srimathi. • IBM: The advancement of women is one of IBM’s global diversity priorities and there are a range of initiatives that are focused on attracting, developing and retaining talent. These programs are positioned as business imperatives and IBM has a long heritage of firsts in the advancement of women journey – IBM’s first woman employee was hired way back in 1899, ‘ Equal Pay for Equal Work’ was declared in 1935, IBM’s first woman Vice President was appointed in 1943, and more,” avers Seema Ajwani, chairperson for IBM’s India Women Leadership Council (IWLC) and leader – work force relations and diversity for IBM Daksh. IBM views workforce diversity as a bridge

between the workplace and the marketplace, a bridge that is founded on four pillars: equal opportunity, affirmative action, work/life balance, and cultural awareness towards building an inclusive work environment. “

Diversity not only widens the source of the talent pool from where we recruit, but also helps our organisation to be more responsive to a broader range of customers and suppliers. The growth of IBM is hugely attributed to the uniqueness of gender, age, origin, culture, religion and race,” she explains.

Wipro Technologies: “ We have articulated and executed a holistic approach towards diversity management, including gender diversity. The gender diversity initiatives are all organised under Women of Wipro (WOW), which is an all organisation wide mandate. There is a formalised structure which begins with our CEOs to our employee volunteers who ensure that WOW remains an important priority,” informs Sunita Rebecca Cherian, general manager, talent engagement and development, Wipro Technologies. •

Standard Chartered Bank: In our India functions, the diversity and inclusion journey started in 2006 with formation of the D Council. It comprised of members across varied functions, hierarchy and geography of Standard Chartered, India, making way for three facets of diversity, viz. , gender, disability and nationality. The India D Council has had an ambitious agenda to secure leadership position in gender diversity. Also, numerous initiatives have been delivered under the sponsorship of the India Management Committee (MANCO) in that direction.

The council spent a few months collating intensive ‘ voice of employees’ with respect to diversity and zeroed in on the D concerns relevant to our women staff in India. Key concerns that came to the fore were – infrastructure for

working women, work-life balance, and barriers to growth. A series of focused group discussions were conducted to understand and address these concerns to help position Standard Chartered as the employer of women's choice," states Rajashree Nambiar, GM – distribution and country champion, diversity and inclusion, Standard Chartered Bank. • Godrej Group: We believe that diversity is a business necessity. Women have exceptional interpersonal skills and multitasking abilities which help them get a competitive edge over others. They bring a lot of enthusiasm, and fresh perspective into the workplace, which helps the organisation take different decisions and paths," says Tanya Dubash, executive director & president-marketing, Godrej Group. • HDFC Bank: " On International Women's Day last year, we launched ' Sisterhood of strength', an HDFC Bank diversity management initiative that we have specially put together for the women employees in our bank.

The brand ' Sisterhood of Strength' would be the umbrella under which all our women employees of the bank will come together, share experiences, be proactive to help one another and benefit from our bank's numerous diversity initiatives," says Nusrat Pathan, head – diversity management & corporate social responsibility, HDFC Bank Ltd. • Hewitt Associates: " Hewitt believes in creating a diverse workforce and encourages all its clients worldwide on the advantages of having a balanced workforce.

This would help us in achieving our mission of ' making the world a better place to work'. We are an equal employment opportunity employer. We ensure that equal opportunity is given to qualified individuals in our

recruiting, hiring, training and development, promotion, compensation practices and all other employment opportunities. We do not discriminate against anyone based on race, religion, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, physical disability, national origin and age.

Hewitt currently has approx 40 per cent of its workforce as women associates,” expresses Arjun Singh – Asia MD for outsourcing, technology and global business solutions, Hewitt Associates. -Yasmin Taj Best for the kids Working parents gain a lot from on-site day care programs. There is no better place to get reliable, safe, and convenient care for their children. This is why most organisations are now opening up some great on-site day-care centres for their employees’ children. • Accenture India: To support our employees who have responsibilities of taking care of children while pursuing their career aspirations at Accenture, we offer more than 100 seats with premier and best in class child care centres such as ‘Your Kids R Our Kids’ over four Accenture locations and also have plans to scale up in all locations in the coming months. The centres are carefully chosen after a comprehensive location audit to ensure a safe, secure and hygienic atmosphere to children of our employees.

We also continue to extend benefits to our employees through sponsoring 50 per cent of child care facility usage charges,” informs Rekha Menon, executive director, Accenture India. • Standard Chartered Bank: “At present, we have three daycare centres called Colours of Joy, across Mumbai and Delhi. These have been very well received by the working mothers in our organisation. These day-care centres ensure that the the parent receives a

conducive work environment for a working parent,” says Rajashree Nambiar, GM – distribution and country champion, diversity and inclusion, Standard Chartered Bank. • Wipro Technologies:

Wipro has its own creche as well as tie-ups across various locations. These creches are inspected for high standards of service. Wipro also organises fun workshops on dancing, painting, cooking, pottery, sessions on ‘ the world of insects’, ‘ explorers of the world’, ‘ exploring Bengaluru’ for the kids, etc. Also, summer camps are organised during holidays when parents struggle to strike a balance between keeping their kids busy and handling their jobs as well. • Godrej Group: “ We have an on-site daycare centre for providing our employees’ kids with an environment, which is like ‘ a home away from home’.

Our policies are unique as they address the challenges that women face in the four main stages of their working life namely – entry into the corporate world, when she gets married, when she has children and when her children grow up and can take care of themselves,” expresses Tanya Dubash, executive director and president – marketing, Godrej Group. -Yasmin Taj
Features A fair show by the fairer sex Today, women are taking up superior roles in organisations, as they are considered more risk-averse as opposed to their male counterparts.

A survey also states that they also bring tremendous diversity to the company in terms of their composition, skill-sets and experience. Experts point out that HR today is playing a vital role to hone these skills of women employees Indian women are making waves in various fields these days and

the corporate boardroom is no exception. Organisations are increasingly recognising that women do bring substantive diversity to company boards in terms of their composition, skillsets and experiences.

Women are also more risk-averse and focus on the long-term interests than their male counterparts. A recent survey conducted by Forum for Women in Leadership (WILL Forum) in partnership with KPMG on ‘Creating Women Business Leaders: Differentiating Styles of Women Executives’ along with these findings states that with leadership today being more result-oriented than process-driven, organisations will see better results if the intrinsically diverse leadership qualities of their women executives are further nurtured.

These developments have lead HR departments in most organisations take notice of the immense growth of women in leadership roles. They are now coming up with various programs and policies to help women nurture their leadership skills and hence, have a smooth transition to the top. Changing perceptions Sangeeta Singh, executive director, HR, KPMG expresses, “It is clear that the role of women in leadership is transforming not only in India, but also globally. Women make up about half the human capital resources available to any country.

Further, equitable utilisation of this talent is only going to enhance the repute of India Inc. The success stories are plenty and the number of women in leading positions in politics, business, administration and education in India is on the rise, thereby motivating and paving the way for future generations.” Similarly, Poonam Barua, founder/convener, Forum for Women in Leadership points out, “Indian women are fast recognising that they have

a range of talent, skills, energy and passion that is unique and can be harnessed by companies for better business performance. She, however, feels, “ Companies are preferring to hire more women on top and boards to bring greater ‘ rationalisation’ to the organisation and better reflect the marketplace where majority of key buyers, investors and customers are now women. Unfortunately, most Indian companies have not realised this important economic reality for having more women in leadership positions to reflect their marketplace and continue to give women only the ‘ softer’ jobs that have no career path to the boardroom or CXO positions. ” Proving their mettle

Though men and women, both have proved their mettle in the corporate world in their own ways, the qualities that lead them to success are different. “ I would like to quote Condoleezza Rice, former US Secretary of State as she stated, ‘ So often, it takes only one woman to make a difference. If you empower that woman with information and training, she can support her entire family and contribute to the success of her community. Multiply that one woman’s impact by a hundred or a thousand and perhaps, a million lives can change’,” shares Ratna Bhatia, director-programmes, Foreign Trade Development Centre (FTDC). Female managers are well aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They tend to recover elegantly from setbacks. They also tend to be good crisis managers,” says Rosita Rabindra, VP and HR Head, NIIT Technologies. Dr Tommy Weir, MD, Leadership Solutions, Kenexa avers, “ The ability of women to understand people is typically very high. And this is a quality that separates great leaders from average ones. Additionally, they can withstand much more pain than men. Rising to the top

is a pain-filled process where you push yourself to the limits. Singh states, “ Women possess a higher degree of persuasiveness, a stronger need to get things done and a greater degree of sensitivity in their willingness to take risks, manage people and catch-22 situations, a trait which can be attributed to their ability to gauge possibilities and prudence. These characteristics augur well in accelerating the pace of development of corporate strategies and provide organisations with a shield against unforeseen contingencies. ” Roadblocks to overcome Times are changing and women are increasingly taking on more responsibilities in the corporate scenario.

But, challenges still remain and need to be overcome. Is there any kind of gender bias in India Inc. even today? Barua states, “ The main challenge that women professionals and managers face are the traditional feudal mindset of Indian males in the workplace that continue to recycle the stereotype images of women. But women feel that they do not have a level-playing field due to the strong ‘ old-boysnetwork’ that is active, buzzing, and very impactful on business decisions. ” For Mamta Wasan, VP HR and training, Fidelity National Information Services (FIS), worklife balance is the biggest challenge. Health issues crop up as they give themselves minimum time. Professionally, women need to learn to be vocal about what they want and deserve. Also, there is gender bias - there is a boy’s club, albeit an informal one in the smoking zone, bars, golf course, etc. In any case, at most leadership levels, women are in the minority and have to create their own path and find their own way. ” Hemlata Nevetia, finance controller, Logica elucidates, “ Success, today, requires organisations to best utilise the talent

available to them, irrespective of the gender. To do these, barriers to upward mobility for women need to be removed.

Though statistics elude, if we look around, we will not find even a handful of companies headed by women or women at the helm of strategic departments. Major roadblocks for women who aspire to achieve and succeed in organisations are the presence of social and role constraints imposed upon them by the society, family and women themselves. " Hence, it can be concluded that though a few challenges still remain, women in India Inc. are certainly making waves and are paving the way for superior leadership roles. And if things go this way, it will soon be a woman's world out there! And HR has a major role to ensure just that. Yasmin Taj Make way for the women leaders! India Inc. is recognising the multiple benefits of having more women leaders on board across levels within the organisation. And, an increasingly large number of firms are taking steps to groom more women for higher roles and functions. However, experts say that along with such initiatives, women employees should also prepare themselves to take charge of their careers Discussion about the presence of a glass ceiling that prevents many women from reaching the top of the corporate hierarchy has been quite prevalent in India Inc. since long.

However, of late, the emergence of capable women leaders like Indira Nooyi, Chanda Kochhar, Naina Lal Kidwai, Kalpana Morparia, etc. has helped in changing thi