

# What does it take to build a **WOMEN FRIENDLY WORKPLACE?**



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TimesJobs Study

# HOW WOMEN FRIENDLY IS YOUR WORKPLACE?

Nearly 70% female employees don't think their workplace is women friendly. This, and more startling facts revealed in this month's survey.

**Apeksha Kaushik,**  
TimesJobs Bureau

## Where do we stand?

JUST when the world celebrated International Women's Day on March 8 and applauded the progression of women in the work world, here come the disturbing revelations in this sphere.

TimesJobs conducted a survey on a topic that the world has ignored for long - workplaces being women friendly. We surveyed about 2,500 working women and the outcomes are rather rattling. Excerpts:

### ■ Not equals

Though most organisations claim to offer equal opportunities to men and women but the ground reality is very different. Nearly 90 per cent women professionals said that there isn't much equality in their organisation when it comes to career progression. Promotions, opportunities for leadership roles, salary increase

and incentive programs have been all claimed to be biased towards men.

### ■ Missing at the top

Female representation in top leadership was rated as poor by 95 per cent women professionals. None of the surveyed women professionals rated female representation in top leadership as good, but just 5 per cent rated it as average. Nearly a third of the surveyed respondents said that they have no women on their company board or in any C-suite jobs. Almost 96 per cent said that did not have a female CEO.

### ■ No fun at work

At a time when work-related stress is taking a toll on employees, social activities and a great work environment helps ease out the pressure a little and support a great work-life balance. A friendly working environment, special healthcare facilities, flexible work hours and support from team members keeps employees highly motivated. However, only 15 per cent of the surveyed women professionals rated such activities in their company as good, 40 per cent voted it as average and 45 per cent said it was poor.

### ■ Hostile co-workers

Nearly 55 per cent surveyed women professionals

**96%**  
surveyed females  
said they didn't  
have a woman  
CEO

rated the people they work with as average. About 25 per cent stated them as poor and just 20 per cent voted them as good. People issues are often side-lined but they are among the key reasons for employee dissatisfaction at workplace. One cannot always avoid annoying co-workers but HR policies can be a saviour in such cases.

### ■ Not heard, not cared

Nearly 50 per cent respondents rated their company responsiveness as poor, 40 per cent rated it as average, 10 per cent rate it as good. A lack of responsiveness is the most common underlying problem in any business. With most women finding it poor, it ascertains that voices are not heard and solutions are not provided at the desired pace, since level of responsiveness is related with - speed, sensitivity and awareness.

### ■ Well-being malfunction

About 60 per cent women professionals rated wellness initiatives at their organisation as poor. Wellness programs aim to encourage employee health. Some companies use financial incentives to motivate workers to monitor and improve their health, some programs offer discounts on health insurance, others penalise by charging people more for smoking or having a high body mass index.

### Insufficient learning opportunities

Almost 75 per cent of surveyed women said that learning opportunities at their company

**90%**  
respondents said  
equal opportunities  
for men and women  
at workplace don't  
exist

as poor. Given that transition is now a routine part of working life, continuing learning should be viewed as a necessity. But this clearly not seemed to be the case for many women professionals who miss out on growth opportunities because of lack of proper training and upskilling initiatives.

### ■ Can't find mentors

Almost 80 per cent women professionals rated sponsorship or mentorship initiatives at their organisation as poor. This is surprising, considering corporate mentoring is on the rise with most Fortune 500 companies offering professional mentoring programs to their employees.

### ■ Income discontent

About 50 per cent women professionals rated satisfaction with their current salaries as average, just 10 per cent rated it as good. One of the earlier TimesJobs surveys have highlighted that men are more satisfied with their salaries than women. This could be attributed to the huge difference in the pay packages earned by men and women at similar roles and with similar experience.

### ■ Unable to telecommute

Nearly 60 per cent women professionals rated the ability to telecommute to their work as poor, and only 35 per cent voted it as average. Allowing employees to telecommute can be a great decision, but it needs a lot of scrutiny. Besides aiding productivity and retention, it helps boost

employee morale. Employees become happier and feel valued, and in turn become more interested in their workplace.

### ■ Flexibility – A distant dream

A lot has been said about workplace flexibility but it still remains one of the key reasons for people to join or leave a company. However, 70 per cent women employees rate flexibility in their organisation as poor. With almost 80 per cent of these women professionals ready to forego promotions in favour of work-life balance, this is a sad revelation. The reason lies in the perception of many companies that promotions are a great way to recognise employees' hard work while, on the other hand most employees need more than just an upgrade of position to derive work satisfaction.

### ■ Failure for families

This one is a game-changer for most married women professionals. But it seems irrelevant for many employers, as 85 per cent

**50%**  
respondents  
claimed their salary  
satisfaction is  
average

surveyed women professionals rate this organisational aspect as poor. A

working woman who is married and is also shouldering childcare responsibilities may need more leaves than the regular, assigned ones. That can put her job security at risk. In such cases family growth support from organisations can be a big help and it should be considered seriously.

**75%**  
women felt  
learning  
opportunities  
were poor

**85%**  
said their firm's  
family growth  
support is poor

**70%**  
stated overall  
work satisfaction  
is average

**80%**  
believed  
mentorship  
program at their  
workplace is poor



**55%**  
respondents said  
maternity leave  
provisions at their  
workplace  
is average

### ■ Maternity policies

While the recent amendments to the maternity bill have given hope to women professionals, the ground reality is that these changes have not been adopted by many companies yet. This could be one of the reasons that 55 per cent women professionals in the survey rated maternity leave provisions at their workplace as average and 35 per cent voted them as poor and just 10 per cent agreed that these provisions were good.

### ■ Lack of progression prospects

It is disconcerting that after a decade of aggressive efforts to create opportunities for women, inequity remains entrenched, as 75 per cent surveyed women employees rated the management opportunities provided by their organisation for women as poor. It is high time that companies acknowledge this need and look at the problem areas and look for solutions to help talented women professionals advance in their career.

**55%**  
surveyed  
women  
said their  
co-workers  
are  
average

4

### ■ No paid time off

The provision of paid time off has been rated as poor by nearly 60 per cent working women. About 35 per cent said it was average and just 5 per cent noted it as good. A Paid Time Off (PTO) policy combines vacation, sick time and personal time into a single bank of days for employees to use to take paid time off from work. It allows employees to use the paid time off when they most need it. While many reported cases of misuse of this policy have made employers rethink about its application at workplace, a little work on setting the right expectations and model appropriate behaviour for employees can help address loopholes in this policy.

### ■ Workplace dissatisfaction

Close to 70 per cent women professions rated overall satisfaction from their workplace as average, 20 per cent said it was poor and only 10 per cent said it was good. This clearly implies that most women do not see their workplaces as women friendly. Employers must consider the aspects discussed above and should sort out ways to give women employees more control over their schedules, environment, and/or work habits. Offering alternative work schedules such as flexi-time or telecommuting. Today's employees have demanding schedules outside of work and many workers appreciate a boss who considers work-life balance. Every person's obligations outside of work are different, customised schedules are a great way to improve employee satisfaction.

## HOW CAN WE ASCEND?

Here are the women friendly policies which - nearly 65 per cent women professionals vouched - would be of great help:

### ■ Flexible work options

Though it's not only women who need flexible work options but men require them too. However, women need them a little more than their male counterparts for reasons widely acknowledged.

### ■ Parental leave

If we want to empower women at the workplace, we don't just need good maternity leave policies but need to advocate parental leave for fathers too. While mothers play a huge role in child care, having support from their partner is invaluable and much needed.

### ■ Childcare solutions

One of the biggest challenge for working mothers while getting back to work is childcare. Innovative policies, such as onsite childcare programs can go a long way in supporting women at workplace.

### ■ Company culture

Company culture is a complex term to define, but it can mean the difference between women putting themselves forward for promotions and progression.

### ■ Mentorship opportunities

Businesses are acknowledging that there lies a huge confidence gap in female and male workforce and they need to do something about it by offering mentorship opportunities, training and skills development to women in areas they wouldn't put themselves naturally.



# Employment rather than Employability

## A win-win solution to the talent gap

*Solving the talent gap requires radical thinking and focused interventions*

Despite being world's youngest country in terms of demographic dividend, only 2% of our workforce is considered skilled compared with 96% in South Korea, 45% in China, 50-55% in USA & 74% in Germany. All these years, the government and private sector has focused on developing Higher Education, overlooking the Employability Quotient (EQ) and the need for skilled manpower.

Indian Education sector has seen rapid growth in nos. of Institutions and students over last few decades. As per UGC report, in 1950-51 there were some 750 colleges affiliated to 30 Universities which has grown to over 727 Universities, 35000 colleges & 13000 standalone Institutions in 2014-15 and counting.

Regardless of the tremendous growth, higher education has not been proved too efficient to make the youth of the country employable as per employer expectations.

In today's world of Globalisation, Skill Training is an Integral component of Increasing efficiency & productivity for sound economic development of any Economy, In India it's still at a nascent stage, however the demand for skilled manpower is huge and to cover this gap, it is very pertinent to re-engineer the skill ecosystem.

As India paves its path to become a global economic powerhouse, it is Imperative to equip its working population with Employability skills. Today, India is one of the youngest country in the world with more than 62% of the population in the working age group (15-59 years) and more than 54% of the total population below 25 years of age.

In 2014, Skill Development started getting a booster from the Govt. under the visionary leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri. Narendra Modi- he encouraged Skill India Mission and also formed Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Skill (MSDE) to coordinate all Skill Development activities, capacity & technical/ vocational training framework building, assessments framework. The Ministry is dedicated to skill 400 million workforce by 2022.

The one big problem seen in the still young Skill Development industry is the lack of connect between skill development agencies and the industry that needs these trained resources.

While the focus has been on employability, the transition to actual employment has been poor. Secondly, despite the existence of industry-led Sector Skills Councils, who are to define, administer and translate the needs of the industry to the training sector, the demand-supply gap, both in terms of quality and quantity has only expanded.

ITM Skills Academy, a part of the ITM Group of Institutions, has developed an amazingly successful solution to this problem. By building deep collaborations with companies across various sectors, ITM Skills Academy provides a full-service "Source-Train-Deploy" model of skill education:

- We work with partner companies to define their talent needs,
- Co-develop highly customized, technical skills and competency based training programs,
- Create a nation-wide pipeline of eligible candidates to be trained at our campuses
- And finally deploy these candidates, as ready to work talent.

Through ITM's 25-year experience in professional education, ITM Skills Academy has capabilities in a wide range of sectors including BFSI, Retail, Healthcare, hospitality, Engineering, Manufacturing and more. ITM Skills Academy has sourced and trained more than 40,000 candidates since 2012 across these sectors, for both entry level and middle management positions. From Sales Officers, Account Executives, Optometrists and Lab technicians, to Assistant Managers and Supervisors, ITM Skills Academy has sourced across India, trained to exacting standards and built a low-attrition, high performance cadre of talent at India's biggest companies such as ICICI Bank, Kotak Bank, DHFL, Indiabulls, Titan Eye+, Thyrocare and many more.

India is poised to become the factory of the world in coming years and it's time for Higher Education & Skill Training to co-exist in the same space with seamless Integration. To enable this, it is very Important for Industry and Academia to work together to generate focused hands-on candidates with right blend of learning and employability traits.

*Anupam Sinha, Vice President, Operations, ITM*



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## EVENT REPORT



## GEEK GODDESS

Bharti of Maharaja Surajmal Institute is TechGig's Geek Goddess



# OPPORTUNITY EQUALITY CREATES GREATER GENDER DIVERSITY



THE recently concluded TechGig Geek Goddess event proved without a doubt that given the opportunity, top coders can appear from any background and are not exclusive to just the top institutes.

Ms. Bharti from Maharaja Surajmal Institute, not only topped the Geek Goddess leader board beating hundreds of IIT and NIT graduates, but did it in style by completing all her coding challenges with 2 hours to spare! "This is first time I've come first somewhere. At Maharaja Surajmal

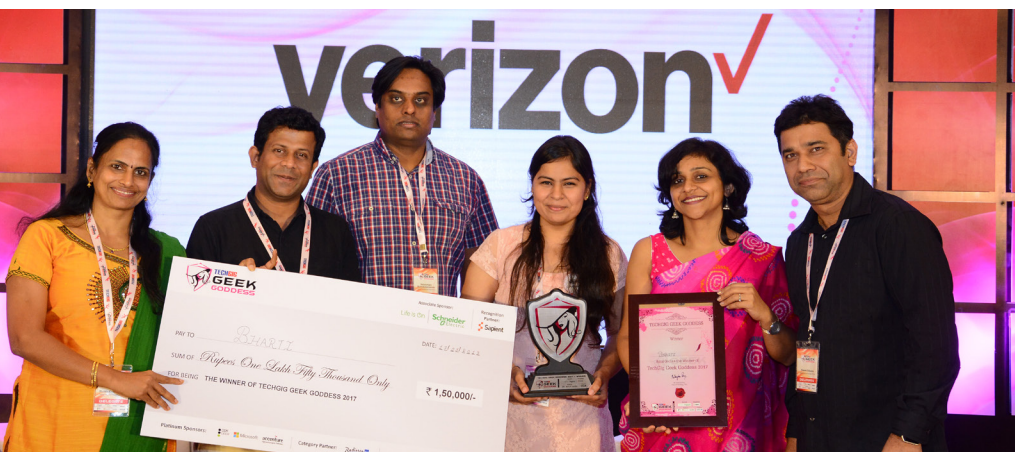
Institute, I am always placed third. I wish I could have called my father on stage now that I have come first," said a very emotional Bharti.

Accepting the TechGig Geek Goddess 2017 title Bharti added, "Everyone says that behind every successful man there is a woman, behind me it's my dad. I dedicate my success and this award to him." Bharti is a B. Tech from Maharaja Surajmal Institute of Technology (MSIT), with proficiency in Java and knowledge of Network and Data Security.

Women leaders from across the IT space graced the event and interacted with the contestants. They also shared their experiences, advice and tips for success in the IT world with the young coders. Excerpts from their speeches at the event:

■ **Vasuta Agarwal,**  
VP & GM, India, InMobi

To succeed, one must know their individual strengths and capabilities. In my life too, the best decisions have been the ones that I took myself. Also







one needs to break away from the stereotypes and explore things with a free mind.

■ **Kalyani Sekar,**  
*Managing Director, Verizon Data Services India*

While there is a rising debate around gender diversity and there are a plethora of programs to harbour gender mix at workplace, but let us also admit that it is not only an organisation-specific issue. It is within each of us (women) to bring out the best in everything that we do.

■ **Vidhya Krishnaswamy,**  
*Director, Sapient Razorfish*

To chase success one has to take tough calls, fights odds and find ways to get what you want. I had to take many difficult decisions in life but when I look back, it appears that those were the best calls for me as they helped me reach this level.

■ **Deepika Goel,**  
*Vice President- Research & Analytics, Genpact*

At our company Diversity and Inclusion is not just an agenda but our first priority. Our President & CEO personally takes an account of the development happening in this sphere. We have a range of programmes for our female employees - existing, on a sabbatical and willing to return to work - which encourage and facilitate them to remain rooted to work. We actively look for new female talent and help them pursue a career while balancing family and work.



■ **Anahita Varma,**  
*Managing Director - Financial Services, Technology, Accenture*

I would describe my journey in IT as 'very tough' because projects, timings, commitments do make it grilling to pursue a career in IT. But times are different now and I think this is the time to make a career in IT.

■ **Daisy Chittilapilly,**  
*Managing Director, Partner Organization, Cisco India & SAARC*

I would not trade my professional journey for anything. I am often asked if it has been 'easy' or 'tough' but I think it has just been fun and exciting. I wish the same for all the young coders present here.

■ **Annie Mathew**  
*Director-Audience Marketing, Microsoft India*

The passion and energy of the

women coders at the finale was palpable. It was especially sweet to hear the stories of the women who won and others who came across and discussed the issues on top of their minds.

■ **Bidisha Nagaraj,**  
*Chief Marketing Officer, Schneider Electric*

I have always believed in pushing my boundaries and I was never comfortable working in one sphere. I have never looked at my job as a mere job, instead I have taken it like a passion. That has driven me so far.

Other winners at TechGig Geek Goddess 2017 were, **Charmy Vora** from Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University graduate (Rank2) **Sneha Mujumdar** from Pune University (Rank 3), **Anusha Yakkala** from IIT Kgp (Rank 4), and **Sonal Bhargava** from DAVIET (Rank 5).

## Interview: Vasuta Agarwal

VP & GM, India, InMobi

# Gender-neutral approach is key for women friendly workplaces

**Do you think the women employees at your organisation are engaged? How do you perceive the engagement levels of women professionals across globe to be?**

The women at InMobi are part of our culture and family where each one is responsible for the well being and happiness of their colleagues. This drives the whole team to be continuously involved in activities that revolve around self development, corporate and community development. In this global village, corporate cultures are now similar, focusing on an employee-friendly workplace that aims to equip them with the best environment possible. Global engagement levels of women professionals are equally high, and in some cases, more than men. Such a culture has incredible results that only help the organisation realise its vision further.

**What challenges do women face at work?**

While women are already charting their own path and are making it big in their careers, issues like shattering the glass ceiling, dealing with stereotypes in a multi-cultural country like ours, balancing work and personal lives are few challenges that women face. While startups like InMobi have necessary policies to empower women to dream and make it big, the situation is not the same across other industries. The government can bring in mandatory policies that will make inclusion a widespread agenda.

**How challenging is it to get back into the workforce after a break?**

Getting back to work after a break is definitely difficult and therefore women need all the help and support at this juncture. The needle is moving towards a more open mindset, where women taking career breaks to start a family or



for other personal reasons, are being welcomed back with open arms. Talent acquisition is also being balanced in such a way that returning mothers or women are given priority, as opposed to training and getting new recruits up to speed.

**What is that one thing which is most essential to encourage women participation in the workforce?**

Women have generally been taught not to ask many questions, and consent to anything that sounds good, at the outset. But being diplomatic through obedience is not beneficial in the long haul, for the company. An encouraging environment must be created to foster more women to lean in, share their inputs and ensure more balanced decisions are taken.

**What are the women friendly career/employment policies that India Inc. must imbibe?**

■ Equal pay for equal work regardless of gender is what needs to be reported clearly. Companies should be tasked with auditing this as part of their governance and annual reports. Since there is a cost to some progressive measures, the tax authorities could look at providing a rebate to companies from the corporate tax rate, if they are having women percentages of 30 per cent or

more. A more direct subsidy could be a direct payout of 10 per cent of the monthly salary for 12 months to every woman being hired by any employer. Government policies need to structurally favour and incentivise the right action without it being a burden on the tax paying corporates.

■ Another women friendly policy that could be introduced is a Parental Fund, where companies in the organised sector contribute a percentage of employee's salaries. This fund could then be used to provide unemployment insurance and maternity insurance for every single woman of the country in the organised or unorganised sector.

■ Companies also need to build on the steps taken by the government with the extension of maternity leave to 6 months, and proactively initiate policies around flexibility in time and location for working mothers, higher study opportunities, smooth reintegration plans, and more.

■ One policy to highlight is a leadership mentoring program for aspiring women, who want to climb the ladder at an equal pace as the others. This will help the organisation take strategic decisions, with equal say at the board and executive levels.

**Is there a thumb rule when creating a women friendly workplace?**

The fundamentals of an organisation, like its vision, is gender-neutral. Why shouldn't all elements of the workplace reflect the same? Making the move towards a balanced culture at the workplace is the root on which the tenets of a diverse workforce are built. When key decision makers have a gender-neutral approach to nurture potential leaders, a women friendly and open workplace will be a foregone conclusion.

*(As told to Neha Singh Verma)*

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