

KAUSTUBHAM

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND
LABOUR RELATIONS JOURNAL



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FOREWORD

The world of work, in the last two decades, has undergone transformational changes. The term “VUCA” began from 2002 and derives from this acronym from military education. It has subsequently taken root in emerging ideas in strategic leadership that apply in a wide range of organizations, from for-profit corporations to education. The year 2020 onwards has been challenging as well as exploring alternative ways of doing business due to pandemic COVID-19. Hence, Business Continuity Management (BCM) is seen on the active agenda of the corporate world. A June 2021 study from *Future Forum* (of which BCG is a founding member) assessed more than 10,000 knowledge workers in six countries and found that 93% want a flexible schedule, 76% want flexibility in where they work, and 56% are open to a job change. As leaders navigate the future of work, they must balance two fundamental goals: to manage the operational challenges of near-term decisions regarding a return to premises and to invest in innovative work and talent models designed to address customers’ and employees’ changing demands. To achieve these goals, organizations must excel in six areas: Shaping the Future of Work; Returning to the Office or Site; Enabling Hybrid Working Models; Winning the Competition for Talent; Understanding Trends in Jobs and Skills; and Transforming the Operating Model. Winning the war for talent requires leaders to ask three big questions: How do we offer flexibility as a basic benefit? How do we reimagine our infrastructure to create connection? How do we reskill our managers to ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are a core competency?

Kaustubham, The Annual Journal of Human Resources Management and Labour Relations, over the last three decades, has not only enriched its content but also broadened the range of contributors. This is why it has attracted articles both from academicians as well as corporate professionals. The Edition of 2022, with theme “*visions for tomorrow*” covers a wide range of articles related to four broad themes: Business Continuity Management (BCM) Strategies during and after Pandemic; Career Management; Talent Retention; and Women Leadership. Some of interesting articles include:

I am confident that Readers will find all Articles as *part of solutions* to many of their challenges specially post pandemic world of work. I also congratulate the Editorial Committee of *Kaustubham* to take the mission of dissemination of knowledge to the next level of the orbit. Suggestions and feedback are welcome from Readers especially Corporate Professionals and Alumni.



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Obstacles to Women Leadership in Corporate & Ways to Overcome

By APARNA SHARMA



Women are making rapid strides virtually in all walks of life across the world. Their presence spans a variety of professions say Human Resources, Retail, Marketing, Corporate Law, Interior Design, Search, Fashion, Television and News Channel Content amongst others. Recently in India, women have joined the National Defence Academy. Indian Air Force already has women pilots. Women have already excelled as doctors, engineers and chartered accountants.

I wish there were more women judges in the Supreme Court of India. The recently retired Justice Indu Malhotra did her profession proud by her conduct as a judge. India has had a lady Prime Minister and President. When will it have a woman Chief Justice?

Women are present just about everywhere even though actual numbers may not have increased substantially. Yet things are moving in the right direction.

Having said the above, it is important to note that there are certain factors that prevent women from realizing their true potential.

Despite the unique challenges female leaders encounter, women continue to push through barriers

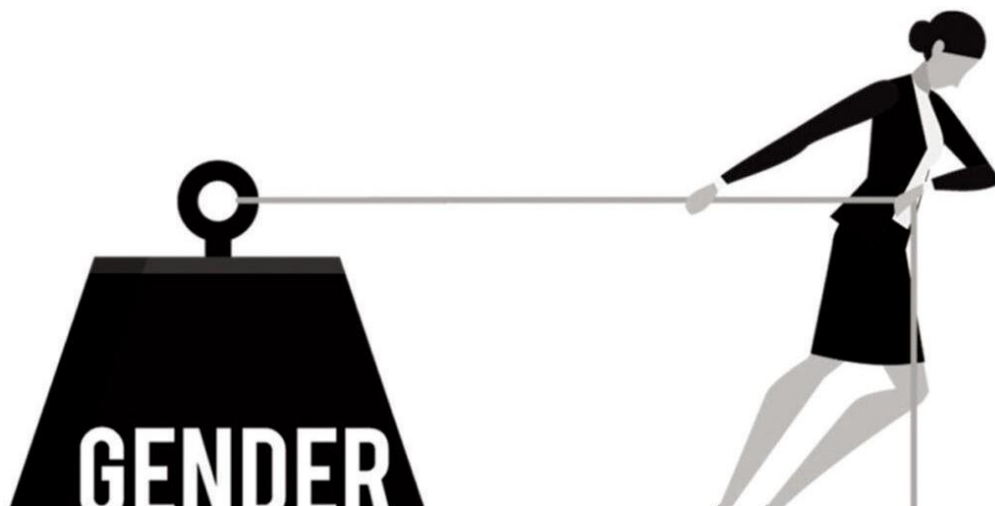
as they serve their mission and strive to reach their full potential. Yet, with women underrepresented in the top ranks of leadership roles in government, administration, and business, we all lose. This sober assessment shouldn't discourage us but should motivate us to identify and better understand the challenges female leaders face.

Justice Indu Malhotra (retd) said there is a gender bias in the legal profession and judiciary. Source(Livelaw) .This male bastion needs to change.

Is this true for well qualified women everywhere including the Corporate World?

What is the story about challenges that women face in the Workplace?

1. **Being treated equally :** From being held to a higher standard than their male counterparts, to facing persistent gender stereotypes, women are systemically placed on an uneven playing field.
2. **Advocating on their own behalf :** Ambition in men is considered as a sign of strength, but women cannot rely on their ambition being perceived as a positive attribute.
3. **Trusting their own voices :** Women often must push through internal and external barriers to find



the confidence to express their ideas. For women in business, it may be a challenge to trust in the unique aspects of female executive presence and acknowledge them as personal and organizational assets.

4. **Building alliances :** Men learn to “play the game” through longstanding business conventions that help them build alliances and influence others. Women may need to find alternate routes to building mutually beneficial alliances and strategic relationships.
5. **Impostor syndrome :** When faced with systemic gender bias and inequality, women often have difficulty forming an accurate self-assessment, a situation also called “impostor syndrome,” which can interfere with their ability to stand confidently in their accomplishments.
6. Lifestyle choices include work-life balance, family choices and breadwinner/caregiver priorities. These choices are not negative, but they are considered barriers, because they contribute to the leadership gender gap.

For example, if a woman is the primary breadwinner in a household, she’s usually the primary caregiver as well. On the other hand, if a man is the primary breadwinner, he is rarely the primary caregiver. This is an important distinction that families must carefully consider when discussing career aspirations. The more balance there is at home, the more balance there will be at work.

Ways to Overcome -

In the face of these barriers to women leadership, professional women can employ several strategies to help address the challenges.

1. Female Leadership Programs

Female leadership programs offer professional women supportive communities that allow them to network with others familiar with the unique challenges they face. Such programs give professional women greater insight into issues and offer them strategies and solutions.

For instance, a professional woman may lack confidence in her leadership style because it doesn’t match the model typical in her organization. However, after attending a female leadership program, she may get feedback from other participants who point out the value of her team-building methods and active listening techniques.

By discussing how to leverage certain leadership traits associated with women, such as leading through

inspiration or showing empathy, female leadership programs teach women how to capitalize on their talents.

Various Business Schools including the IIM’s & ISB organize specific programs for Women leaders. Those who are already in CXO positions or those aspiring for senior positions benefit immensely by participating in such programs.

I have personally undergone a Women centric Management Development Program (MDP) at IIM, Ahmedabad which has left a lasting impression & the learnings have been of great value.

2. Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs

Mentorship and sponsorship programs are vital to professional women wanting to move ahead in their careers. Mentors share the tricks they’ve learned along the way and model successful approaches. They offer confidence-building encouragement invaluable to professional women.

Sponsors — typically professionals in influential positions — use their influence on behalf of an up-and-coming fellow employee they believe in. They help their protege get high-stakes assignments that give them a chance to shine. They also advocate for professional women when coveted positions open.

Both sponsorships and mentorships empower professional women to grow, excel, and gain the visibility needed to move into the most senior-level leadership positions.

I currently am part of a couple of initiatives as a Mentor especially for women in middle management positions where I help them chisel their soft skills & pump up their aspirations.

3. Effective Communication About Career Advancement Goals

Overcoming barriers to women in leadership calls for effective communication about career advancement. Professional women need to learn to skilfully and consistently communicate their career advancement goals and desires to their supervisors. This may involve setting up meetings with their supervisors to discuss their careers.

Before such meetings, professional women should consider the following questions, for example:

What are my short- and long-term career objectives?

What are my strengths, and where do I have room to develop?

What am I willing or not willing to do to achieve my career objectives?

During discussions with their supervisors, professional women should review their accomplishments, describe their visions, and ask for guidance and next steps to achieve the goals laid out.

Based on their impressions from the meetings, professional women can then develop personal strategies for advancing their careers. Perhaps that means researching other departments to see if they hold better opportunities or creating a solution to a problem in the organization.

Such communication helps change misconceptions about professional women's ambitions and drive. It also opens an important dialogue about the needed steps to charge forward. Discussing career goals empowers professional women to direct their paths and reach their growth objectives by giving them a chance to deepen their relationships with supervisors and gain clarity about how to plan for the future.

In addition, effective communication about career goals allows professional women to get more frequent feedback and information about the actions needed to achieve their career objectives. When supervisors see focus goal-oriented employees, they are often inspired to champion their efforts.

4. Strategically Promoting Equity

Professional women can help eliminate barriers to their development by working with human resources and allies in leadership to influence company policies and promote equity.

For example, professional women can help form or join employee resource groups, or ERGs. ERGs discuss and strategize ways to create more equitable work environments that support employees.

An ERG can focus on improving working conditions for employees or identifying and nurturing future leaders. ERGs can promote equity and influence policy decisions.

In Summary, one has not seen enough women supporting other women. If women support each other, women shall progress at a faster rate. Also, women should set their own benchmarks and not keep men as their barometer of success.

Whilst attempting to make their presence felt at work, women should not try to ape men but retain their femininity. This is what makes them special. Wearing a business suit because men do so means little, if their thought process does not add Value to the business.

"In the future, there will be no female leaders. There will just be leaders."- Sheryl Sandberg

About the Author:

Aparna Sharma is a seasoned Global Human Resources professional with over 26 years of rich and diverse industry experience across Building Materials, Banking & Financial Services, Pharmaceuticals (including KPO), Biotechnology & Petrochemicals. Encompassing Commercial, Research and Manufacturing operations largely in India, also in the Philippines and South Asia with successful interface in global, matrix and multicultural environments.

