

Great Rewards follow Tough decisions

Stumbling upon a profession almost by accident, achieving accolades for work done in that field, that too in a short career span is not easy. Aparna Sharma's (Human Resources Site Lead for Mumbai and Jaipur) recent award is testimony to the fact something difficult is not necessarily impossible. In a career spanning merely 15 years she has made a mark for herself and has impressed a global research cell with her achievements and value contribution across industries to be conferred the coveted "Women Super Achiever Award" at the 6th Employer Branding Awards. The award will be presented at an awards ceremony later this year.



When we caught up with Aparna to find out the secret of her success, she was forthcoming in her responses and eagerly shared the highlights of her illustrious journey. She said that three things worked for her in this serendipitous career choice were; her strategic perspective, involvement as a change agent and team orientation and people management.

Aparna originally wanted to join the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) but had to take on an alternate profession as she had to become financially independent early in life and owing to the stringent norms of the administrative services time was not in her favour. This initial disappointment did not deter her and she took on the challenge head-on. She learnt early in her career that Human Resources had to be an integral part of the business in the larger context of the organisation and was not a stand-alone function. She possesses an astute ability to see the bigger picture and derive people priorities from business vision and imperatives. This she says, held true for her not only in specialist roles but also in generalist Human resources roles played by her over the years. She demonstrated this strategic perspective even during her first job interview; she told the panel that she would consider the opportunity only if they allowed her to begin on the shop floor, a male dominated, highly unionised area of the business. She got the job and started right there and made her mark solving worker union issues.

As a change agent, Aparna has played an integral part in setting up and revitalising the human resources teams and defining the culture of the organisation, in three out of her four previous roles. One of the striking highlights as a change agent has been when she worked on the performance management process following the merger of one of her previous organisation's. With a strategic perspective, she took the best of both organisations and created a new process for evaluating performance. In the capability development effort, she has an equally compelling story to tell. She came up with a revolutionary idea to decentralise training in collaboration with employees from the business. This not only increased her team's capacity but also created ownership and made training real for employees.

The third aspect of her career that worked for her was team orientation and people management. Aparna is a people's person and working with people comes naturally to

her; a necessary trait, considering her profession. She says that even though she came into this profession by chance and had a second chance to get into to the administrative services, she chose not to stray from the path as she is passionate about people as assets. She has successfully created successors in all organisations by giving autonomy, empowering her staff and mentoring them.

In one of the articles written by Aparna, she has compared leadership to wine in a cellar. She writes, the longer one travels on the journey of leadership, the more one matures, like wine in a cellar. Considering Aparna's success in this short journey, it would be interesting to see the accolades she earns as the wine matures.