

Media Coverage

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Gender balance is an essential element of an inclusive workplace – and when women rise, men do, too. According to research, when more of these factors are present, women are more likely to thrive and advance but, equally, men are 23% more likely to become a manager and twice as likely to reach the senior-manager level. Indeed, companies make real progress in the workplace when men and women are equal.

Gender sensitivity and women empowerment is one of the most discussed topics globally. As per the finding of a McKinsey Global Institute report, by 2025 a \$12 trillion could be added to global growth by improving women's equality. A country like India could add \$700 billion to its GDP by boosting participation of women labour force by 10 percent. With gender equality and providing opportunities to women will help both

advanced and developing nations to achieve their economic goals and societal developments.

Diversity of thinking makes for better teams. That's now an established fact, in addition to being common sense. Diverse teams by definition mean more diverse ways of thinking, producing more options for decision makers to consider. Having more varied team members to choose from increases a team leader's chances of assembling the best team as a whole, balancing, for example, approaches that are analytical, experimental, practical or relational.

As public discourse around International Women's Day reached a feverish pitch, Equality Unbound at AsiaBizToday reached out to a section of HR & Diversity heads to get views on what their respective companies are doing. Below are some of the comments that we received.

Salika Sukswan, Director, Human Capital, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Malaysia

I believe men and women have equal opportunities to excel in my organisation, but more women than men opt out from progressing to senior roles. This is typically influenced by the expectations from their family (and themselves) to spend more time at home. My advice is to have conversations with your family before opting out and consider an equal partnership with your spouse at work and at home.

At PwC, we allow for flexibility in our ways of working and we have introduced more family-friendly practices. We have recently extended paid paternity leave to 30 days to encourage men to be more involved in taking care of their newborn.

Whilst we continue to enhance workplace policies and practices, there needs to be a change in mindsets and behaviour in our wider society to see women and men as equals in the corporate world.

Monila Kothari, President, APAC Flavours, Givaudan, Singapore

Givaudan's purpose provides a strong and unified reason for why we do what we do as a company, reaffirming what we stand for at every level of our business. One of the tenets of our purpose is focused on our People. We want to be a balanced and inclusive company for our employees. We have defined a set of goals to ensure that we do what we say we will do. For example, on inclusivity and diversity, we want 50% of our senior leaders to be women before 2030. We also have in place a number of initiatives that will help us meet our goal, like our "Better Balance" initiative.

Better Balance is the term we use to describe our approach to enrich our organisation's talent mix to better reflect the customers we serve, the changing consumer landscape, and to drive innovation. Ensuring we have a diverse organization is essential to meet our business goals, and to create an inclusive culture. Better Balance for example, allows our female employees to balance their life between work and taking care of their family. Better Balance also offers flexibility to our employees who are new mothers and who are coming back into the workforce after a short break.

Additionally, we have in place tools for our leaders to ensure that our talent processes are inclusive and remove or minimize our unconscious biases ensuring that all women in the organisation have the same career opportunities as their male counterparts.

I would like to encourage all women to challenge themselves consistently. When new opportunities are available, be it a stretch assignment or a job posting overseas, always rise to the occasion, step out of the comfort zone and accept the challenge. A lot of times, we are quick to offer reasons as to why these opportunities won't work and spend little time addressing them to make them work. I have seen many instances where female

employees have been successful when they push boundaries and grow with these opportunities. If you have a family, bring your family along for the ride and watch them grow with you on the journey.

R P Yadav, Chairman & Managing Director, Genius Consultants Ltd, India

I believe that power of parity would help to create a balanced workforce. The strengths and styles each gender bring to the role are different. Practicing equal opportunities will help to broaden our horizon to inspiring conversations, professional developments, cultural change and create a healthy & supporting workplace for all employees. An inclusive working opportunity would bring in various perspectives and ideas to boardroom conversations as our clients are from diverse background and we should be reflecting that.

Looking beyond employee benefits, there's a lot Genius Consultants Limited does to support women at work. Well, it should be practiced by other organizations through their actions and decisions, company heads can set the tone at the top. It's time for the organisations to think beyond sharing equal benefits and providing a supporting working environment for women employees.

Tina Vinod, Head – Diversity & Inclusion, ThoughtWorks, India

Gender Equity & Equal Opportunity is what we strive for as a community in ThoughtWorks. Gender Inclusion has always been a key business prerogative as well. We believe that no matter who you are or how you identify, you deserve respect, empathy and equal opportunity to succeed.

Empowering Women's success is critical for us and VAPASI is one such initiative. The free technical training program is designed to enable experienced women technologists who are currently on a career break to re-enter the world of tech. The program is inline with our efforts to drive real change.

The program aims to elevate conversations around inclusivity, equal opportunity and leveling the playing field, encouraging more women to come back to work after a break. We believe our role in creating positive social change extends beyond our organization and hence work with various other companies and partners to meet our commitment to build gender equity in across.

The gender gap in our workplaces is a reality and holistic leadership development programmes, exclusive policies and comeback initiatives for women who've taken a break are critical, in addition to building safe bias-free, inclusive workplace. Unfortunately, the systemic patriarchy and unconscious bias in our culture continues to seep into the workforce creating toxic workplaces for women. Having 100% leadership commitment, engaging with dissent, building a pool of male allies and questioning age-old bias on a male centric approach to success in the workplace, is important.