

Invincible

- 1. Global Leadership Women Conference**
Bangalore, India
Topic Analysis
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Global Leadership Conference

Background: In India, the number of women conferences has gone up.

- Cisco's women action network organized a really big conference.
- NASSCOM organizes a Women Leadership summit in Nov timeframe every year.
- More recently CII (Confederation of Indian industry (CII)) has started a separate group called the Women Business Leaders Forum. They organize 2 good conferences a year.

Current Situation:

- The participation and contribution of women have significantly increased over the last 2 decades in all industries and just not the IT sector.
- Companies are recognizing that having women on board at all levels in the organization makes good business sense. Almost all companies are considering ways to involve and develop women for higher roles and functions.
- Corporate companies and various organizations like NASSCOM etc. are working towards recommending better processes, practices, policies and procedures to examine if these differential factors can facilitate capability augmentation, growth and career prospects for women.

Segmentation of the corporate world in India:

- **Family owned businesses** – many women leaders, e.g. Head of Hindustan times, managed by Shobhana Bhartia, granddaughter of GD Birla.
- **Banks** – Head of HSBC, Naina Lal, Head of JP Morgan, Chandra Kochar.
- **MNCs**
- **NGOs** - Running NGO Sevamandir, Nilema Khetan

Main Issue: How to change women's roles from being mere employees to leaders in their respective companies?

- **The women in the IT industry in India don't speak up.** They don't come out in the open about the gender discrimination or unhealthy work practices in their company. Ex. Infosys/Wipro etc, where the whole biz revolves around # of work hours/billing etc, the women are bearing the brunt of the commute, as well as the inflexibly long work hours, not enough trust to work from home etc. As a result, so many-many have dropped out of the workforce. The speaking up has got to do more with the cultural mindset to not speak up.

- **Barriers women face in corporations**
 - Increasing fear of safety and security at work place and while traveling to work.
 - Glass ceiling syndrome still exists in pockets of corporations though senior management claim to have no gender bias. Lack of exposure to business aspects.
 - Women still are pre-dominantly looking for career flexibility and job mobility. Lack of infrastructure - day care, health care etc.
 - Companies are yet to bring up programs that initiate gender inclusivity – a few players have done this but by and large still non-existent. Lack of support networks and mentoring.
 - Lack of flexible work schedules which allows women to manage work-life especially in those intervening years when they have to take a break or take-up part time options, and come back when they are ready to jump in fulltime.
 - Lack of ability to deal with politics and power play at work. Men have much more experience and role models than women.
 - Negative perceptions or prejudice - often its assumed that women will leave if husband gets transferred, or if they have a baby. Majority of women do exactly that and it further reinforces the perception.

Cultural influences that inhibit their success

Culture is a big influence in India as is the society around them

- In-laws, conservative parents, not-supportive husbands
- Ability to take decisions for themselves before and even after marriage
- Support structure at home to help through critical career transitions
- Lack of or discomfort with negotiation capabilities
- Decoupling that working is for extra money vs. ambition for a career
- Ambition is not encouraged as it is misunderstood as aggressiveness

Self-imposed barriers

- Women in India are still largely governed by thoughts of what society would think, family inhibitions and ties, giving up successful careers to take care of home and children after marriage, giving more importance in supporting the spouse versus personal career ambition, inability to totally handle harassment at work etc.
- From a professional angle, women still to a large extent lack or do not practice networking skills that men do so successfully or corporate politics. They tend to stick to the job at hand versus long-term ambition and aspirations.

- In terms of leadership skills, women have a long way to go to develop these, they make effective managers but not the best leader

Desired Outcome:

- **Developing leadership skills:**
 - Accepting a management position makes you a manager, becoming a leader is much more difficult it involves setting the right goals, communicating ideas, and delivering results.
 - A leader must be able to prudently influence and inspire others to execute a plan. Organizations and individuals respond to well-articulated visions that are strategic, persuasive, and measurable.
 - The Conference to delve into effective decision-making processes, power and influence, organizational change, personal negotiation styles, and investing in and managing relationships for greater impact.
 - Speakers to bring the best of their expertise in personal and professional information.

Proposed Topics:

It is important that we commence the session with where women were and what they have accomplished today with the economic and social support systems.

Top 3 topics

- **Public Policy change:**
 - Make the labor laws and infrastructure more supportive of working women e.g. providing more subsidies to day care centers or some, tax credit to incentives for companies with onsite day care centers.
 - Certification process to ensure quality of day care centers.
 - A complaint mechanism for parents to complaint about schools, which are discriminating against working mothers. There are schools in Bangalore today, which will not give admission to children if their mothers are working. These are private schools. There is no open discussion on these topics.
- **Self-development**
 - Finding support structure, negotiating within family and workplace, building confidence, learning leadership skills, finding women's networks etc.
- **Organization support**
 - Mechanisms to attract and retain women talent and supporting them through the transitions of life. Flexible work options, part time job profiles, smart offices (i.e. locating offices across the city instead of one big campus only) to reduce commute and pressure due to lack of infrastructure etc.

Conclusion

- Companies understand Business Imperative of Gender Inclusivity.
- Empower women to prepare for leadership roles.
- Create policies and best practices from other countries on correlations between women's participation and successful enterprises.
- Create powerful inclusive team partnerships that create innovative and agile organizations.

Some Quotations:

"Women need a more positive topic for the conference. This is a time to be part of the next spurt of growth and innovation" – Madhavi, EMC.

"There is a growing interest within the enterprises themselves to promote gender support groups to retain talented women in an industry starved for good, loyal talent. Women tend to be more loyal than men; though I am sure none of the companies have come out and said that. You see young men jumping jobs for a few thousand rupees more.

The number of women conferences has also gone up. So the question really is what would you be doing different which is not already happening. Will you bring women from non-technology sector as well? Social entrepreneurs? Journalists and technologists on the same platform ??" – Savita, Cisco

"We need a focused approach to target issues for women in India. To come out with a solution it is important we embrace a larger audience of women in NGOs, family run businesses. It is repetitive to speak to the converted" – Vikram, Shell.