

Publication	DNA
Date	May 08, 2011
Edition	Bangalore

Women-friendly workplaces are now in vogue

Today, corporate houses are becoming more flexible and understanding of women's needs by introducing new work models

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The corporate world is inching closer towards shattering the 'glass ceiling' most women hit in their careers.

Earlier, the perception in the corporate world was that women, particularly pregnant women and young mothers, will not be able to dedicate their time wholeheartedly to their jobs. Many women, therefore, were compelled to take a break at the peak of their careers. And when they did make a comeback into the corporate arena, things seemed different and difficult.

Fortunately, today, this phenomenon is fading out. Corporate houses are becoming more flexible and understanding of women's needs.

SAP Labs India, for instance, has taken several initiatives to make their organisation woman-friendly. "Our focus is more on helping women deal with maternity and post-pregnancy days. We are building an environment and infrastructure that is supportive so that they feel comfortable when they're ready to resume work," said Bhuvaneshwar Naik, vice-president, human resources, SAP Labs India.

The company is set to open a creche on the campus at subsidised rates for employees' children, which can house 250 kids.

In addition, women employees are given the option to work from home for up to six months after their maternity leave lapses. They are also given an option to work part-time, which requires employees to put in a minimum of 50 hours a week.

Many firms have opted for regular workshops to help women find a balance between their professional and personal lives.

American Express conducts sessions where women employees are given vital tips on childcare, health, and inspirational talks on how not to compromise on one's career, among other things.



Some firms have day care centres so that young mothers can take care of their little ones

SAP Labs India has initiated the Business Women's Network. Through this, women in mid-management level are identified and assigned a mentor, typically from the vice-president's level. They are lent a helping hand to deal with any kind of problem, along with assistance to get to the top of the ranks.

Radhika Balasubramaniam, COO, India domestic BPO operations, Intelnet, says over 50% of their workforce is women. Recognising the need to support them, the company offers flexible timings and working in break shifts, which works well for women living in the vicinity.

"Not just pregnant women, but also those with older children, need to be with their kids at crucial times, such as board exams. We are very supportive of their needs and work out options that suit them," said Balasubramaniam.

Celebrations like Women's Day and Mother's Day are also observed religiously by these corporate firms.



RICH MOM, POOR MOM: Regardless of whether a mother is a wealthy professional or a ragpicker on the streets, she hopes to give the best of what she can to her child

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'Both mom and ma'am must inspire'

DNA Correspondent

Motherhood is not merely about bringing up children; it's about moulding the child by imparting strong values. This is what Niru Agarwal, director of Greenwood High School, believes in.

Niru's passion for education, her belief in values, and her strong sense of culture were a value-add when she took over the reigns of the city's popular international school.

She believes that strong values such as honesty and integrity are important, as it lays the foundation for a responsible new generation.



At home, every mother should inculcate these values in her child and, at school, every teacher should strive for the same, she said.

To Niru, creativity is another factor that can help in a child's progress. At Greenwood's, unique and creative activities, such as a robotics class, are arranged.

Not every school provides this kind of extra-curricular subject. She also actively advocates chess, which is not a popular game among today's students.

Stressing on spirituality, she said that a certain amount of spiritual awareness should be inculcated in children. "Relevant

moral orientation is important for a child's growth," she pointed out.

She strongly believes that more is achieved by being a role model for the values espoused. Laying a strong emphasis on sharing, she said, "Sharing is the most important characteristic that needs to be ingrained in children. When that is in place, most other values fall in line," she said.

A student counseling session has also been set up in the school as it plays a crucial role in sensitising students on what is right and wrong.

(Niru Agarwal is the director of Greenwood High School)