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How to impact- diversity, inclusion and belonging for women

People Matters reached out to women leaders to understand challenges that are faced by women that prevent them from reaching the top and how they can take charge of their career.



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

Diversity has been a never-ending debate. Even after a lot of initiatives and policies implemented by organizations across the world, industries have some distance to cover to attain gender parity in its leadership roles. According to [LinkedIn data](#), women hold over 25% of all leadership positions globally. While the United States and Canada have the highest percentage of women in leadership, with one third holding roles director-level and above, India

Research conducted by LinkedIn and Bain & Company of more than 8,000 LinkedIn members – both female and male – found that 31% of women are more likely than men to question whether they have what it takes to advance in a leadership position. The data also accentuate the mindset gap between women and men. At entry-level, 65% of women aspire to reach the top, compared to 72% of men. This deficit stays with women into mid-career, meaning women are trailing men at a critical point in their professional journeys.

To gain more insights, Peoplematters reached out to women leaders to understand challenges that are faced by women that prevent them from reaching the top and how they can take charge of their career!



Harlina Sodhi, Senior Executive Vice President-HR, IDFC Bank

While there have been tsunamic changes in the way women have risen to leadership roles in recent past, it's important to know that their journey continue to be fraught with challenges, glass ceilings and stereotypes. What begins to happen over a period of time is that fatigue starts to set in due to continuous struggles to prove and outdo men at work, loss of energy having to deal repeatedly with same issues and stereotype conversations. So a kind of reverse cycle sets in from growth to decay. As women become more mature and senior in their roles, they start to realize the futility of warring to get leadership roles. Around this stage, their emotional maturity is high which coupled with their

heightened awareness of self-worth keeps them away from office politics and burnouts just to prove their point or score notch higher than others to win a lofty title!

Advice for Companies:

Organizations need to keep the agenda alive in the boardrooms. Ensure it is discussed and presented at all key business meetings such as quarterly results, annual reports, shareholders meet, annual day celebrations, customer and fundraising events. Businesses need to make inclusion as one of the company. Hardwire it into company core processes. Publicly promote causes and people who mentor and propel women forward and create level playing fields for them, those who willingly put their careers on line to argue merits of a women leadership.

Advice for Women:

Besides what has been spoken and discussed already, I would recommend the following:

1. Know yourselves well regarding what are your strengths, preferred style of working and communication, emotional quotient, ability, and threshold to cope with stress or change and either stay within those boundaries or learn to widen them seeking interventions.
2. Seek out, build and continuously nurture a wide network of support system. This should be leaders in the current organization, Ex bosses. Alumni of your B school/Ex Organization, affinity groups and social networks on LinkedIn and Twitter. The network will not only support you during times of life transitions but also make several new opportunities available for you.
3. Get a life coach who will along the journey help you unleash your potential in a systemic manner without prejudice and judgment. The safe space a coach creates backed by powerful questions and reflections is unprecedented regarding navigating changes and transitions at work and propelling one forward by not only resting the demons but by unleashing potential.

Lastly, I would say is that at times, when the weather is rough, it's ok to duck and lie low.w.

"Recharge your energies, learn new skills. Winds and waves will turn. Stay alert, agile and leap forward when the time is right.