

# Gender positivity at work

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There has been increasing conversation about inequalities amongst men and women at the workplace. The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum (WEF) shows that the gender gap is widening at an alarming rate. It is clear that progress is too little and too slow for realizing the potential of one half of humanity. Ensuring their healthy development has a vast bearing on the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and businesses worldwide.

Organizations need to take more decisive actions and treat gender diversity like a priority. The word, "equality", takes precedence when we talk about positive changes to be introduced within an organization. It emphasizes the need for bringing gender positivity at the workplace by driving discussion, promoting awareness and amending policies that aid in building an organization that holds the future. It requires closing gender gaps within the organization and taking bolder steps to create a respectful and inclusive culture that safeguards all employees.

A positive work culture is one wherein all employees feel trusted, valued, heard and comfortable bringing their 'whole' selves to work. Whilst, no one individual is responsible for creating an inclusive culture, the leadership sets the tone for the company. An inclusive work policy adapted at all levels of the hierarchy ensures the outstanding performance of the entire workforce. On the other hand, a biased workplace is likely to remain outdated with less diversity in ideation.

A brand culture, offering equal opportunities, that stands out and attracts talent from all over the world is the need of the hour. Men and women who get equal opportunities to showcase their talent, feel self-motivated in the workplace and prove to be highly productive for the organization. Employee Benefits are an opportunity to put the company's values into practice and helps to expand their support towards all employees.

The World Values Survey and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data has found a strong link between societal attitudes that limit women's potential and gender-equality outcomes. Besides affecting the role of women in work, cultural attitudes reinforce expectations about the roles that women are best equipped to play and can impact fundamental notions of their value in society. Therefore, recognizing the personal definitions of well-being, work-life balance and family care, form an integral part of any policy formation. Ensuring safety for women working long hours, flexibility in working arrangements for new mothers, extended maternity and paternity leaves, enabling grocery deliveries, day care services, work from home options and bring your child to work days are some of the ways that organizations can help employees to uphold their familial and

societal commitments and obligations. Financial assistance and certain housing benefits that help achieve the quintessential Indian dream of owning one's own home, go a long way in creating a supportive and all-inclusive workplace culture.

Organizations today need to be proactive in working towards breaking existing barriers and ensuring an equitable working environment for all employees. The only way that the world's perception about women can be changed is by bringing women into unbiased positions with pay parity across all levels in an organization. There is a huge responsibility on the shoulders of policymakers to act on gender positivity and implement changes. The overall gender perspective has to be transformed in order to enhance collaboration, talent acquisition, development and goodwill. Nevertheless, by defying the stereotypical approach and creating a conducive work culture that promotes gender positivity and attracts talented professionals, can lead to progressive outcomes and add to the overall performance of a company.

Recent surveys by the World Economic Forum (WEF) prove that gender equality is a complex problem that will take multiple years to resolve. We can, however, do our part and contribute towards creating a workplace culture that includes respects and elevates all employees. Other drivers of representation are hiring and promotions, and if done impartially at the entry-level itself, it can significantly reduce the

disparity, leading to a diverse representation at even the topmost positions within the organization. As per recent studies conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute, India has one of the largest opportunities in the world to boost its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by simply advancing women's equality and increasing women's participation in the labour force.

Creating a 'people first' company culture takes unconditional and ongoing commitment from every level of the organization: from executives to managers, human resources, administration, customer service representatives, entry-level employees, etc. It is indeed a team effort. Over the years, India has made considerable strides in opening access to education for girls, a vital enabler of macroeconomic productivity benefits as well as benefits to the individual. Ensuring that both women and men receive equal access to education and work opportunities will be vital in safeguarding growth and inclusion. Government measures - whether in the form of legislation, fiscal measures, programmatic changes, or public-private partnerships - have the potential to influence gender outcomes directly, or indirectly by targeting the society's economic development, cultural attitudes and beliefs. At the workplace, introducing learning and development programmes, enhancing commitment to and policies for gender balance can help accelerate these numbers.

The business case for diversity is compelling and continues to have global relevance. India is an incredibly diverse country, and businesses today should celebrate and thrive on the region's high level of cultural breadth to provide workplaces that are positive, supportive and conducive for all.