

## Flexicareer woman entrepreneur to look up to



A seed sown by an unrelated experience sometimes becomes a huge business idea. When Saundarya Rajesh visited the UK on a Chevening scholarship in 2005, she had an opportunity to interact with interim managers, professionals who worked only on part-time or project-based assignments. Thus was born AVTAR I-WIN network (Interim Women manager's Interface Network), India's first career service for enabling work-life integrated careers for women.

AVTAR was started in December 2000. The experience of her father as a first generation entrepreneur held her in good stead that she put her faith on people rather than products.

The concept of interim managers, called I-winners, did not find an easy passage initially. The I-winners themselves proved to be ambassadors for the concept and word of mouth expanded the network further. Diversity issues slowly started gaining ground and I-winners took off. The precursor to this, AVTAR I-WIN, which provides women with flexi-time and second career opportunities, was a research done by Saundarya in 2005 which showed that 45,000 to 50,000 professionals stepped off their career track owing to marriage or childbirth never to return again!

Starting with creating flexi-career tracks within an organization, AVTAR subsequently helped define the process for a flexi-career paradigm in organizations. Saundarya says, "AVTAR works towards a vision of making education and work worthwhile for women. Making women's careers sustainable is AVTAR's goal." TiE Chennai has also hired through I-WIN network, which should be heartening for Saundarya who has won the TiE Stree Shakthi award this year.