



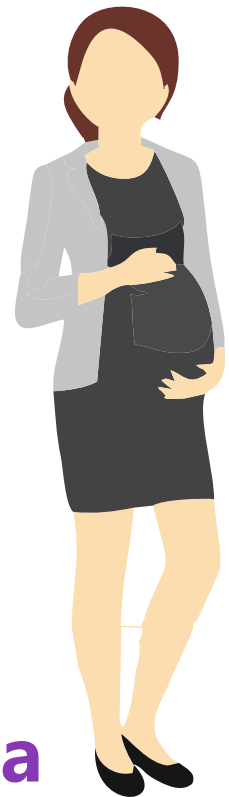
*MATERNITY
ENABLEMENT
FRAMEWORK*



Maternity Management in Corporate India



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FOREWORD

Dr. SAUNDARYA RAJESH Founder - President, AVTAR Group



Maternity management is as much a business conundrum, as it is societal, as it is familial! With organisations leaving no stone unturned on their path to gender balance, curated by inclusion, maternity management becomes a critical business issue. When we analyzed the data that emerged from 2017 the Working Mother and AVTAR Best Companies for Women in India study, one strong data point stood out. If organizations begin investing in women right at the entry level to the stage when she plays the twin role of being the primary care giver to her family as well as her professional demands, they benefit by way of lower attrition, greater engagement and better per capita productivity. And even more importantly, the empathy that the organization demonstrates by being there for the woman professional during one of the most significant milestones of her life, stands out as a non-transactional gesture.

Every day, the Indian Woman Professional (IWP) goes through the existential intersection of wanting to be intentional about her career while also being accountable for her personal commitments. The three usual suspects – the triple Ms (Marriage, Maternity and Mobility) – cause a pause or sometimes even a full break in a woman's career path. Among the three, Maternity breaks account for by far the largest proportion of derailment and as such are among the highest areas of concern for employees as well as the managers.

So when a woman employee takes the (in most cases) difficult decision of returning after a maternity break, what does she expect? Flexibility? Understanding? Respect? Acceptance? An equal opportunity to prove herself? Research states that all of this is true. Companies face a high women attrition rate as new moms come back to careers with a whole new identity. And the assumption that you are getting the same exact person is wrong. She comes with the added motherhood responsibilities, being the primary care taker of a young child.

This issue of VIEWPORT 2018, released on Mother's Day, deals with this very topic. Organizations should facilitate programs for the returning mother to welcome her back and provide all possible support making it easier for her to integrate work and life. Her work environment must be well-prepared to allow her to re-discover herself after the break. The entire eco-system can be an influencer and a catalyst to help her view maternity as a positive experience, not only personally but also professionally. There is no greater business case for a well-planned maternity phaseback program, than the sheer creation of women leaders who have found an understanding manager and an empathetic workplace when they most needed it.

Warm Regards,

Dr. Saundarya Rajesh



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conversations around maternity are an integral part of organizational journeys towards gender inclusion. Acknowledging this critical phase of life for women and enabling it, is becoming a business priority for organizations; more so in the wake of the recent amendment to the Maternity Benefit Act. From leveraging technology to enabling the lives of moms-to-be to ensuring emotional well-being of returning mothers, organizational initiatives towards maternity management span a broad spectrum. The good news is that in the realm of maternity management, the focus is not exclusively on the woman employee who is traversing the maternity phase, but also on the entire ecosystem – the mindsets and apprehensions of the line managers, the reactive mechanisms of her team-mates and the extent of infrastructural inclusion. The focus is on inclusive work environment sans biases and stereotypical notions!

As thought orchestrators of the Diversity & Inclusion agendas for several intentional organizations, AVTAR strives to create metamorphic alliances between the industry and the women's workforce in the country, by actively engaging in their diversity conversations. Starting 2011, AVTAR has been conducting SEGUE sessions, India's first large format skill building and networking program for women seeking transitions in their careers. SEGUE received a makeover last year to address a very specific transition – that of maternity. In the last two SEGUE

sessions in 2017 (Mumbai) and 2018 (Bangalore), the focus was on maternity phaseback and how organizations are gearing up to retain and reintegrate women talent during and after maternity phases.

VIEWPORT 2018, discusses maternity management through this organizational lens, also channelizing the challenges faced by the maternity transition-ers. A contributed effort of over 150 organizational leaders from 30 different organizations– D&I practitioners and business leaders from across industries and sectors, SEGUE sessions resulted in several learnings as a result of the discussions at the conference sessions. The key discussion points on the knowledge exchange platform of SEGUE inclusive of organizational challenges during maternity, solutions to the same and best practices are compiled in this report. The report throws light on challenges new mothers face during the maternity phase, as a result of discussions with 275 mothers as part of AVTAR's outreach programmes. The report also showcases role model organizations from Corporate India whose strategic practices have resulted in above par maternity retention rates in their workplaces. VIEWPORT 2018 also throws light on the impact of best practices for maternity management in the Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best companies for Women in India, the flagbearers of the intent on gender inclusion, in the country today.



INTRODUCTION

Glass ceilings and sticky floors are two metaphoric terms coined by social researchers to describe skewed gender ratios in the corporate world. India Inc., being no exception to the career architectures of the contemporary world, this is a phenomenon that is prevalent here as well. True that these invisible barriers based on the structural existence of corporate operations slacken the pace of career success for women; but it may be noted that the impact of life events on women careers is significantly higher, more so in the Indian socio-cultural milieu. This is further explained by the fact that critical career decisions for Indian Women Professionals are very often influenced by societal expectations on them – to become the nurturer, to be the nurturer!

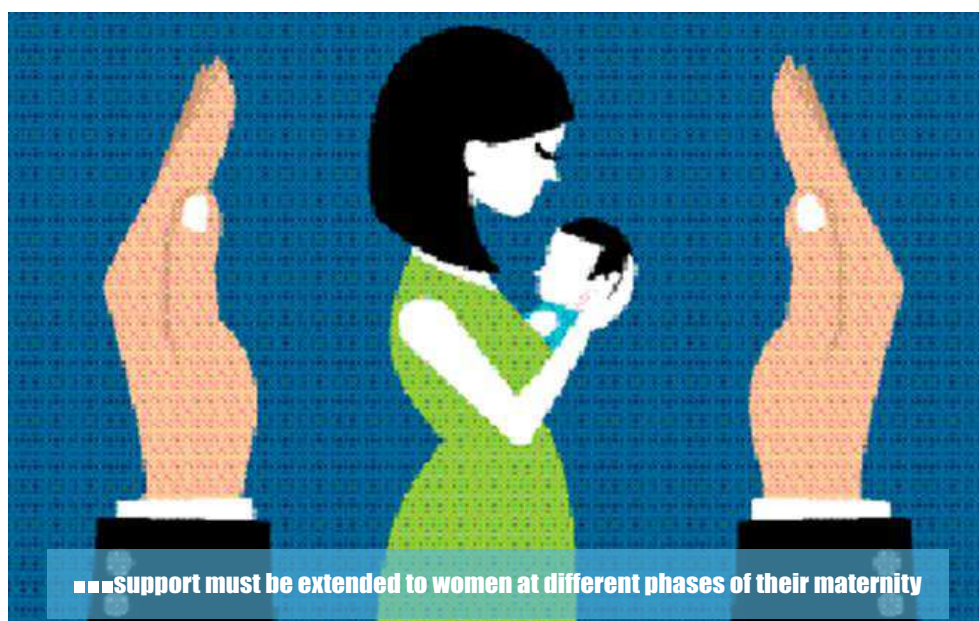
The country has seen a sharp increase in women making it to graduation – for the record, 46% of university graduates in India today, are women; ironically women are seen missing at the workplace – from 27% at entry levels to 15% at mid management levels to 5% at senior management levels. It is heartening to note that the legislative machinery in the country is intent on improving workforce participation rate of women in the country, further pronounced by the recent amendment in the Maternity Benefit Act. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 witnessed a progressive amendment in the year 2017. The amendment more than doubled the duration of fully paid maternity leave for women from 12 weeks to 26 weeks. The Act also extends the maternity benefit to adoptive and commissioning mothers. It also proposes “Work from Home” option after the expiry of 26 weeks leave period and mandatory crèche facility for every establishment with 50 or more employees. This amendment is applicable to all establishments employing 10 or more people, and is expected to benefit over one million women in the organized sector.

Viewing this amendment in the context of about half of professional women in India quitting work at the altar of

motherhood, it becomes pertinent to understand what Corporate India's role can be in terms of ensuring career sustainability. While career enablers that support the work-life integration patterns of women (at different life and career stages), like work flexibility and day care services, have proven to directly impact the retention of women, this report will throw light on the status quo of 'Maternity Enablement Framework' in India Inc. It will also examine the impact of these enablers on the Career Continuity of Indian Women Professionals, specifically along the “Maternity Continuum”. This research also helped establish the fact that India Inc. is intent on making this enablement framework – “comprehensive” – by devising parental provisions that are not mere leaves but incorporating policies and programs to cater to the professional, personal and emotional well-being of employees.

This report will explore in great depth, the frameworks of support that are extended to women at different phases of their maternity – pre, during and post their maternity breaks, which together constitute the maternity enablement framework. After reviewing the career continuity patterns of Indian Women Professionals and the several factors impacting continuity (detering sustainability), the report moves on to present a global literature review of such frameworks of support. The key challenges at different phases along the maternity continuum are then presented, followed by recommendations towards successful instantiation of the enablement framework aka solutions. The report also features a “Company speak” segment that will showcase some of the best practices by discerning organisations in the space of maternity enablement.

The report concludes with a discussion on the impact of best practices on maternity management in the 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Companies for Women in India.



CAREER CONTINUITY OF INDIAN WOMEN PROFESSIONALS

Much has been talked about the careers of the Indian women of today. There are reasons to cheer as every passing day is witness to an increasing number of intentional, young Indian women enrolling for graduate and post graduate education in universities across the country, around the world. With enviable academic records from prestigious institutions, it is heartening to see Indian women marching ahead alongside their male counterparts in fields as diverse as Information Technology, core manufacturing or banking and financial sectors. But how continuous are the career journeys of these women? How can one explain the reality behind this statement, "In spite of women making up to 46 percent of college graduates in India, there are less than 5 percent of senior level women executives in India"? What happens to their careers midway?

The answers can be in fact traced back to the social roles a typical Indian woman plays in her society. Research shows that an average Indian woman's career trajectory is markedly different from that of an average Indian man's, especially around the aspiration around work-life integration. In AVTAR's 2015 research on career trajectories of Indian professionals, we found that for a whopping 72% of women at the mid-career level, work-life integration was their most significant career aspiration, as against 61% of men. It is undisputed that women world over continue to be the primary caregivers to their children, more so in the Indian-cultural context. While an Indian woman does everything within her ability to attain a respectable education, her career curve is often determined by the responsibilities she is secured with by virtue of being a wife, a mother, a daughter, a daughter-in-law et.al – the conundrum of "dual burden" steps in, with women continuing to be responsible for the lioness' share of household work, alongside their professional commitments. As she enters the institution of marriage, and over a period of time dons the role of a mother, caring responsibilities and household chores demand more of her attention. Mobility also becomes a challenge, with global roles today requiring frequent business travel. Careers take a backseat and succumbing to the pressure of the juggling act many women choose to quit work. Such career breaks make their professional journeys discontinuous and the collective result is a huge drain of female resources along the talent pipeline. In a nutshell, a woman professional's career path is very often influenced by the three Ms – Marriage, Maternity and Mobility as also the consequential three Cs – Cooking, Cleaning and Caring.

For the records, India's gender chore gap, the difference between the amount of housework done by women and men, is the largest of any country for which data is available, according to World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report 2014^[3]; women spend on an average 300 more minutes than men, every single day attending to household chores^[9].

Time Spent doing Household Chores

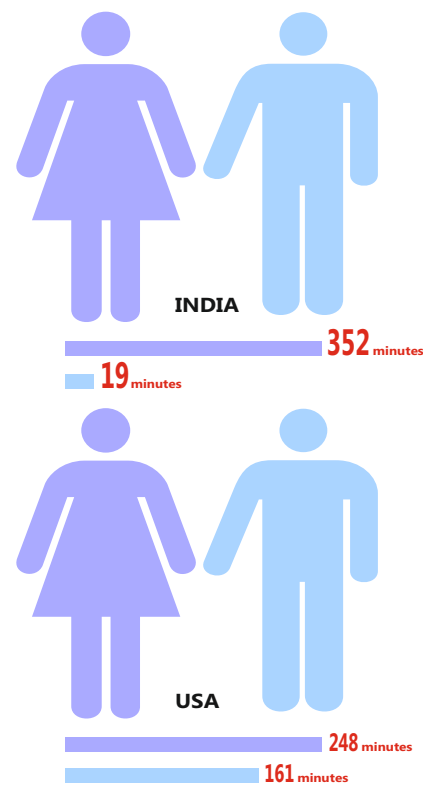


Figure 1: Gender chore gap, Source: World Economic Forum

Furthermore, the chore gap is most pronounced in cities, rather than in villages. Among women surveyed by India's National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in 2011-12, around 39% in rural areas and about 50% in urban areas spent most of their time on domestic duties. Of those women about 60% in rural areas and 64% in urban areas did so because there was nobody else to carry out the domestic duties. To summarize, the dual burden conundrum is real and something that the maternity enablement framework should necessarily address.



MATERNITY CHALLENGES AND ENABLEMENT: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The recent amendment to the Maternity Benefit Act has placed India as the third best country in terms of the length of paid maternity leave given to women, ahead of most countries (France, Germany, Australia, Japan and the US) in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. This laudable, welcome move, however, will have to be ably supplemented by additional frameworks of support to create the necessary impact. A quick look on how maternity related challenges unfolds across the globe as also how the maternity enablement framework executes itself, is given below.

- A US-based research (2015), states that close to 42% of mothers with children under the age of one, were not participating in the workforce. Baggallay (2011) suggests that often corporate culture is not conducive to talented women returning to the workplace operating effectively in the workplace whilst handling their domestic obligations.
- Hewlett (2013) study observed that 36% of Indian women take a break from their work – 75% of the women take a break for childcare post maternity.
- According to UN Women, “the female participation in the workforce (India) has been diminishing in recent years, with only 22% of women in working in the formal economy which well below the global average of 47% (www.ft.com)
- Gerber (2000) suggests that it is imperative that the career breaks, especially in maternity leave, need to be accommodated in order to constructively leverage the training and development invested in female employees by the organisation.
- A McKinsey (2010) report re-emphasizes the impact of “double burden syndrome” on women careers. The fine equilibrium that improved levels of work-life integration can provide can become career clinchers for women.
- Lucas (2013) study among South African women professionals identified common themes arising from experience of returning to work following maternity.
- Researchers Craig and Powell (2012), Chung (2016) also reconfirmed the notion that employers who are receptive to the evolution of best practices for enabling the maternity-phase are successful in retaining their talent pool.
- In the words of Morris (2008) despite strengthened legislation and in some cases, enhanced organizational benefits, one in three women, for various reasons, find it difficult or very difficult to return to work after maternity leave.
- Researchers Barrow (1998), Lyness et al. (1999), Mosisa et al. (2006), Morris (2008) and Li et al. (2014) have emphasized and periodically scrutinized the confronts faced by pregnant women employees and their experiences subsequent to maternity leave within developed countries. It is observed that 48 percent of women quit their jobs because of unfavourable maternity policies at their workplace.
- Researchers Houston and Marks (2003) and Millward (2006) echo that the effective management of maternity leave involve managers, colleagues and the women themselves. This in turn will have a direct influence on an employee's decision to return to work.
- According to Millward, (2006) a new mother's decision to return to work can be affected by feelings of guilt and self-doubt about whether a woman can be both a good mother and a good employee.
- Beck and LeaveLogic Founder and CEO Anna Steffeney unearths another issue faced by most working women especially in C-suites during their return to work post-pregnancy - should return to the same job or a similar job if the original job no longer exists.
- In the United States, the Washington State's government allows new parents to bring their babies to work with them until they are six months old through the maternal action program - Infant at Work programs.



MATERNITY ENABLEMENT FRAMEWORK ALONG THE MATERNITY CONTINUUM

What is the maternity enablement framework? In simple terms, it is a relationship-based care model that organizations implement, integrated across different facets of a woman employee's maternity cycle. They are frameworks of support extended by an organization to enable the maternity transition of women. This framework is made up of three phases, beginning with pre-maternity enablers, moving to during- maternity enablers and culminating with post-maternity enablers. They ensure that women employees are heard and have their professional and personal needs met during this extremely critical life stage – pregnancy & maternity.

The maternity enablement framework springs into action as a woman employee traverses the maternity continuum at her organisation. Maternity continuum refers to phases of maternity that a woman professional goes through in the event of pregnancy; the phases being pre-maternity, during maternity and post maternity. The continuum traces a woman professional's journey through the pregnancy stage up to rejoining post maternity leave. Fig.2 depicts the maternity continuum in greater detail:

THE MATERNITY CONTINUUM

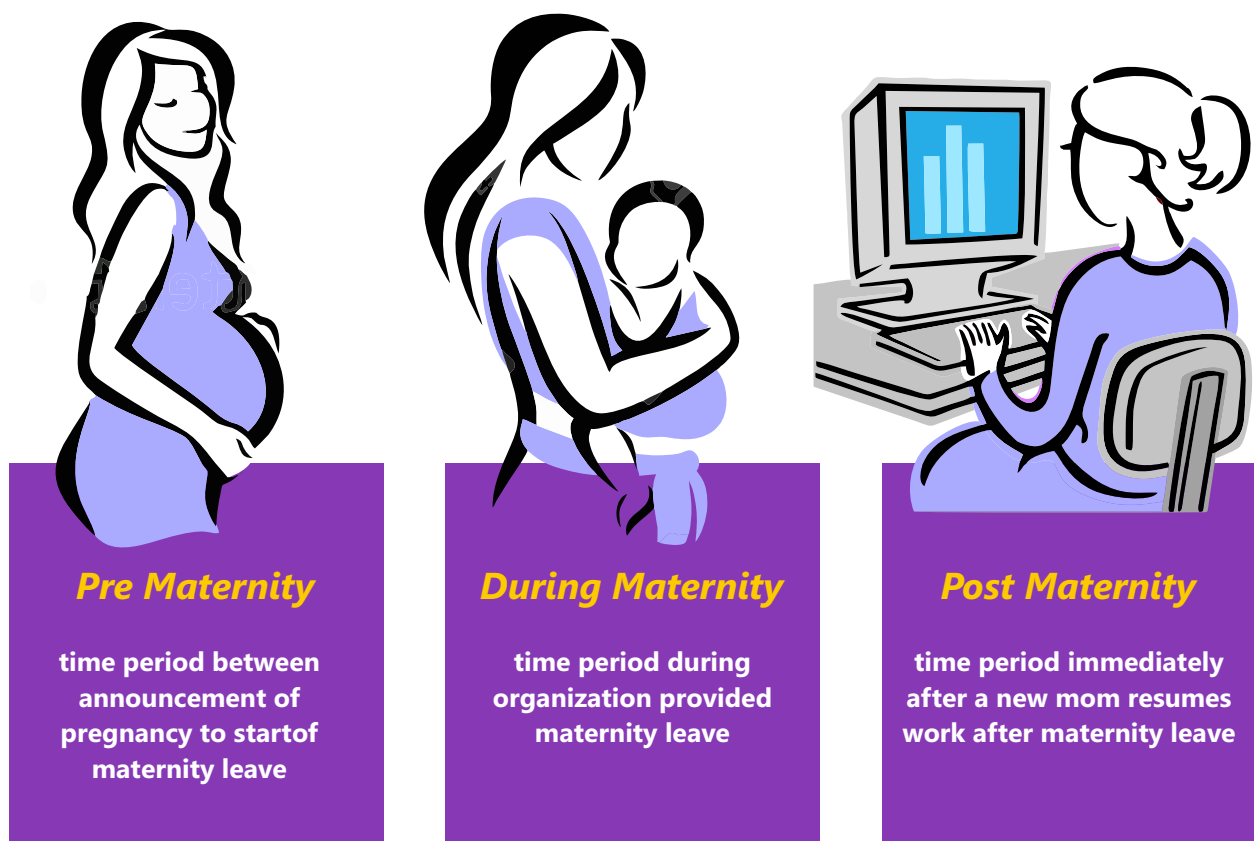


Figure 2 : Maternity Continuum



CHALLENGES ALONG THE MATERNITY CONTINUUM

This section will discuss the typical challenges an Indian Woman Professional and her professional ecosystem, faces along the maternity continuum. To also address the challenges that organizations face as they enable the maternity journeys of their women employees, every challenge in this section has been segmented into two – “Mother’s speak” – referring to the woman professional’s challenge and “Manager’s speak” – referring to the challenges that organization (specifically the woman employee’s manager) faces. These challenges were compiled as a result of focus group discussions that were hosted at SEGUE Sessions, Bangalore – 2018 and discussions with 275 mothers as part of AVTAR’s outreach programmes.

Challenges in pre maternity phase: It’s a bump(y) ride

Mother’s speak	Manager’s speak
Communication Conundrum Many women are unsure of the right time of announcing their pregnancy news to their managers. They fear a possible pause in the path of career progression. 68% of women said that deciding on the appropriate time to communicate gave them additional stress, especially when their rapports with their managers weren’t going great	Communication Conundrum The employer is in a dilemma whether or not the employee will continue in the organization once an employee announces her pregnancy. Apprehensions about her health and the need for a temporary succession plan to ensure business continuity, are amongst their worries. At least 62% of managers felt that due to a delay in the pregnant employee communicating the news of pregnancy to them, they had to realign project plans and executions in the past.
Career Uncertainty Mothers-to-be worry about the slowing down of their careers that manifest in various forms, such as a most awaited project getting passed on to a team mate; an important travel being put on hold; and sometimes even a promotion not being given just because she announced her pregnant status. 88% of women felt that, in the absence of guidance and support from mentors, managing uncertainty was a huge challenge, especially when there were health challenges involved.	Career Uncertainty Even for the most progressive-minded and a receptive manager, a pregnancy announcement, creates a cascade effect – the need to plan for eventualities and address uncertainties, becomes a necessity. 95% of leaders / managers opined that this was a critical challenge, especially when maternity leaves were taken when women were at junior levels.
Health Problems The first and the last trimesters of pregnancy are critical to a woman who is traversing pregnancy – health challenges include morning sickness, dizziness, and backache at a later stage and sore feet. Mothers-to-be worry about the impact that it will have on their work. 70% of women felt that managing the bad health days during pregnancy was an issue, if they weren’t able to plan in advance and negotiate flexibility.	Health Problems The employer is concerned about a pregnant employer’s health, getting further impacted by work-related stress. Also, if the work demands extensive travel within the city and beyond, the employer contemplates withdrawing those responsibilities from the employee. 78% of managers reported to have had concerns about health management of their pregnant team-mates, especially when there were long commutes involved.
Unplanned Leaves As pregnancy progresses, invariably there will be many unforeseen leaves that a mother-to-be is forced to take. It could be because of a bout of bad morning sickness, general tiredness, or in unfortunate circumstances, huge health challenges. Pregnant women often express concern over managing these unplanned leaves. 59% of women said that the aftermath of unplanned leaves was huge and put additional stress on them.	Unplanned Leaves The biggest concern most line managers have, once an employee announces her pregnancy is on how to build an alternate resource equivalent in talent to fill in for her unanticipated temporary absence. 61% of managers felt that this was a huge challenge impacting business continuity, especially when the woman employee was in client facing roles or was not an individual contributor.



Challenges during the maternity phase: A pregnant Pause

Mother's speak

Insecurity

A widely prevalent issue around job for a to-be-mother is job security. The fear of being substituted hovers in her mind as she is on her maternity break. Having been in the thick of her career, now being at home voluntarily, she doesn't want to be in a situation where she returns to work only to find someone else in her profile. 87% of women were worried about their roles being taken over by other employees, during their absence. New mothers reported to harbour this concern, especially after the initial, exhausting days post-delivery were over and they geared up for their comebacks.

Connectivity

Being physically away from the workplace, leaves an employee (read: new mother) disconnected with the organization and peers as well. This could create a huge communication gap between the employer and employee, feel many new mothers who are on their maternity leaves. 76% of women agreed that this was a huge challenge, especially when they did not have proper support systems during their maternity phase. Staying connected often fell off their priority list. 63% of new mothers agreed to this being a challenge, especially when conversations around emotional well-being are not common in the Indian context.

Emotional Quotient

Even the most successful career women keep their emotional struggles to themselves because either they feel they shouldn't be seen as weak or they don't have a confidante they can trust. This happens more so during the maternity phase when the emotions are riding high for women with hormonal fluctuations and lack of sleep.

Mental Preparedness for the Comeback

Being away from work during the maternity phase, young mothers have to tide over the feeling of loss of technical agility, as they prepare for the comeback. They are further bogged down on various aspects of post maternity stage - child care, job role, organizational changes, etc. 42% of women said that even though they had begun visualizing their returns right from the beginning of their pregnancy, as their leave drew to a close, they felt themselves grappling with confusions about the comeback.

Manager's speak

Insecurity

As much as an employee is unsure of her acceptance on her return from pregnancy, her employer is skeptical if she will return to the same role or not. The manager also has to manage her workload which means delegating her work to other employees in the same team which if not well planned might result in overloading them. While 51% of managers said that their organizations combated this challenge by helping women plan the leave and the transition back, the rest felt that this was definitely a point of concern.

Connectivity

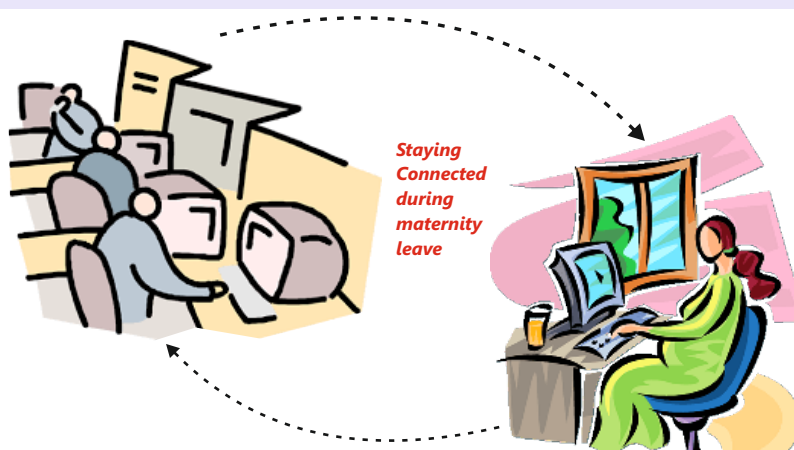
When an employee leaves for a maternity break, the manager is concerned about maintaining channels of connectivity with her, without seeming intrusive. They worry over time appropriateness, and coming across as non-understanding / insensitive. This was reported to be a critical challenge by 91% of managers - they felt that attempts to stay connected often remained passive, a one-way bridge. They feared that greater push from their end could be misconstrued as intrusion.

Emotional Quotient

During the maternity phase, the manager is skeptical to connect with a woman employee fearing an addition to the emotional baggage she is already carrying. 82% of managers felt that this was a common challenge, which if not managed could result in the woman employee dropping off the workforce.

Mental Preparedness for the Comeback

The manager is also in a dilemma on when to start preparing for an employee to return from maternity. The reintegration process also poses the challenge of preparing her entire team that worked with her that is now getting used to not having the said employee around. 62% of managers said that they have observed new mothers who came back without sufficient mental readiness, to be finding the integration phase tougher against the context of guilt.



Challenges during post maternity phase: Taking Baby steps

Mother's speak	Manager's speak
Work Life Integration At least three out of five of young mothers who intend getting back to careers or already back in careers find getting back to work after a baby, an incredibly daunting and difficult experience. The biggest concern is on how they would shuffle between multiple responsibilities that come with motherhood. 76% of women said that in spite of having the support of their families, they found themselves constantly worrying about their babies while at work, during the initial days of return.	Work Life Integration To make reintegration smoother, managers end up reducing maternity returners' responsibilities or changing their roles that would ease up their work-related pressure. In some cases, managers end up overlooking under performance of a new mother without communicating the same to her, not wanting to add more to their work-life integration worries. This sometimes hamper team effectiveness. 71% of managers said that in the wake of insufficient support from organizations (especially around child care), this challenge made the reintegration phases less smoother.
Role Change Technological advancements and changes are so rapid that it is very often difficult for someone returning from a maternity break to cope with. They find themselves lagging behind in technical skills and coping with social changes in the work environment, becomes a challenge. 22% of women reported this to be a challenge. The rest felt that this was a manageable challenge, especially with access to several e-learning platforms, some of which are organization provided.	Role Change As women returners acclimatize themselves with technological advancements and other changes in the organization on their return, managers find it challenging to fit them pronto into their previously held roles. 37% of managers said that they have observed the changes impacting the returns of new mothers.
Work Flexibility Negotiating flexibility is a concern for many returning mothers. If not supported by organizational policy, they worry if their requests for flexibility would be considered sensitively. 67% of women said that in the absence of an equitable flexible working environment, they found the returns more stressful.	Work Flexibility While managers are open to provide the option of flexible working hours to maternity returners, it becomes a challenge if it is not supported by organizational policy or guidelines. In roles that require team effort, the manager also needs to sensitize other team-members about collaborating with this flexible worker. 62% of managers said that they have faced this challenge, especially when requests for flexibility from new mothers were made in an unplanned manner.



MANAGING THE MATERNITY CONTINUUM:

SOME SOLUTIONS

This section will further recommend some key solutions that an Indian Woman Professional and her professional ecosystem, can implement along the maternity continuum. Every solution in this section has also been segmented into two – “For Mothers” and “For Managers”. These solutions were also compiled as a result of focus group discussions on the same that were hosted at SEGUE Sessions, Bangalore – 2018 and from the Working Mother and AVTAR Best Companies for women in India study.

Pre-maternity Phase: Time it but don't Time out

For Mothers	For Managers
Breaking the Communication Gap There is never a good time or a bad time to announce the Big news to one's manager. Disclosing the pregnancy, early will allow a woman employee to have enough time to strategize and plan her professional journey well ahead.	Breaking the Communication Gap For a line manager maternity news sounds more like a never ending nightmare. However, organizations must sensitize managers on “maternity news preparedness” – which means, a manager should not only display signs of happiness to his/her employee, but also be willing to have an open conversation to keep the momentum going for the female worker's career path.
Career Uncertainty Eight out of ten women professionals go on a maternity break forcing a temporary pause on their careers. But these breaks do not necessarily signal the end of their careers. More important, this has to be communicated their managers. It is imperative for women to constantly display their intentionality towards their careers.	Career Uncertainty Among the 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Companies for women in India, 67% have structured maternity phaseback programs (structured reintegration programs for returning mothers) to enable maternity continuity for their women professionals thereby securing their jobs on their return. A powerful post maternity tool will enable support in reinstating returning mothers and thereby reducing talent attrition.
Health Problems Instead of getting bogged down by health challenges that curb one's ability to perform certain tasks and functions, women professionals must keep reminding themselves that the phase is temporary. While it is fair on their part to expect managers to make those health based accommodations, women also should direct efforts towards managing their health	Health Problems While it is true that many managers have pre conceived notions on pregnancy and pregnant mothers, it is also a proven fact that the mindsets are changing across companies. Today, many companies offer pre natal programs and lactation consulting to pregnant workers aiding them in their transition from being just a career woman to a working mother.
Unplanned Leaves During the course of nine months before the little one arrives, several physiological changes leave women stressed out more physically. Instead of taking unplanned sick leaves during pregnancy, it is recommended that a pregnant woman approaches her manager with a business case presenting her need to avail of flexible working options.	Unplanned Leaves As organizations evolve to set the tone right on removing those “unconscious biases”, policies and frameworks are also being formed keeping in mind all the practical requirements of working professionals, especially pregnant employees. To take cue from those who have successfully implemented their tweaked policies, Novartis Healthcare, a 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Company for Women in India provides reduced work hours for pregnant associates and unlimited sick leave. In another case, Thoughtworks, a global technology consultancy firm offers trust-based unlimited sick leave to its employees.



During Maternity: Keep One Foot out the Door

For Mothers	For Managers
Insecurity Returning to your company after having the baby to the same role can be made a lot easier than it appears. Overcoming the insecurity by keeping the communication line open with their line managers, peers and co-workers is important. It would be a good idea to host a coffee meet or go out for a meal with team members and line manager taking time out in between changing diapers and feeding.	Insecurity Pregnancy is still perceived as a career derailment by most managers and leaders even today. However, many companies that have built policies to ensure job security for maternity returners. Sony Pictures, the entertainment company has maternity cover options to ensure role security while an expectant mother is away for six months or more.
Connectivity Technological advancements have made it near impossible for anyone to stay incommunicado at any given point in life. It is important that women identify the right person/right people to remain connected with during their maternity phase. Other than being connected with the organization, it is also important to stay in tune with the current affairs related to your line of work.	Connectivity New age managers across industries feel that women on maternity break respond to engagement efforts from the organization. Over 24% of the 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Companies for Women in India provide a refresher course to women who are on a sabbatical post child birth to enable them to stay abreast with latest in the industry.
Emotional Quotient The transition back to employment after a long sabbatical during pregnancy and post child birth can be fraught with confusion, frustrations, questions and sometimes depression. One common mistake that most women employees make is to not talk about their state of minds and/or seek professional help.. It is also recommended that women professionals seek out help from their mentors or if required, qualified professional help.	Emotional Quotient Companies today are intentional about the overall well-being of their employees, emotional well-being critical. Amongst 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR Top 10 Best Companies for Women in India, eight reported to provide professional medical support to all the women suffering from post-partum depression/stress, in particular.
Mental Preparedness for the Comeback Returning to work post maternity can be both exciting and a nerve-racking exercise. As if the guilt of leaving the little one behind to work is not enough returning mothers also have to deal with what many corporates call as job anxiety –role changes, need for flexibility etc. It is important that mothers need to prepare themselves mentally and plan their returns well in advance. This includes identifying reliable support systems for child care and mentally preparing oneself to stay physically away from the child for a certain amount of time, post return. Make the transition from being a new mom to a working mother easier by planning and thinking well ahead before the joining date.	Mental Preparedness for the Comeback Realizing the need to engage the large talent pool that goes on pause during maternity break many companies have developed systems and processes that help keep the pregnant employees engaged with the organization. For example, providing coaching both managers and employees to understand the emotional conflicts during pregnancy and after child birth, in respect to career development. Such initiatives helps the manager to not only celebrate a pregnant employee's personal milestone, but also to help her plan and prepare for the return, methodically





Post Maternity: What women Want

For Mothers	For Managers
Work Life Integration Managing both home and career is like a tight rope walk with family on one side and work, the other. This gets worse in the Indian context where there is a huge gender chore gap and the pole that a woman holds on the rope gets heavier by the day. It is recommended that young mothers look out for sisterhood, mentors, buddy groups within their organizations that provide support and guidance in areas such as career aspirations, work life integration, life stage changes etc. through discussions.	Work Life Integration From an organization's perspective enabling work life integration needs of employees is quintessential to a win-win situation for higher efficiencies and overall growth of the company. Especially so, when a woman employee is a new parent. Apart from creating networks from young parents, organizations could also showcase role model women who rose to leadership successfully navigating their maternity returns.
Work Flexibility Flexible work timings, work from home options and telecommuting are policies that encourage and motivate women who go on a sabbatical especially for child bearing, to get back to work. Whether it is less work hours in a week or a work from home, every working mom needs a little amount of flexibility at work. When presenting one's case for flexibility, it is important that the woman professional does so amply supported by details on how she has planned to function flexibly for work flexibility give him/her the business case on why you need flex timing and reduced week hours. While you request for a flexi work option keep in mind your employer is paying for your service and there has to be a win-win situation for both you and the organization.	Work Flexibility Flexible employment model is helping many companies in attracting and retaining talent especially women. Some of the evolving trends that have emerged in the 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Companies for Women in India to work for in India include flexi timing, telecommuting, remote work options, partial work and partial pay and compressed work schedules. Almost as much as 46% of the 2017-100 Best companies also train managers to help flexible workers.
Role Change Return to work after a maternity break is rough, what makes it even more challenging is reintegrating to the role. Women returning after maternity breaks might want to prepare themselves for taking over their previous roles or alternately move to roles that might grant them greater autonomy over their schedules.	Role Change It is important that organizations plan ahead on the role maternity returners are to take, also dependent on the function/level they are at during that phase. This plan also has to factor in the aspirations and needs of the maternity returners.



ROLE MODELS: COMPANIES SPEAK

In this section, we demonstrate case studies from role model organizations that have efficiently and effectively managed maternity for their valuable women talent.

Deloitte in India – 2016, 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR Top 10 Best Company for Women in India

We all need support. Women, more so at the time of maternity. As a special case Deloitte in India allows for mothers-to-be to get their food heated and served at their desks including healthy eating options like salads, sprouts and fruit juices. They arrange for support tips for the reporting manager, husband and colleagues to ensure they take special care of the new mother. The company also reimburses expenses for their commute to office to encourage them to travel safe. When the mother returns to work, Deloitte ensures a 'soft landing', from home for a month, and when she is back at office she is deputed on projects that can help her wind up early in the day to take care of the baby at home. The company also stays connected through the maternity phase and asks the managers to call up the mother to make her feel connected to her workplace.

"While no organization can claim to have solved its dilemmas over how to balance the needs of working women and child care, we at Deloitte have always piloted initiatives that create an environment for women that promote equal opportunities and treatment in employment and occupation without prejudice to health or economic security. Our maternity enablement benefits have reinforced our image as an firm that cares for its people."

N.C. Hegde,
Partner, Deloitte.



Dr. Reddy's Laboratories – 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Company for Women in India

The buddy mothers program is Dr. Reddy's' in-house support group for expecting women, was created with the aim of providing best-in-class experience to our women during their maternity phase.

This program aims to connect women employees going on maternity with a "Buddy Mother" who will help the women employee by addressing all workplace related apprehensions. A few enterprising women from each business unit have volunteered to be Buddies and to help women who are Pregnant/on Maternity Leave/ New Mothers, overcome stress and anxiety during this period.

The buddies listen to the concerns of expecting/new mothers and offer suggestions/advice on how best to overcome these challenges, keep in touch with employees during the leave period, share personal stories of motherhood and offer clarification on Maternity Policies.

"The buddy mothers program is our way of providing a nurturing and caring environment for expecting mothers. It lets them know they're not alone in feeling a certain way, and that they can reach out to their fellow women colleagues and learn from their experiences."

Namrata Gill Tyagi,
VP Corporate HR, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories



K Raheja Corp: 2016, 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Company for Women in India

To support the female employees through their journey of motherhood and to nurture the little bundle of joy, K Raheja Corp have a 26-week maternity leave policy. Aanchal Maternity Support Program encompasses initiatives and practices to support new mothers achieve work-life balance. Benefits under this includes reduced working hours to 7 hours, work from home, transport allowance and reserved parking space. During maternity leave, the employee is kept updated on any critical developments at the work place through a friend in the team - *My Saheli*. The new mother and baby are given a gift basket and HR stays connected on well-being and progress of mother and child at regular intervals. Post maternity leave, new mothers are seamlessly blended back in the environment through initiatives like Crèche facility, reduced work hours to 7 hours for initial one month & counselling session with Head HR for re-instating the support of the Company. This has helped 98% of their women workforce return to mainstream jobs as against cases where women extend maternity leave / take a sabbatical / quit the Company.



"At K Raheja Corp we have created equal opportunities workspace, and have zero tolerance for pregnancy discrimination. We do not discriminate amongst our women employees because of any maternity related occurrence whether pregnancy or a medical condition as an outcome of it, or even if they take time off during the adoption of a child, which is seeing an increase today. We believe the emotional intelligence of women goes a long way in making strategic decisions, in everyday business functioning. Our women employees are equally represented across functions from sales to engineering and from architecture to contracts, and we endeavor to help them glide through their maternity phase and continue to perform at work with élan!"

Urvi Aradhya

Chief Human Resources Officer, K Raheja Corp

Thoughtworks - 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Company for Women in India

ThoughtWorks commitment to gender inclusion and providing an eco-system for women technologists to grow, influences their policies, hiring agenda, leadership development programs and inclusion strategy. Most of their flexible time policies and practices are gender neutral encouraging an eco-system wide change favouring a balance of responsibilities in parenting. ThoughtWorks announced an extension of its Maternity Leave to 180 days in August 2015, ahead of the amendment in the mandate. Apart from the extension, the company also offers a lot of flexibility in working arrangements post the leave. Working mothers can avail annual leave and part-time working options. Their medical insurance policy provides benefits to mothers and the newborn. They have tie-ups with Cloud 9, a pregnancy and maternity care hospital for discounted consultation, diagnosis and scans. The 4D scan, typically carried out in the last trimester of pregnancy, is free for ThoughtWorkers.

ThoughtWorks India has seen many instances where the company hires women during the last trimester of their pregnancy and provides them with all the support, they need to continue their careers. They realise that each parent's need varies in terms of support required and we provide customized options to suit each their situations. This includes role specific support, mentoring, training support or an option to be assigned to projects that suit the individual's requirements.

The company also invests in internal training programs that focus on Inclusion and Overcoming Implicit Bias. This helps them maintain an inclusive culture that overcomes unconscious bias and provides a safe space.



"ThoughtWorks has always believed in providing a safe and equitable workspace for women in which they can be themselves and find opportunities to thrive in their careers. We've rolled out multiple programs to support women technologists at all stages of their careers both internally and externally, one of which is Vapasi. This program is aimed at returning mothers. ThoughtWorks will continue to be invested in creating and supporting a future workforce that is more balanced, diverse and inclusive."

Kaushik Ghosh

Head of People, ThoughtWorks India.



MATERNITY ENABLEMENT FRAMEWORK IN 2017

WORKING MOTHER AND AVTAR

100 BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

Here, we present a snapshot of the maternity enablement framework at the 2017 Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Companies for Women in India (2017-100 Best). This is a reinforcement of the intent and commitment of these organizations towards enabling the maternity journeys of their women employees. The 2017-100 Best recorded only 10% maternity attrition, to mean that on an average 90% of women who took maternity leave at the 2017-100 Best, joined work back post completion of their leaves. Table 1 shows the distribution of some of the critical maternity enablement systems in the 2017-100 Best.

Table 1 : Existence of Maternity Enablers in 2017-100 Best

Pre-Maternity		During Maternity		Post-Maternity	
Enabler	% of 2017-100 Best that offer this enabler	Enabler	% of 2017-100 Best that offer this enabler	Enabler	% of 2017-100 Best that offer this enabler
Maternity leave coaching (Training imparted to managers of pregnant women employees to plan and prepare for maternity transition)	51%	Customized apps to stay in touch	21%	Phaseback programs (structured reintegration programs for smooth reintegration of maternity returners, back to their roles.)	66%
		E-learning courses/platforms	27%		
Work flexibility	98%	Buddy systems	58%	Postpartum stress/depression	38%
		Career conversations with managers	65%	On-site child care	34%
Pre-natal coaching (specific programs that pregnant employees are provided with or provided access to for prenatal (before delivery) wellness.)	56%	Partially paid maternity leave	25%	Near site child care	31%
		Job secure unpaid maternity leave	77%	Work flexibility	98%



BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN



THE IMPACT OF MATERNITY ENABLEMENT FRAMEWORK IN 2017 WORKING MOTHER AND AVTAR 100 BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

In this section, we present a closer look at the impact of the maternity enablement framework in 2017-100 Best. The impact is signified via the Maternity Retention Rate which is the percentage of women who joined after maternity leave on the total number of women who were expected to join post maternity leave. Women who left for maternity and were expected to re-join upon women who actually joined post maternity. Table 2 shows the story in numbers:

Table 2 : Impact of Maternity Enablement Framework

	Maternity Retention rate (MRR) in companies with this enabler (in %)	Maternity Retention rate (MRR) in companies without this enabler (in %)	Difference in MRR (in %)
Male leaders championing gender inclusion	89	82	7
Support for post-partum depression	92	86	6
Tracking of gender diversity initiatives	89	83	6
E-learning/refresher courses during maternity break	91	87	5
Phaseback programs (Structured reintegration programs for young moms returning to work post maternity)	88	84	4
Longer maternity leaves, beyond the country's mandates	89	85	4
Manager training on gender inclusion	88	87	1
Maternity leave coaching (Training for managers to plan for maternity leave of their employees)	88	87	1
Career development conversation with managers during maternity break	88	87	1



BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN



CONCLUSION

The statistics around female labor force participation in India show that women exit their workplaces in substantial numbers, every year. The talent deficit that loss of women talent owing to maternity creates is huge. The loss also signifies negative returns on the investment made in training these women. To plug this phenomenon of leaky pipeline especially around the phases of maternity, companies are beginning to accept the significance of young mother-friendly workplaces to offer innovative approaches to support the transition of working women emotionally and professionally.

Acknowledging the fact that career transitions at mid-life for women are difficult as well as different, organizations have to implement creative ways to attract and retain talent in an extremely competitive job market. Moreover, employers cannot afford to lose strong contributors.

This report was a snapshot of how companies instantiate support systems to help manage maternity stages of women, the key challenges faced, the solutions proposed, discussions on systems of impact and the actual impact created. As a result, the progressive changes in Indian organizations redesigning their maternity policies, came to the fore. Longer maternity leaves, realistic workloads, flexible working hours (part-time, job sharing, telecommuting, customised schedules), child care facilities, structured phaseback programmes and concierge facilities are some of the common features built in the maternity enablement framework in the Indian corporate landscape.

Professional handholding that can compensate and reorient the way women look at their careers post-maternity can if not reverse, at-least reduce the instances of career breaks for women. In the simplest terms: better maternity benefits are good for business!





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BEST COMPANIES
FOR WOMEN

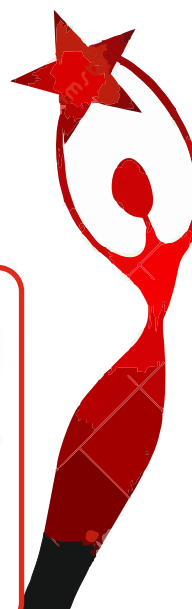


2017 WORKING MOTHER & AVTAR TOP 10 BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

2017 WORKING MOTHER & AVTAR	accenture	Deloitte.
EY	IBM	NORTHERN TRUST
people combine	P&G	Life Is On Schneider Electric
Shell	TATA TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES Experience certainty.	TOP 10 BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA



WINNERS ARE...



2017 WORKING MOTHER & AVTAR 100 BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

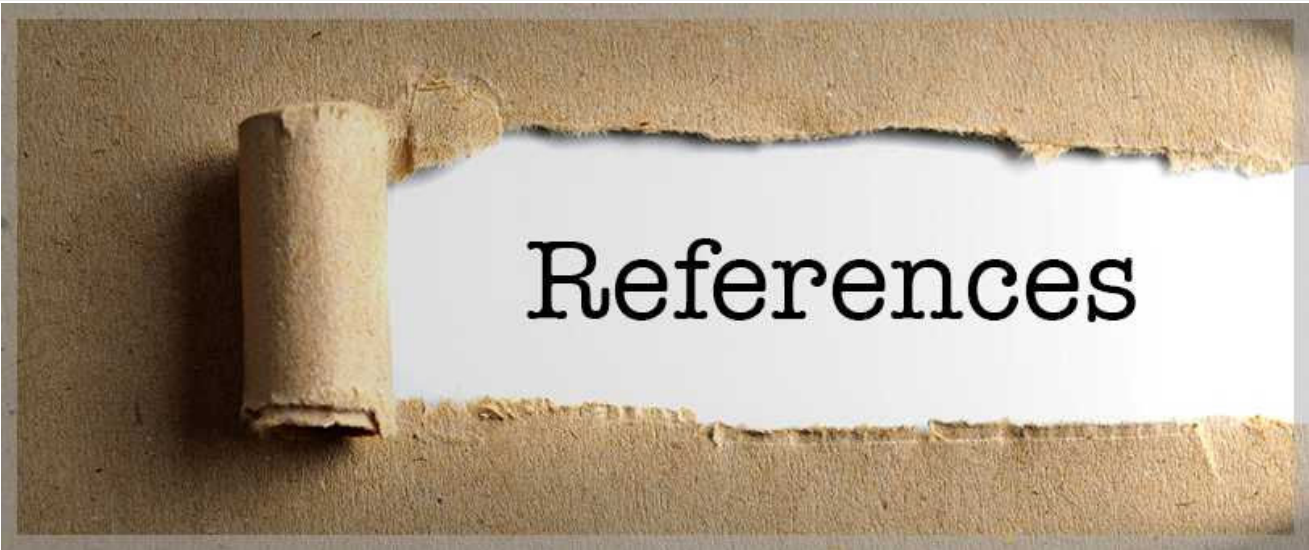
			
			
			
			
			
			
			

2017 WORKING MOTHER & AVTAR 100 BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

2017 WORKING MOTHER & AVTAR 100 BEST COMPANIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

 NOVARTIS	 OPTUM®	 PayPal	 PEGA®
 people combine	 PEPSICO India Region	 pnb MetLife	 P&G
 Raychem RPG	 Sapient®	 Life Is On Schneider Electric	
 SOCIETE GENERALE	 sodexo QUALITY OF LIFE SERVICES	 SONY PICTURES NETWORKS	 Standard Chartered
 Standard Chartered	 STATE STREET	 Sun Life Financial	
 TATA COMMUNICATIONS	 TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES	 STARBUCKS®	 TATA TATA STEEL
 Tech Mahindra	 TESCO BENGALURU	 TAJ HOTELS • PALACES • RESORTS • SAFARIS	
 ThoughtWorks®	 Value Labs® inspired by potential	 vedanta transforming elements	 verizon✓
 VISA	 vodafone	 Best Price™ MODERN WHOLESALE Walmart Flipkart	 WELLS FARGO



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Saundarya Rajesh - Founder-President, AVTAR Group

Dr. Saundarya Rajesh, a Phd in women's workforce participation is one of the earliest voices to speak on Gender Diversity & Inclusion of Women in India. An award-winning social entrepreneur best known for pioneering work done in creating second careers for women, Dr. Saundarya was felicitated by the Government of India in the inaugural 2015 #100WomenAchiever contest. Receiving the 100Women Achiever Award for her resilient efforts to increase women's workforce participation, she had the opportunity to lunch with the President of India. Recently, she was named to the UN's list of "25 Women Transforming India" 2016.



Founder-President of the AVTAR Group, Dr. Saundarya was herself a second-career woman – one who pursued a corporate career only to discover that the workplace had to undergo several transformations in order to be sustainable for women. She started India's first career service for women – www.avtariwin.com in 2005 and today, more than a decade later, she says "I have 40,000 Saundaryas on the AVTAR I-WIN network, 8000 of whom have re-entered the workforce, contributing an estimated Rs. 250 crores by way of economic participation". Coaching and counselling organizations to develop a Gender Inclusion plan, AVTAR has ensured that several hundred organizations successfully fill critical roles with second career women.

Dr. Saundarya leads tripartite (community-organization-individual) engagements in Women's workforce participation, Diversity training, Diversity Audits and Diversity Recruitment. Over a 100 corporate houses are mentored by Dr. Saundarya in their pursuit of Gender Balance and Inclusion. A leading keynote speaker at national and international forums in the areas of Entrepreneurship and Human Capital Management, Dr. Saundarya's vision is to reach out to the 1.8 million Indian women who wish to make a career come back. AVTAR's work also impacts an estimated 28 million women who are currently working and who face multiple challenges while trying to remain employed, productive and contribute economically. Dr. Saundarya passionately believes that women are the backbone of any economy and if a country focuses on increasing its women's labour force participation, then it would have reached its entire potential.



Karthik Ekambaram - Vice-President, D & I Consulting, AVTAR Group

Karthik Ekambaram, is a Diversity and Inclusion specialist having completed several seminal projects in this area for multiple organizations. An MBA with over 15 years of experience in business analysis, talent strategy and workforce diversity consulting, Karthik began his career in web designing and dot com.

Karthik moved into HR consulting, later, specialising in Diversity and Inclusion as well as flexible working methods.

As a strategist, who has devised flexible working policies and diversity-ready workplaces for several fortune 500 organizations, Karthik brings with him a rich experience of managing a wide range of requirements for creating a futuristic workplace. Managing Diversity recruitment and formulating second career programs are some of Karthik's recent achievements. As one of India's pioneering workers in the field of Second Career programs, Karthik has been a key architect in the re-entry of women into the workplace. He has worked on projects which utilize Diversity & Inclusion as a business driver for organizations by employing it as a talent, CSR and business strategy tools. He has carried out Job Analysis, Time and Motion studies at several client sites for the purpose of Flexidizing and Unbundling of jobs to create flexi-career tracks in organizations interested in implementing flexible working options for their employees.

Karthik has worked on many research studies on Diversity & Inclusion, Second career women, Generations in the workforce, Flexible working and Work-life balance. He has also conducted Diversity & Inclusion audits for a number of organisations.

Anju Rakesh, - Sr.Manager - Research & Analytics, AVTAR Group

Anju Rakesh, a CBSE national topper is a Computer Science Engineer from BITS, Pilani – one of the premier institutes of technical education in India. Research had always been her passion and in her career spanning 12 years, she has published several papers on women careers in national and international journals. In 2010, she was chosen to present her research paper at AAAI (American Association for Artificial Intelligence), a highly prestigious Artificial Intelligence conclave in Atlanta (USA). A listed co-inventor of two patents at the USPTO, Anju's tryst with 'gender analytics' started about half a decade back when the 3 Ms in her life – Marriage, Maternity and Motherhood reshaped her approach towards women's careers.

As Senior Manager - Research & Analytics at AVTAR, Anju (a second career woman herself) has played pivotal roles in several women centric studies undertaken in-house - on career intentionality of women professionals, on generational diversity amongst Indian Women Professionals and economic centeredness of Indian women, to name a few. She is also the focal point at AVTAR for Corporate India's largest gender analytics exercise – Working Mother & AVTAR 100 Best Companies for Women in India study, which recently launched its third edition, after two successful runs in 2016 and 2017.





Maternity Management in Corporate India