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### THE SOCIAL STATUS OF WORKING YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CORPORATE WORLD

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#### ABSTRACT

In the light of these observations, what are the current critical issues that need to be addressed? What measures will the corporate sector take to harness the skills of more and more educated and talented women for executive jobs? Of what magnitude and quality will the incentives given to them be, in order to attract their interest, and thereafter, ensure their continued loyalty? Will these incentives be attractive enough for self-employed professionals such as those in medicine, law, politics and finance to forego their freedom to join the world of business? How will the companies minimise the role conflict for women executives so that neither their performance nor their loyalty are affected? How can the corporate roles of women managers be effectively performed while addressing their needs of self-esteem and upward mobility? Where merit and performance dictate success and upward mobility, companies must necessarily adopt "women friendly" policies while addressing all these issues.

Corporate social responsibility towards women empowerment can become ray of hope in many ways. Here are some recommended HR Management Practices to Create a "Women-Friendly" Organization

- Senior management commitment to gender issues
- Career development programs for women
- Exposure of women to top management
- Leadership development programs for women
- Job rotation for women
- Recruitment of women at senior-level positions
- Regular survey of women to assess job satisfaction
- Mentoring programs for women
- Child care facilities at work
- Corporate should undertake more number of campaigns like DRISHTI and SHAKTI for women empowerment.

*The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics* presents statistics and analysis on the status of women and men in the world, highlighting the current situation and changes over time. Analyses are based mainly on statistics from international and national statistical agencies. The report covers several broad policy areas – population and families, health, education, work, power and decision-making, violence against women, environment and poverty.

The present corporate culture derives from the western perception of business developed during the industrial revolution. There is no problem with the origins of corporate culture other than it means it is essentially western; not modern western but old western where women were still chattels in law. Non-western men and women were somehow not as 'good' as the western white men. These concepts appear today to materialize in corporate culture as a fear-status relationship.

### **OBSERVATIONS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

There are many available definitions of CSR and they are consistently referring to five dimensions. Although they apply different phrases, the definitions are predominantly congruent, making the lack of one universally accepted definition less problematic than it might seem at first glance. The CSR definitions are describing a phenomenon, but fail to present any guidance on how to manage the challenges within this phenomenon. Therefore, the challenge for business is not so much to define CSR, as it is to understand how CSR is socially constructed in a specific context and how to take this into account when business strategies are developed.

Overall, 96% of the persons interviewed reported various work-related ailments. A gender breakdown reveals that women are more vulnerable than men with respect to certain complaints:

- female employees experience physical pain and discomfort more often;
- the feeling of fatigue appears earlier and increases more quickly among women (particularly after the fourth hour at work).

As a result, medical help in treating work-related complaints was needed by female employees more often than by male workers.

### **SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

All said and done I believe and realized that stress is not always something negative. It can be something positive and constructive as well. Since the BPOs mostly have relatively younger age group of employees, their energy and ideas can be put to better use by identifying their competencies and matching the same with the business goal.

➤ Organizations can organize something like "Young Leader" wherein a team of two or three people would work on a project and let the management decide the best idea and recognize new talent. I believe interaction with the leadership would do well because most of the employees working in BPOs in India are in an age group when they are highly impressionable and what better way to create that impression than seeking a mentor beyond the immediate supervisor. The whole idea is to let the young minds think.

➤ It is a fact that in India BPOs are not taken as serious career options and that is one of the reasons why young people joining it but leaving it all the more soon. The most important thing therefore is for the industry to promote the same as a viable career option. NASSCOM, the governing body for the industry is off late making an attempt towards that direction. Such efforts should be done on a larger scale so as to promote the industry further. The key to this I believe is

to create awareness among the general public because in India even now family/ parents are actively involved in taking decisions in respect of their children. So, it is important for them to have this awareness. Most of the stress which these youngsters face is on account of the pressure they face at home with respect to their jobs at the BPOs and it is this stress which culminates into bigger dimensions and leads to disillusionment among the young.

- The BPO industry as a whole should come together and address the stress problem by conducting seminars and workshops for their employees.
- All organizations should have a Counseling Desk wherein an in-house counselor counsels the employees on their career needs, problems in adjustment which may arise on account of the fact that most of the employees who work in the BPOs leave their home towns and come to various cities to work. This may act as an effective way to curb emotional stress.
- Redefining the career paths and making the employees aware of the same. Trainings should be conducted which would enhance their skill sets beyond taking calls and develop their competencies to match the same against organizational goals.
- There should be some fun at work activities conducted every month to keep the employees peeped-up.
- Tie-ups with different health clubs for the benefit of the employees.
- Small trips should be given as incentives to the employees.

Stress adds flavor, challenge and opportunity to life. Without stress, life would be dull and unexciting. However, too much stress can seriously affect one's physical and mental well-being. Recurrent physical and psychological stress can diminish self-esteem, decrease interpersonal and academic effectiveness and create a cycle of self blame and self-doubt. It is important for one's health that one should find the optimal level of stress that one can learn to manage effectively.

Stress is unique and personal to each of us. What is relaxing to one person may be stressful to another. One person may find "taking it easy" at the beach relaxing while another may find it boring. The key to stress reduction is identifying strategies that fit one as an individual.

The best way to cope with unhealthy stress is to recognize when one's stress levels are building. While we often think of stress as the result of external events, the events themselves are not necessarily stressful. It is the way in which each individual interprets and reacts to an event that produces stress. People vary significantly in the type of events they experience as stressful and the way that they respond to these events. Public speaking is a good example: while some people see it as routine, others experience it as highly stressful.

Stress "signals" fall into four categories: thoughts, feelings, behavior and physical symptoms. When one is under stress one may experience-

**FEELINGS**

Anxiety, irritability, fear, moodiness, embarrassment

**THOUGHTS**

Self-criticism, difficulty in concentrating or making decisions, forgetfulness or mental disorganization, preoccupation with the future, repetitive thoughts, fear of failure.

**BEHAVIORAL**

Stuttering or other speech difficulties, crying, acting impulsively, nervous laughter, "snapping": at friends, teeth grinding or jaw clenching, increased smoking, alcohol or other drug use, being prone to more accidents, increased or decreased appetite.

**PHYSICAL**

Tight muscles, cold or sweaty hands, headaches, back or neck problems, sleep disturbances, stomach distress, more colds and infections, fatigue, rapid breathing or pounding heart, trembling, dry mouth.

When one becomes consciously aware of the above factors stress becomes more manageable. For example if one experiences frequent neck problems or sleep disturbances along with fatigue it is only obvious that stress is at work. So, the best way to handle or counter stress is to become aware of stress ourselves and take actions for the same which can be by going to a doctor or taking a day or two off from work etc. How we decide to counter stress is completely our initiative. One option of course is to think that "all is wrong" and feel depressed while the other far more viable option would be to go for some exercise and workouts or learn music or dance etc and channelize that energy more constructively. I would recommend the second option.

Further more I feel organizations should do well to accept the fact that their employees are stressed rather than try to undermine the same. While conducting this research I had the chance of interacting with quite a few HR managers who refused to acknowledge the fact that their employees are really stressed. This denial by organizations only adds to the problem all the more. Rather than denying that stress is existent if not rampant among its workforce accepting it and working towards it to reduce its impact on the employees as well as the business is more advisable. How that can happen would depend from one company to another. Half the battle is won if there is this acceptance and of course employees need to be educated about leading a more balanced life and also be made aware that stress is not something which is only externally created or needs an external stimulus. We as individuals also play a major role in creating stress and at an individual level we should be ready to accept the same. Going around stress would require the full fledged cooperation of both the organization as well as the employees. The need of the hour is to work together towards it rather than playing the blame game.

The minimum list of variables to be added in the Annual Report or Balance Sheet along with the format of Balance Sheet Abstract (BSA) should be finalised by the Department of Company

Affairs (DCA) in consultation with the concerned agencies such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), etc.

A standard format should be formulated for uniform and timely reporting of data and to facilitate electronic processing.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION**

- Formulate specific IT Education that serves women the corporate world.
- Develop partnerships with corporate leaders to formulating such education programs.
- Have discussions with HR professional who daily witness the dynamic of technology changes and how it affects the work force.
- We need to reach women at all levels.
  - Girls in school
  - Moms at home
  - Women returning to work
  - Middle managers
  - Women in senior positions
- Encourage community learning: link those who "know" with those that do not.
- Voluntary Organizations should partner with Info Technology Companies to educate and start with humble beginnings for the usage of email technology.
- We used to have Bingo. Let us now have cyber café meetings.

We should provide opportunities for discussion and learning amongst informal social groups such as PTA's or Pensioner groups or Mom and Me classes.

Companies having assets or sales over, say, Rs. 50 crores (on the lines of deemed public company in the Companies Act), or having a market share of over 10 per cent in a particular market segment, or those with controlling foreign interest should be brought under some legal obligations to provide for necessary disclosure of annual reports and their accessibility to the public. Such transparency with regard to reporting and disclosure requirements should be adequate, even if not necessarily on par with listed companies. The DCA should have the primary responsibility of bringing out basic statistics in respect of such companies.

**Technology is the new gender!**

## ACTION PLAN

We need to have direction and a strong Action plan implementing accessibility to life long learning and to ensure the success of women at all levels.

- We do understand that there are many who simply do not even have basic access to technology. Something needs to be done to open up that population to IT education.
- Some women feel IT is something that they simply cannot learn. We need to understand that and then take steps to rectify it.

We need strong impetus from the policy makers in Education, Corporations, Government and even from Voluntary organizations. We need joint action!

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