

# Motivating Working Women in India: A Case for Consideration

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**Abstract:** Many companies in India is struggling to find and retain the right person on the job as high attrition and employee turnover cause unforeseen expenses and even crush the whole business. So motivating employees becomes a vital part of every business. Today, India has seen a tremendous growth of working women and with more women coming into workforce, women motivation is gaining ground. According to western perspective, the main factors to motivate women employees are salary, providing recognition, benefits and opportunities of growth. But in a country like India having comparably low cost of living, salary satisfaction can be reached more quickly and working women look beyond money factor, as they give very much importance to culture and family, companies are adopting motivation practices like work from home options, maternity leave baskets, flexi hours, crèche facilities to take care of their toddlers etc. Therefore, it is a sincere attempt to explore what are the initiatives being adopted by Indian companies to motivate working women.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Factors of Motivation, Working Women.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Companies come in all kinds and so is motivation. There are some who keep a hawkish eye over its employees, banning even mobile phones at work place and there are some who mandate strict silence, tight schedules and lot of formalities. On the other side some provide good work-life while some allow flexi hours or even work from home option. Some motivate by money, some by rewards, some by punishments and some by fear. Gone are the days when employees only looked for high paying jobs in a ruthless office set-up.

Even high paid employees agree that money doesn't matter after a certain point; it is job satisfaction and a cordial office atmosphere that ultimately makes a difference.

Various rewards and recognition programs ensure innovation, creativity, leadership, team work and above all a highly motivated staff. Today companies not only taking initiatives at a time when work related stress is taking a toll on the life of employees but it is refreshing to see that some organizations are going out of the way to make their staff love the work they do and also ensure they have a great work-life balance.

The biggest victim of work-life imbalance and stress is working women in India. Over the last decade, India has seen a tremendous growth of working women, with education and jobs; it has been a much better story for the Indian women, than the previous generations. Traditionally an Indian women's role was well-defined and almost fixed i.e. a daughter, a wife, a housewife and a mother. But today, role and responsibility of women is increased manifold.

A working woman, bold enough to think, is faced with a dilemma of a very basic kind, her talent and education on one side, the demands of biology on other; women on traditional belief on one side and obvious injustice she is subjected to because of her physical limitations on the other.

Though we claim modernity, our society yet believes that woman should stay at home and fulfill the responsibility of taking care of family. The pregnancies, the confinements, the need to breast feed the child, caring for the tiny tots are all extremely important responsibilities that the female of the human species is expected to shoulder and devote her to. At one hand, we have women who desire to play her role as a housewife and on the other we have educated, professional, talented, dashing women i.e. working women who want to make a career and work outside and earn to supplement her husband's income, to fulfill all her wishes or even to save for better future. There are many factors which motivates women to work or in other words, make her working women.

In modern times, when jobs are becoming complex and roles are getting diverse, employee motivation is in top of the mind and with more women coming into the workforce, women motivation is gaining ground. Companies are supporting working women by taking care of their medical expenses, taking health initiatives, providing maternity leave, work from home options, sports tournaments, zumba lessons and what not for motivating and retaining the women workforce.

ICICI Bank, Marriott Hotels, E-commerce Giant Flipkart, Citi India and almost all is doing something or other for motivating women to work. Following are some companies which initiated motivation practices for women in India:

*Marriott Hotels:* Ranked number three in a survey by The Economic Times, "Taking care of our associates is at the heart

of Marriott's core values". Here associates refer to employees. Hotel treats women employees like a queen (especially on your birthdays and anniversaries). It allows you to celebrate your special days in the hotel by giving you a free meal for six or a stay to experience their own hospitality. As a Marriott employee you also get access to the hotels' discount policy (food, beverages and room stays in and around the country), international exposure, cross-department exposure and health insurance.

*Silver Spark Apparels:* The secondary brand of Raymond group, Silver Spark Apparels boasts of having over 90 per cent women workforce. The work environment by default is women friendly; the company offers day care facilities, teachers to educate the kids along with various social and cultural activities for the employees and their children. With a large women workforce, breaking the glass ceiling isn't something that you have to worry about.

*Accenture:* With it's headquartered in Dublin, India remains the largest employee base of Accenture. Boasting of more than 80,000 employees, the company has a special community for all its female employees known as 'Vahini', the community deals with every kind of problem that female employees might encounter at work. They also have a 24X7 dedicated helpline for women. Expectant mothers are also provided with visits to the gynecologist.

*Google India:* 'Fitness and fun are woven into Google's history'. When it comes to facilities, working environment and benefits, work-life balance, very few companies can compete with Google as it is having creative and colorful ambience. Well equipped Gym, three free meals and unlimited snacks, employees can go to one of several sleep pods for quick nap. Google celebrates "Bureaucracy Buster Day". Initiatives only for women include women empowerment, academic scholarships to future leaders in technology and supporting employee resource group like women@google. To motivate employees Google organizes 'bring your children to work' day and organizes activities for them.

*RMSI:* a global IT service company, winner of Best Employer Award for past 5 years in India provides women employees safety and security, rewarding environment, healthcare and other benefits, stress management through yoga, meditation etc. RMSI follows 'Anti- sexual harassment' policy. Organizes self-defense workshops, tai-chi, distribution of pepper sprays, sessions with women police officers, NGO's to create safety awareness. The company also has focused health initiatives for women for breast and cervix cancer, thyroid tests, gynecological problems. Women also have access to extended maternity leave, part time/flexible working hours, and work from home options and option to take a short-term break in careers.

*SAP Labs, India:* provides maternity leave policy in which women employees are entitled to twenty weeks of paid maternity leave with an additional sixteen weeks of extended

maternity leave with loss of pay or a part time work option. Women are offered with cab transportation during and post pregnancy. Another initiative named as Run Mummier is a maternity return program that focuses on ensuring the return of a female employee after her maternity leave as smooth as possible. SAP Labs also allow 'Part work from home' after the birth of a child implies that male employees, apart from paternity leave, have the flexibility to work for four hours at office and the rest from home. SAP Labs also runs SAPlings in-house crèche. This crèche caters to 250 children in the age group of nine months to six years. Under this program children are provided with day care, Montessori education, summer camps as well as other activities. Another important initiative is Business Women Network: This is a forum which strives to foster a diverse workplace at SAP by inspiring women employees through the creation of role models and sharing of inspirational stories of successful women in leadership positions. Work from Home Policy is another initiative where women employees can work from home for four days in a month or one day a week. Temporary Part Time Work This benefit allows employees to work part-time for a maximum period of four months. One can work on 50, 60 or 80 percent of regular work load based on the agreement with the manager. Care for Life: One of the most impactful initiatives has been an Employee Benevolent Fund called 'Care for Life Fund' which is a purely voluntary, employee funded and employee managed initiative, used to provide financial support to employees and their families in times of unexpected and unforeseen emergencies. The Care for Life Fund operates through a Trust and runs on a steady monthly contribution by members. SAP has 33 interest groups, each catering to specific activities like drama, music, art, dance etc to help employees pursue an interest of their choice.

*American Express India:* 'Creating an inspiring workplace is a top priority'. Amex designed a unique gender diversity initiative in 2014 called 'Reach Out'. This program in collaboration with 4 other leading companies - PepsiCo, PwC and Tata Sons - to set a partnership which enables us to leverage each other's Diversity & Inclusion (D&I). The program provided a development platform for senior women leaders to 'Share, Network and Learn' from leaders and peers across these organizations, to enable greater career success. Amex introduced a 'Smart Savings' program that enhances overall financial wellness of employees. With access to online portal and onsite helpdesk, employees are educated and updated on their earnings and long term savings. The convenience of having this information made employees save time and effort. It is a single stop solution to their short to long term financial needs.

*Godrej Consumer Products:* From building leaders, spotting talent at campuses, flexible work options and encouraging more women to join the workforce, Godrej Consumer Products builds an environment that nurtures talent at every stage. There are resource groups for working women (Godrej alliance for women) and parents (Godrej alliance for parents)

with cross-company leadership networks. Both these networks are supported with periodic trainings, external speakers and workshops to address the particular issues that each group may encounter. The company's maternity policy offers full pay for six months as they are endeavoring to create an open and inclusive environment for our women talent, who return to work post an extended break. Flexi work and part time work options are also available to help make this balance along with other facilities at our offices. A robust talent management process to groom high potential women talent.

*Intuit Technology Services:* Intuit India is ranked fourth in the IT industry category and third among best companies in supporting women to remain at work category. The company has seen a 29 per cent increase in its gender diversity ratio in the last year. "Parents at Intuit can enjoy various benefits such as maternity & paternity leave, once they are back at work they can avail daycare discounts at our partner crèches. We ensure expectant mothers have dedicated parking and a vehicle at their disposal to make travel less painful," says Shikha Verma, Total Rewards Leader, Intuit APAC. For employees who wish to adopt, Intuit offers Rs 50,000 and 84 days of adoption leave to allow new parents to bond with. Medical insurance of up to Rs 5 lakh for families of employees at no cost to the employee. Top-up medical insurance options wherein one can choose a higher medical cover. "To keep employees financially fit, we have employee stock purchase plan program, which has a 95 per cent participation rate (given that our stock price has seen a handsome upswing of 70% in a year), or the National Pension scheme in which we provide employer contributions towards employees' pension fund. We even take care of small business expenses such as broadband, each of our employees are eligible for Rs 2,000 per month reimbursement towards broadband," adds Shikha Verma.

*ICICI Bank:* is fast realizing that childcare is no child's play. Economic Times reported, "The hyper competitive world of banking is increasingly recognizing the importance of retaining and motivating female talent in particular those who lose the most productive years of their lives to family commitments." ICICI Bank provide women employees a unique leave basket, which includes six months of paid maternity leave which can be extended by taking leave without pay if needed. 36 days of paid child care leave each year for mothers till child attain the age of two years and 180 days of leave for employees undergoing fertility treatments.

On occasion of Women's Day this year, M.D. and C.E.O. of ICICI Bank Chandra Kocher launched two more programs for women motivation including iWork@home. This is the first program in banking sector which facilitate women to work from home with duration of one year if she is single child of her parents and is liable to take care of them. Another program is for woman who is having a child less than three years of age and is having tour job. In this case, bank will bear all travel and lounge expenses for child as well as

care giver. This will help women employees to reduce work stress and focus on performance.

*Citi India:* motivates women employees by providing "flexible maternity policy" where women officers are entitled to avail of maternity leave of 180 days in three different options. Even clutch of global banks aim leave initiatives and policies especially for new mothers.

Another important contemporary issue in motivating working women is companies like Anderson and India Inc love kid rock. Parents in corporate India are being encouraged to bring their kids to work and meet them over tea breaks or lunch. Tech companies may have pioneered the idea of crèche and other child friendly policies to maintain the crucial work life balance.

*Noida based Xansa* manages 3 free crèches across the campuses with full maid support. Netflix announced an unlimited maternity leave policy so that its employees without worrying about finances can balance the needs of their families.

*E-commerce giant Flipkart* also offers adopting parents Rs. 50000/- as adoption allowance to use towards legal agency or regulatory costs.

TCS, Wipro and Syntel are planning to open crèches and are a well established practice at Hyderabad based ADP-Wilco and Mumbai based Mastek.

## II. CONCLUSION

Thus we can safely conclude that Indian working women are looking for companies which are not just offering good pay packages but are more motivated where she finds pleasant working environment, convenient location, flexi hours, crèche facilities, work life balance etc. As women workforce is an important part for any company, they are doing every possible effort to motivate and retain this valuable asset in which initiatives like ICICI bank's unique leave basket for maternity, Intuit's employee stock purchase plan program, Accenture's 'Vahini' community and 24\*7 dedicated helpline for women, SAP Lab's work from home policy and Xansa's free crèches across the campuses are remarkable. The general conclusion is that there is no universal solution for every organization to motivate women workforce. Each organization has to build its own motivation system based on compatibility between individual and organizational goals.

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