

Infosys

Preface

Women today are present in every field of work. Research has consistently indicated strong correlation between diverse senior management and financial performance of organizations, highlighting business benefits from having considerable number of women employees as part of the workforce. The scarcity of global talent has led to many organizations pro-actively doing their best to recognize, retain, and develop women. In India, keeping women employees on the job has proven difficult in a traditional patriarchal society. With the changing work force demography, and the talent war among the companies to attract and retain the best-in-class candidates, Indian companies continue to work on improving existing policies and facilities for women (Nath, 2000). Though there have been claims on IT being a platform for women to enter and succeed in careers, the claim has not been established by any empirical analysis yet (Surya, 2002).

Currently, women make up 42 % of college graduates in India (People Matters 2010). Still, according to U.N. statistics, at 34.2% India's rate of female participation in the workforce remains the lowest of any of the BRIC countries. To successfully tap into this huge talent pool, professional service providers and other industries alike have to pay special attention to women as a source of educated and employable talent. Back in 2003, the number of women employees in Infosys was only 19% making women a minority in the organization. This impacted not only the organizational culture, but also the policies and support systems setup for employees, key decisions on process improvements and risk assessment.

This paper is a practitioners approach and experience in making their company successful in attracting and retaining women talent. The scope of the paper is limited to actual programs implemented in the work place and does not include mapping the programs to any actual theories existing around women in technology or women and technology (Henwood, 1993). This paper is about IWIN's (Infosys Women Inclusivity Initiative) efforts and results in creating a gender inclusive work environment as well groom more women leaders at Infosys., an Indian IT giant. Infosys is the first Indian IT company to set up a dedicated office for diversity and inclusion. At the time when IWIN was set up in 2003, a six member team conducted appreciative inquiries and researched journals to understand various approaches to building gender sensitivity and women leadership. Methodology included focus group discussions with employees, benchmarking practices among the global companies, and consultation with academicians to understand and relate better to research conducted on gender inclusivity.

Infosys business and Diversity challenges

Infosys operates out of 33 countries, employing people from different nationalities and has plans to expand to newer geographies for business. Hence focus for increasing local talent & commitment to attracting diverse talent becomes an imperative. Infosys stands on diversity and its success depends on the collaborative distributed development model. This model is about teams in different parts of the world working together in harmony and synergy to develop solutions for our customers. As a global corporation operating in multiple geographies diversity and inclusion enables us to build confidence and trust in the minds of customers and employees. Hence, for Infosys, diversity in talent is not an option but is a critical success factor to win in the flat world. The business case for Diversity and Inclusion at Infosys reflects in the way we do business and some of the key focus areas are:

- Business model
- Expanding to new Geographies
- Reflecting Client Practices
- Complying with Government and Legal requirements
- Changing Workforce demographics
- Commitment to equal opportunity
- Social responsibility



Birth of IWIN:

The company formed Infosys Women Inclusive Network (IWIN) to address specific needs towards the development, engagement, growth, and retention of women by promoting an inclusive workplace where the potential of women is leveraged and every woman feels valued, heard, and fully involved with the company.

Though diversity and inclusion (D&I) has always been a part of Infosys's corporate culture, the global diversity and inclusion team was setup in 2003. The focus on diversity and inclusion started quite early, and gender was and continues to be one of the key focus areas. One of the key challenges in improving gender ratio in the organization was low offer-joining ratio. While women applied to the role and had a good impression about the organization, they did not pursue when the job offer was made. On further analyzing this challenge we understood some of the key considerations to be kept in mind while recruiting women. Infosys like many Indian IT organizations is located in the outskirts of Indian cities it operates in and this presented in itself a safety threat for women who applied. That combined with the fact that the infrastructure and public transport at these cities were still in its infancy. Infosys, being an equal opportunity employer believed in hiring from colleges which was not for a particular gender. With women's only engineering colleges coming up, this again was restricting the pool of talent available for hiring. Infosys has always believed in giving equal opportunities and hence other issues such as equal pay for women, discrimination in performance ratings etc., were not our battles to fight. These are considered general hygiene factors that has helped Infosys emerge as a globally respected organization for gender inclusion.

Therefore the key challenges that presented were

- Create a safe and harmonious work place for women
- Identify and engage with talent from multiple sources
- Ensure equal opportunities for both men and women
- Create inclusion and retention policies catering to this group

The key initiatives and programs of IWIN are all mapped to attract, increase, and retain (AIR) women employees with the intent to expand the bottom of the pyramid and to chart out a strategy to retain women as they move up in their career life cycle.

Infosys attracts talent by pioneering exclusive programs like Campus Connect, SPARK, industry electives, and internship programs.

Campus Connect - It is an Infosys program to help increase India's competitiveness in the knowledge economy. Campus Connect aims at evolving a model through which Infosys and engineering institutions can partner for competitiveness, enhance the pool of highly capable talent for growth requirements in the IT space. It is aimed at creating an effective means of backward integration into the supply chain by going into the college campuses from where the IT industry gets its people for its growth.

Spark - As part of this initiative a group of students along with members of faculty visit the nearest Infosys DC and spend the day observing the IT services delivery environment. The event is designed and conducted by Infosys volunteers. The agenda is customized for the target audience which also includes special batches for women, rural institutes and Government-run institutes. Initiatives like SPARK, a program that aims at raising the aspiration levels of students, have made young Indians think of bigger opportunities and challenges that awaited them once they completed their education.

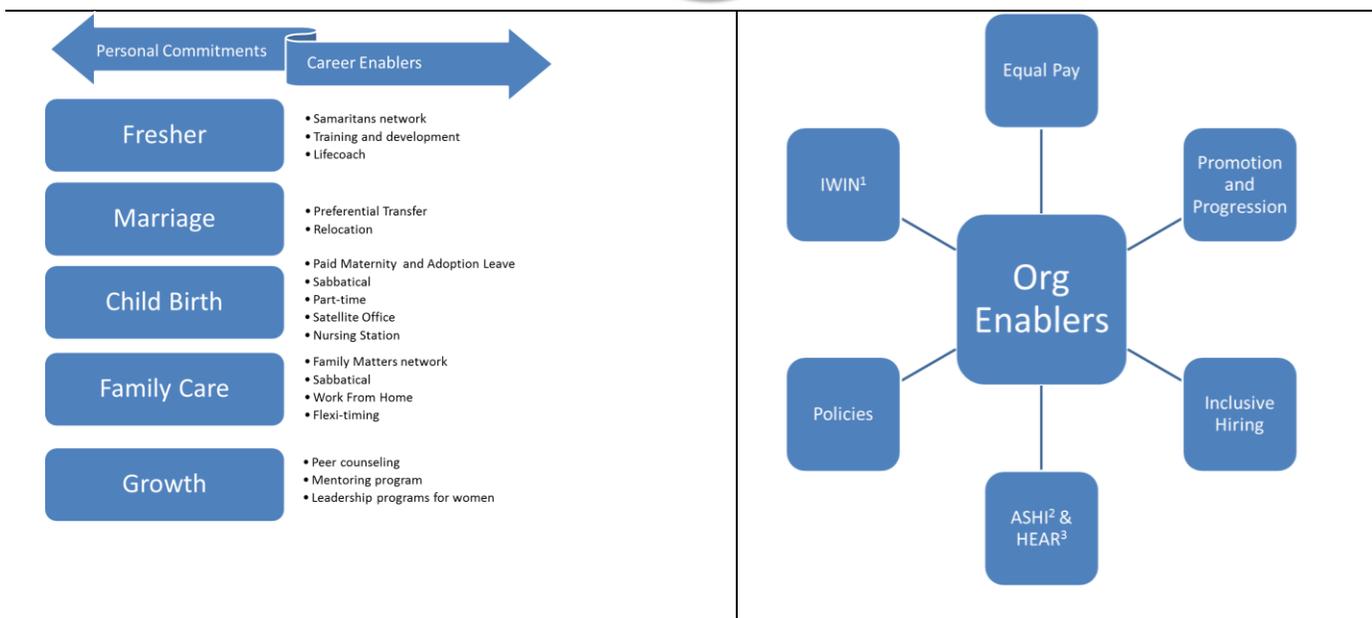
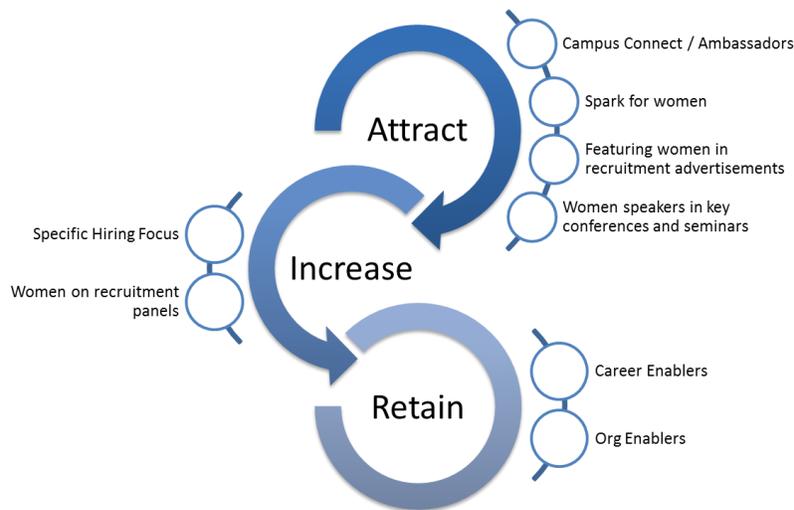
Industry electives - Infosys collaborates with universities to design industry oriented electives. Outcome based learning approach is implemented for the industry electives which are credit / noncredit based courses in the curriculum. These customized programs, are based on "learn and apply" models.

While the above listed are a few initiatives that Infosys pioneered to attract talent, there has been an endless list of initiatives conducted to create a positive environment at work.

ASHI - Infosys places a lot of importance on safety of women in and out of the campus. Anti sexual harassment initiative is a very strong program within Infosys. All employees have to undergo ASHI training and multiple avenues are provided for employees to raise a concern. All complaints / concerns are looked into and addressed by trained individuals.

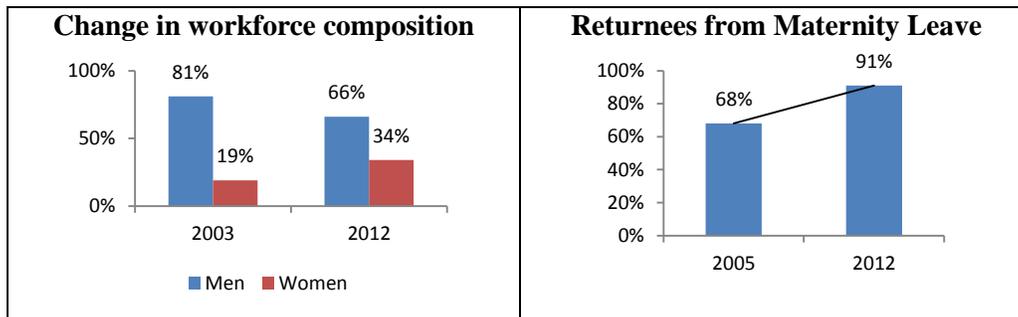
Safety - Self-defense classes are held in the campus to train women to be more prepared when faced with an unsafe situation. The organization provides special taxis to women with a security guard to make sure that women reach home safely on days when they end up working late to meet client deadlines. This is primarily done as a measure to ensure safety of employees. An automated message is sent in the evening, to remind employees about the importance of travelling back home on time and to use safe means of transport.

Others - Simple but extremely effective changes like including women in all recruitment panels, talking about importance of safety and harassment free work environment, influencing the public transport system to increase the frequency of buses to the office locations and hiring from women-only technical colleges has shown us significant results in attracting and retaining women employees.



Measure of success:

Back in 2003, our workforce comprised of 19% women, today it has increased to over 34%. This is even more significant and inspiring considering the growth of total employees from 15000 in 2003 to over 140,000 employees in 2012, making Infosys amongst the largest women employers in the IT sector in India. Through our SPARK and campus connect programs; we achieved a milestone wherein we have 59% of our base hires as women as opposed to 41% of men. Though it is considered a norm, we have been tracking and ensuring that progressions, promotions and salaries of equally competent men and women are at par with one another.



Today, Infosys has 91% of women returning from maternity leave (from 68% back in 2005). It is interesting to note that every day 7 women avail the option of maternity leave. Though the effectiveness of these initiatives is measured not by numerical targets, numbers do help us understand whether the needle is moving in the positive direction. At Infosys we not only measure the increase in percentage of women joining the organization but also the increase in number of women across levels in the organization.

Apart from launching inclusive policies, we also track the usage of policies for effectiveness and ensure that the usage is moving up. It is interesting to note that equal percentage of men and women make use of the flexible workplace policies.

Road ahead:

Our belief in equal opportunity and management commitment has always been the key factors to help achieve the milestones in diversity and inclusion. The three key areas that the organization continues to focus on are

1. Continuing to attract women at entry and lateral levels
2. Creating inclusive policies to retain
3. Ensuring abundant opportunities to learn and grow

While increasing percentage of women at the organization remains the key focus, increasing women across levels is the need of the hour. Women tend to derail after they reach a particular level in the organization that usually coincides with the biological cycle. With women trying to balance their family and work, their career starts to take a backseat. Therefore organizations with commitment to groom and grow women need to look at their developmental needs differently; for example, women would come and deliver their best at the job but were not applying for training and self-development sessions. Deep dive led to development of specific programs for women.

For women at mid to senior management, an exclusive program called IWIL (Infosys Women In Leadership) was designed in partnership with a premier business school in India (Indian Institute of Management). Aimed at empowering women to take up leadership roles and nurture talent to take up leadership roles in future. IWIL has helped women discover latent strengths, re-evaluate their potential and renew their aspirations. With subsequent batches, empowering more women employees, the impact will be felt on overall workforce demography.



The road ahead looks extremely bright with hope of developing best-in-class women leaders. The pool of women will be further developed through 'tier-leadership' program which is open for both men and women. This program also presents scope for building sponsorship programs for women, networking opportunities, thereby making women build their own circles of influence.

These programs coupled with goals to increase women representation in unrepresented areas, levels or with low representation will be the key to sustain and grow gender inclusivity program at Infosys.

Other inclusion programs:

At Infosys gender inclusion continues to be a major focus area; however, the focus of diversity & inclusion is much larger one. Though our stance as an equal opportunity continues, a diverse talent pool comes with its own set of challenges. For example an employee with disability, though treated on par with any other employee, may require certain reasonable accommodations at workplace to perform and deliver at his/her optimum potential. Hence, an employee resource group for minority/micro-inequity groups has been encouraged.

- **Familymatters** - At Infosys, we have over 50,000 parents are continuing to grow. The Family Matters network is essentially a support group that helps employees cope with the ever growing challenges of managing family and work. Familymatters also offers parenting workshops, relationship as well as newsletters every quarter.
- **Creating Common Ground** - CCG is a differentiated focus of Infosys, where we focus on commonalities we share and then leverage it for business needs. Initiatives such as Culturati (culture immersion workshops), Culture Café (inter-geo chat sessions) & Culture Coach (Culture experts answering and coaching new joinees) fall under the CCG umbrella.
- **Infyability** - Infosys is an enabler in more ways than one. Our focus on developing a truly 'inclusive' environment has been one major reason for differently-abled employees being able to perform beyond expectations. This has led to creating a unique forum, that is, Infyability.
- **IGLU** – (Infosys Gays, Lesbians and You) - IGLU represents our openness and commitment to employees from the LGBT community. It reinforces our values of fairness, integrity and transparency towards all our stakeholders. IGLU is a transformative effort to align ourselves with the practices of our global clients and establish an industry touchstone of corporate fairness and integrated workforce for other Indian organizations.

Conclusion:

The journey of inclusion is never ending. The more inclusive an organization gets in this globalized environment, that many more business prospects can be achieved. Just as organizations select people they want to hire, talented people pick the organizations they want to work for. For the employee value proposition to create an image of the company that attracts and retains best in class talent, it must therefore be aligned with the organizational strategy plan, its vision, mission and values. With enhanced synergy and team spirit within distributed project teams, employees are able to better understand and cater to customer demands. Improved customer satisfaction scores have a positive impact on the service provider's brand image. Apart from social and moral implications, diversity and inclusion practices have direct financial implications; it becomes viable to expand the business at reduced costs to multiple locations around the world as the workforce is acquired locally. And for a long-term benefit, significantly improved employee satisfaction also leads to significantly reduced employee attrition rates.

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