

NASSCOM[®] MERCER

GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN INDIA

**Building empowered
organisations**



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FOREWORD

With annual revenues of USD60 billion, the Indian IT-BPO industry has emerged as the largest private sector employer in the country, with direct employment of 2.23 million professionals and indirect employment of over eight million people in different industry sectors.

The IT-BPO industry has remained fairly gender neutral from the onset, providing equal opportunities for both men and women, and the participation of women in the workforce is seen as a critical enabling factor for continued growth of the industry. While the percentage of women in the IT-BPO workforce at the entry level is commensurate with graduate profiles, anecdotal evidence suggests that this is not the case at middle and senior management positions.

Across different job profiles, skill sets and designations in the organisational hierarchy, women contribute significantly to the success of companies and the IT-BPO industry as a whole. At the same time, while women are actively encouraged by IT-BPO companies to contribute at work, much more needs to be done. There are still a large number of geographies where women-friendly policies and facilities simply do not exist, a fact that can greatly deter women from entering or staying on in the IT-BPO industry.

Recognising the growing influence of this emerging workforce, IT-BPO organisations are gearing up to act as a catalyst in the development of female workers. The industry has taken a lead in adopting best practices in the areas of HR to promote the growth and increased employment of women. Companies, especially the larger organisations, have already launched initiatives that encourage gender diversity. As part of this movement, special groups, policies and processes that spur female participation have been introduced.

NASSCOM has also launched a gender inclusivity forum that aims to create a platform for female professionals in the industry, where they can learn from each other and share best practices. However, the real impact of various gender inclusivity initiatives in corporate India and particularly in the IT-BPO industry is yet to self actualise, partially on account of the lead time such initiatives have before generate a meaningful change in employee diversity.

This joint report conducted by NASSCOM and Mercer takes a holistic approach to the issue of gender inclusivity and proposes a multi-dimensional framework involving an ecosystem encompassing the individual, organisation, society, and the government to achieve increased levels of integration and benefits. With input from a number of NASSCOM member organisations and the CEOs of companies in the IT-BPO industry, Mercer and NASSCOM assessed current gender inclusivity levels, and explored the potential issues that inhibit women from staying within the workforce and rising to leadership positions. Based on this input and analysis of current trends, we propose a set of recommendations in this report to help effect the transformation from inclusivity to total empowerment within the context of each of the stakeholders.

Mercer and NASSCOM hope this paper stands to benefit each of your organisations and helps you understand and assess where you are today in your gender inclusivity journey to build a more empowered organisation.

Padma Ravichandar
Managing Director, Mercer India

Som Mittal
President, NASSCOM

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Many individuals and organisations have helped us in preparing this report. First, we would like to thank the forum members and member companies of NASSCOM who went out of their way to provide detailed statistics on their companies.

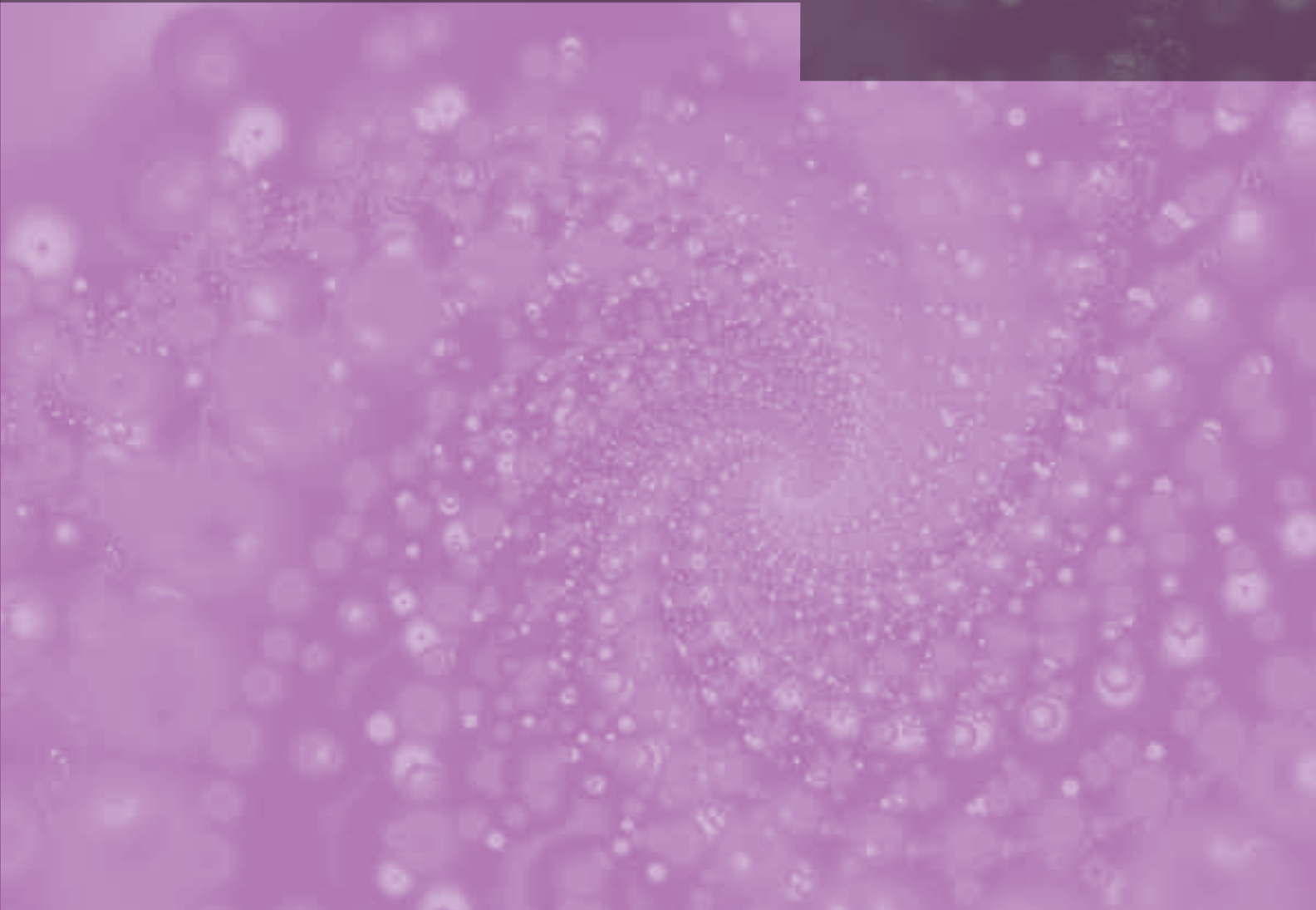
Second, we would like to acknowledge inputs from companies such as Infosys, IBM Daksh, Accenture, Cisco, Mindtree, Braodridge, ADP, Ajuba, CSC, Focus Infotech, UBS, GE, Dell, Emberin, Empower Research, Fidelity National, I2IT, IIM Ahmedabad, Oracle and India Stats.

Finally, our thanks go out to the teams at Mercer and NASSCOM who were instrumental in producing this framework and the whitepaper.

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1.INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

As part of an ongoing gender inclusivity initiative, in 2008 NASSCOM and Mercer India joined forces to conduct a study that aimed to develop a better understanding of the key drivers of and often-overlooked stakeholders in the gender inclusivity movement. This paper is a result of the joint research on the status of women, their roles and the challenges they face, particularly in the IT-BPO industry in India.

More than 45 leading technology companies participated in the initial survey. In addition, Mercer spoke to a number of senior leaders in both the IT-BPO and manufacturing industries to elicit their views on the issue and better understand the gender inclusivity efforts undertaken within their own organisations.

In this paper, you will find:

- The results and findings of the survey
- An overview of the current state of gender inclusivity actions in the IT-BPO industry
- A description of the stakeholders involved
- A proposed framework for holistic transformation
- A set of recommendations for each of the stakeholders

The objective of this paper is to propose a multi-dimensional framework for stakeholders – individuals, organisations, society and the Government – to realise greater integration and the benefits of an inclusive work environment. We also explore the various phases of gender inclusion and the corresponding metrics. However, the key focus of this paper is to outline the actions required in order to nurture women and enable them to grow in a leadership capacity, while presenting a model that will enable a climate of inclusion in companies.

This paper includes a set of recommendations for the stakeholders in this movement that we have outlined during the course of the study, to help effect the transformation from gender inclusion to total empowerment. This is particularly relevant today, while India is on the cusp of economic growth and social transformation. If women are not an active part of this growth, their unique perspectives, insights and economic contributions will be lost.

This paper is divided into five sections:

1. Demographics in the IT-BPO industry
2. Current state of the gender inclusivity movement
3. Stakeholders in the gender inclusivity movement

4. A roadmap for moving from inclusivity to empowerment
5. Recommendations for each of the stakeholders

Why produce this paper?

India has more working women than does any other country in the world. Of the entire workforce of 400 million, 30-35 per cent are female, and of these women, only 20 per cent work in urban India. This figure can largely be attributed to the growth of the IT-BPO industry, which is one of the largest recruiters of a qualified workforce in recent times. While this industry itself has been a beacon in championing diversity and gender inclusivity initiatives, few companies have taken stock of how successful these programmes have been and what the road ahead should look like.

Despite the number of political and industrial forums, mandated Government policies, and widespread discussion in the media, the issue of gender inclusivity continues to remain largely unresolved. Often regarded as a woman's problem, this issue will remain unresolved if we as individuals, society and the nation as a whole do not acknowledge that this is everyone's problem. We must change our perception if we are to truly integrate women into the workforce in India. And to be able to do so, we need a deeper understanding of the issues linked to their causality.

This paper attempts to understand where we are on our journey to female empowerment and calls for action from key stakeholders, including individuals, organisations, social systems and the Government, working in unison towards this common objective.

Take the furore surrounding the *New York Times* article "The opt-out revolution" back in 2003, for example. This article has proven to be a source of enduring fascination and outrage. A number of readers, especially women, are angry at the central premise: While a number of workplaces do not accept women, a number of talented, well-qualified women are leaving the workforce because they feel their lives are more meaningful without work. The readers' anger has stemmed primarily from one source: that these women leave because they can. Many others cannot. This argument certainly has more than an element of truth in it. Yet it does not take away from the author's central premise: that the very same women who are supposed to be succeeding are walking away from the workplace. That raises this question: What needs to be done to retain women and enable them to rise through the ranks, whether or not they can afford to leave?

¹ Alice H Eagly and Linda L Carly, "Women in the labyrinth of leadership", *Harvard Business Review*, September 2007

In another thought-provoking article, the *Harvard Business Review*¹ pointed out that women's route to leadership is like a maze. The article suggests that rarely do women experience any kind of linearity in their work lives. Their path to the top is a labyrinth with choices along the way that may derail them. Companies and women need to navigate this maze to ensure that women have a chance not just at staying in the workplace but also at assuming senior leadership roles.

For instance, McKinsey has developed a model for women's leadership, *Centred Leadership*, which aims to help women connect to their personal sources of meaning and focus on managing their energies rather than their time and on using specific strategies to network and groom themselves for their professional growth. While this model does not address the underlying issues of gender inequity, it does try to allow women to work through the specific and unique challenges they face.

The economic cost of exclusion

The business case for including women in companies has been made and validated time and again. Independent studies show that companies with more than two female board members demonstrate a better return on equity compared to the industry average (11.4 per cent vs. an average of 10.3 per cent, according to a recent study²). According to a recent *Economic Times* study³, in India, companies headed by women grew by a compounded annual growth rate of almost 35 per cent compared with 21 per cent registered by the BSE-30. Their profits grew by 56 per cent in the last five years, but grew even faster, at the rate of 64 per cent, in the last three years. The BSE-30 companies posted a growth rate of 27 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively, during the same period.

However, according to the study, there are still too few female directors (less than two per cent) on the boards of Indian companies. India ranks at the bottom in the overall proportion of men to women in the workplace, although this number grew an average of 15 per cent per annum over the last five years. India started with an exceptionally small base, particularly in terms of senior leadership roles. In a country where 75-80 per cent of employed women still work in the unorganised sector, it is women in senior leadership positions in the IT-BPO industry who are uniquely positioned to transform and drive the inclusivity movement.

² "A business case for women", *McKinsey Quarterly*, September 2008

³ "Women promoters beat big daddies", *Economic Times*, 8 March 2009

The social cost of exclusion

There is a compelling business case for gender inclusivity; however, we must go beyond this to address the issues of social justice and stability. These issues have a direct bearing on the economic growth and social fabric of India as a country growing in prominence on the global stage.

We cannot separate the social from the economic. A woman who is not encouraged by her family to study and work, for instance, will not even enter the workplace and therefore will not contribute to either social change or the economy. A number of global initiatives have already recognised the role of women in weaving the very fabric of society and the economy. For example, The Harvard Kennedy School regularly runs an initiative called Women Waging Peace, where women from communities all around the world that have been plagued with conflict and ravaged by disease talk about how society can be reshaped in the midst of disaster. Women have been a crucial link in ensuring that the fruits of economic progress, such as better health and education, are passed on to those who need it the most but are least able to demand these benefits for themselves.

In India, we are witnessing the confluence of multiple forces: liberalisation, identity politics, religious tension and threats to national security. Today, social norms are being redefined with some challenges. If women are not included in this national discourse, any stability that arises will be understandably precarious.

From a national context, gender inclusivity provides us with an opportunity to achieve economic growth as well as social justice. In a country where most women work in the unorganised sector, it is the women in senior leadership positions in the industry who are uniquely positioned to give the inclusivity movement the push it needs to result in transformational change. Industry powers India today, but the actual impact of globalisation on a significant proportion of the population is not easy to decipher. When scholars such as Martha Chen⁴ have studied the actual impact of industrial growth on lives and livelihoods, it becomes even more apparent that unless social and economic policies are inclusive, we as a country run the risk of marginalising women, regardless of whether they are employed or not.

“We have our job cut out for us.”

*– Subroto Bagchi, Co-founder,
MindTree Consulting*

⁴ Martha Chen is a lecturer in public policy with the Harvard Kennedy School and coordinator of the global research policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

Objectives and direction

This paper has two objectives. The first is to suggest that a model for gender inclusion involves a number of stakeholders, including governments and companies, sharing some common responsibilities and activities. For example, companies should take on gender-related activities in society within their sphere of influence while working within their own organisational systems.

Second, the paper presents a model for gender inclusivity in organisations that, if followed, can create an enabling climate for inclusion and growth. This model looks at the various phases of gender inclusion and the corresponding metrics. The Mercer NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study in 2008 revealed that while some progress has been made in the proportion of women in entry-level and middle-management roles, there is still a lack of representation of women across all job functions and clearly fewer women than men in senior levels within many organisations.

Inclusivity as an agenda has already been addressed by some companies in India, with the IT-BPO industry taking a lead. This has resulted in clearly defined policies and metrics, better brand recognition, and greater levels of retention and productivity in these organisations. However, most companies have yet to realise the complete benefits of a fully integrated workforce, achieving a “state of being” that reaps corporate, economic and cultural rewards for both the organisation and its employees. The real impact of gender inclusivity initiatives in corporate India and particularly in the IT-BPO industry is yet to be seen, partially because of the lead time that such initiatives require before they can generate a meaningful change in gender inclusivity.

This paper takes a holistic approach to the issue of gender inclusivity and proposes a multi-dimensional framework involving an ecosystem that includes individuals, the organisation, the social environment and the Government in order to achieve increased levels of integration and the ensuing benefits. It also proposes a set of recommendations to help effect the transformation from inclusivity to total empowerment from the context of each of the stakeholders.

“It is necessary to empower the victims to deal with this challenge themselves”.

“Women need to work on themselves and their stereotyped images, and learn from the development programmes they attend”.

*– Dr. Sudha S, General Manager,
MindTree Consulting*

2. CURRENT STATE OF GENDER INCLUSIVITY ACTIONS

2. CURRENT STATE OF GENDER INCLUSIVITY ACTIONS

In addition to the initial survey conducted by NASSCOM and Mercer, interviews were conducted with a number of senior executives and business leaders in both the IT-BPO and non-IT-BPO spaces. We also elicited feedback on the framework of this study by conducting small focus groups with diversity managers from a cross section of companies. We have incorporated the excerpts and knowledge gained from the interviews that we conducted with senior leaders, as well as our recommendations, in this report.

In this paper, we will:

- Present the results and findings of the survey and interviews
- Take stock of where the IT-BPO industry in India is with respect to gender inclusivity
- Define a framework that includes the various stakeholders for a meaningful and overarching change
- Present a set of recommendations based on the study, our framework and Mercer's global experience

There are many reasons why an organisation's workforce is a critical consideration in all planning and strategic activities. At a minimum, the current workforce impacts business plans, and the achievement of growth is dependent on workforce expansion plans. However, traditional workforce planning tends to focus on numbers and levels. In the recent past, other aspects of the workforce have emerged as being equally, if not more, critical, such as diversity – the mix of the workforce needs to reflect the multicultural, multilingual, multiracial, multinational society. Further differences within society are yet to be named; however, they also play critical roles.

The advancement of women continues to be an area of concern. Through gender inclusivity, India has an opportunity to fill the gap between labour supply and demand, which is largely underutilised. This starts with education – access to schooling and the chance to learn. While the right to education remains fundamental, social norms often prevent girls from receiving the same access to education and consequent employment (5.3 per cent of women are unemployed, compared with 4.9 per cent of men). As a result, a large percentage of women work either in the unorganised sector or not at all. This remains a challenge to the gender inclusivity movement. While it is deeply rooted in society, it also influences organisations.

“Organisations should create a gender inclusive working environment by removing barriers.”

*– Narayana N.R. Murthy,
Chairman and Chief Mentor,
Infosys Technologies*

For many global companies, the issue of providing equal opportunities to women first arose in North America almost 20 years ago. Since then, global organisations have made diversity a core policy, offering equal opportunities not only to women but to all minority groups. Most of India's leading IT-BPO organisations work closely with large global companies and have been exposed to their gender inclusivity policies. This explains to some extent why these companies have been among the first to realise the impact of gender inclusivity on business success.

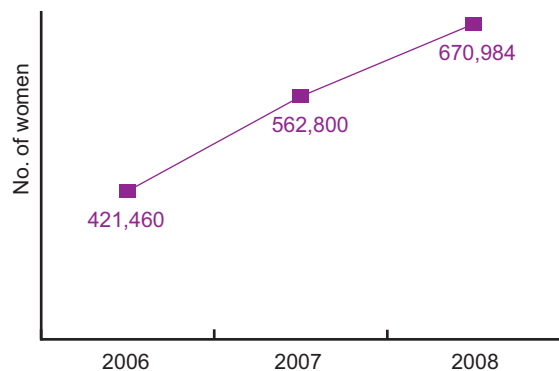
India IT industry demographics

The Indian IT industry mirrors the availability of women engineers in professional colleges. In the mid '80s, only 5-8 per cent of students in engineering colleges and approximately 25-30 per cent of the population entering the IT industry were women. The dramatic growth of the IT industry in the mid '90s inspired a larger percentage of women to obtain higher education, and by 2005, 40.4 per cent of the entrants into institutions of higher education were women⁵. This trend has had a direct impact on the positions filled by women in IT, the bottom of the pyramid having favourable gender ratios.

Since then, the number of women employed in the Indian IT industry has increased (see Chart 1). This is a consequence of various factors, including the following:

- The number of women graduating from engineering colleges has been on the rise.
- The idea of a working spouse is more widely accepted.
- The IT-BPO industry is generally perceived to offer a safe and friendly work environment.

Chart 1: Women in the IT workforce



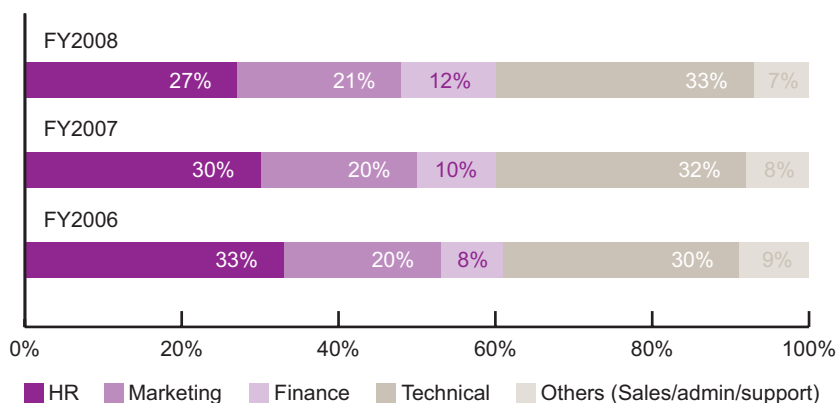
Source: Mercer – NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study 2008

⁵ University Grants Commission

The increase in the percentage of women working in various job functions over the past three years is equally encouraging (see Chart 2). This highlights an interesting aside in the gender inclusivity movement – efforts to increase inclusivity are creating a level playing field for both genders. In technical functions – traditionally considered all-male bastions – we see that the percentage of female employees steadily increased from 35 per cent in 2006 to 36 per cent in 2008, especially at junior levels.

Further, the percentage of women working in human resources – long a preferred career choice for Indian women – dropped from 55 per cent in 2006 to 25 per cent in 2008, which shows that women are opting for careers outside HR.

Chart 2: Percentage of female employees in various job functions



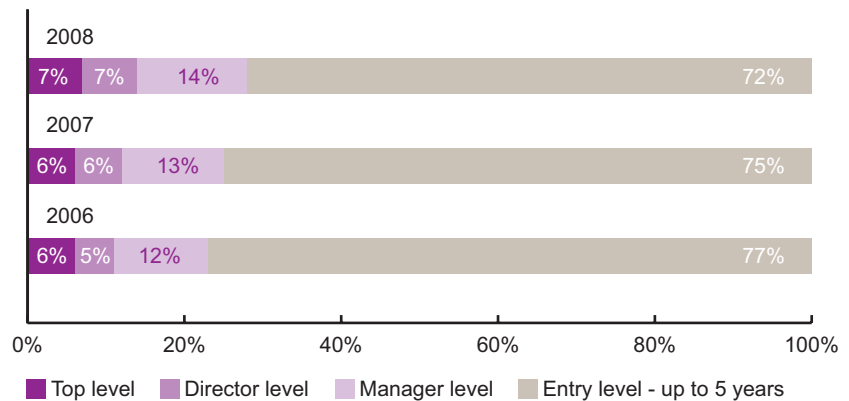
Source: Mercer – NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study 2008



However, the crux of the problem remains: While women are well-represented in entry-level roles, they drop out from the workforce as they start to progress through the ranks. (See Table 1 for a definition of career levels.)

Table 1: Definition of career levels		
	Career level	Definition
1	Entry level	Graduates with no supervisory role This career stream ranges from entry level through to technical or subject matter experts in the IT space
2	Manager level	Supervisory level ranging from team leader level to general manager May provide mentoring and coaching to less-experienced staff
3	Director level	Heads of programmes, divisions and functions
4	Top level	Refers to executive team, senior vice presidents and vice presidents

Chart 3: Percentage of female employees by career level



Source: Mercer – NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study 2008

A landmark study by PwC⁶ in 2008 called this depletion of female talent the “leaking pipeline” and noted that it was prevalent across industries and countries as a global phenomenon. The more organisations do to address this problem, the greater benefit they stand to realise.

⁶ *The Leaking Pipeline – Where are our female leaders?* PricewaterhouseCoopers, March 2008

Despite the fact that many women leave the workforce as they progress through the ranks, data show that women are more loyal to their employers than are men and leave for very different reasons. While men leave for career opportunities, women tend to leave for personal reasons. Organisations investing in the career development of their female workforce stand to gain in many ways from this talent “brain drain”. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: Voluntary attrition of working women		
Top reasons for leaving Organisations		
Women	Men	Common
Marriage	Better job profile	Growth opportunities
Family/children	Better compensation	Education
Relocation		

Source: NASSCOM Research

The Leaking Pipeline report showed that across regions globally, the percentage of working women in the 30-plus age group is significantly lower than that of women in their 20s, indicating that this is the stage when women tend to leave the workforce. This is true of India as well, where women often leave the workforce due to the inability to achieve a strong work-life balance. Women who choose to take a break at this stage typically miss the critical step that takes them to the next level of management. And when they do choose to return to their careers, they find that they have lost leadership roles to their peers who remained in the workforce.

If companies in India were able to retain this core group, reducing attrition by 25 per cent, it would add significantly to a highly qualified and diverse management pool. And that would only be the tip of the iceberg, with larger, all-pervasive benefits to accrue when there are more women in leadership roles.

The impact of efforts in the Indian IT industry

Before we attempt to analyse the causes of female attrition and identify means to control this phenomenon, it is important to understand the current state of where organisations are in terms of their gender inclusivity initiatives, identify the best practices and benefits, and determine where they have failed to make an impact. This has provided valuable insights in developing the methodology and framework to tackle this complex issue.

Chart 4 below provides a snapshot of the positive impact that efforts around gender inclusivity have had on the organisations that participated in the study. It is worth noting that more and more companies want to build their employer brands, which translates to being preferred companies to join for women employees.

Ideas in practice

“An empowered company has a solid understanding of what diversity means and how it can benefit society and the organisation. The company houses processes and policies that embrace this philosophy; strong communication channels and training programmes that convey this message simply but clearly; key metrics measuring programmes and initiatives that help us move forward over time; and a culture that does not need external or internal stimuli but is open-minded and self-directed.”

- Definition of an empowered organisation by a diversity leader in a Bangalore-based IT company

Chart 4: Impact of inclusivity efforts on organisations



Source: Mercer – NASSCOM Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations study 2008

Therefore, increased employment of women, improved diversity ratios and a stronger work culture are only some of the immediately evident benefits that inclusive organisations experience.

According to participants in the Mercer NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study in 2008, the most significant benefits seen from gender inclusivity efforts include a stronger employer brand, higher levels of productivity and profits, and reduced attrition within the workforce. Often overlooked, however, is the fact that women make powerful brand ambassadors and, given that women represent 80 per cent of all retail and consumer purchasing power, their inclusion in the leadership of any organisation can help sway buying decisions in the favour of their product or service. Microsoft deliberately integrates women into its engineering design teams, with a view to developing products suited to women consumers.

While these perceived benefits are valid and unarguable, many more are yet to be realised. So far, we have merely scratched the surface in capitalising on the advantages of increasing the number of women in the workforce, most notably in senior positions. The true scope of benefits will only be realised once organisations move beyond their current initiatives and encompass other stakeholders.

Reality check: What have organisations done so far and where are we now?

Several participants in this study have been fundamental in spearheading the inclusivity movement; raising awareness of the capabilities, skills and strengths personified by female employees; and revealing the key issues that hold women back. This helps us better understand the programmes that organisations have already been implementing, their level of success and where women stand on the journey to empowerment. Chart 5 reveals some of the key programmes already implemented by participating organisations.

While best practices exist, less than 50 per cent of participating organisations have actually implemented these programmes. Policies around grievance management; the implementation of gender-neutral practices, career opportunities and advancement; and the creation of an inclusive work environment are missing in many companies.

The IT industry in India is addressing these gaps by benchmarking their efforts with those of their global counterparts, which have been working towards gender inclusivity for many years. Those companies that have already embarked on the journey to gender inclusivity recognise that this strengthens their employer brands, which in turn act as differentiators when competing in the war for talent with their more established global counterparts.

Leading the change

- examples of recent gender inclusivity initiatives by winners of the NASSCOM Awards for Leadership in Gender Inclusivity 2008

- We focus on talent programmes specifically designed to attract women, such as “women only” recruitment drives, and payment of higher referral bonuses for referring diversity candidates.

- IBM Daksh

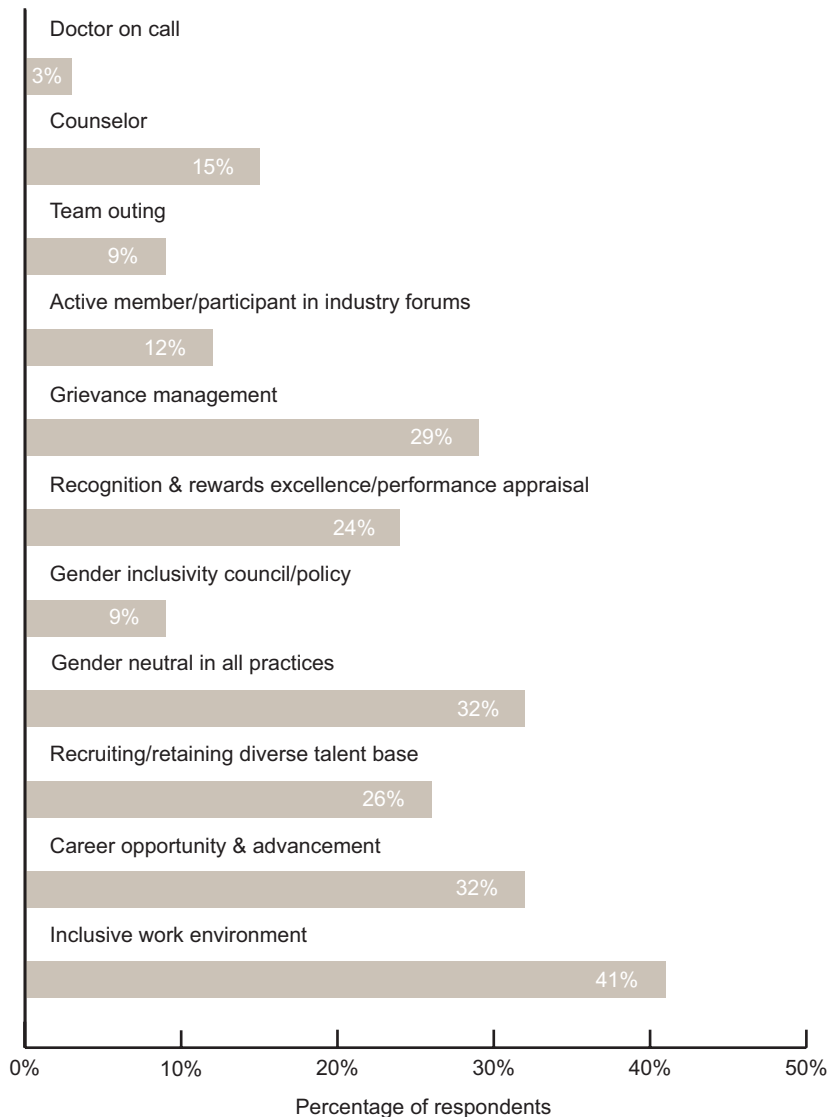
- As part of its corporate wellness programme, Ajuba provides a general physician for all employees, as well as a gynaecologist for female employees. A special lounge has been created in each of Ajuba’s three facilities, providing pregnant or unwell female employees a space to rest and relax.

- Ajuba

- ADP established a diversity forum called Vividha, which means “variety” in Sanskrit. This forum fosters an organisational culture that caters to a workforce comprising different education levels, skills, experience, languages and perspectives. As part of Vividha, the company established a 12-member Women’s Forum (including three men), which focuses on addressing inclusivity issues.

- ADP

Chart 5: Efforts undertaken by organisations to build an inclusive workplace



Source: Mercer - NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study 2008

Much work is required to build the channels and processes that will enable women to reach an equitable platform in India. Most initiatives to date have focused on the more visible, generic aspects of inclusivity; however, there is a need to look beyond the norm and engage employees to create more meaningful channels that in turn result in fostering a sustainable culture based on inclusivity and not just namesake processes.

Excerpts⁷

“A part of being sustainable is about building on a concept called ‘emotional infrastructure’. It is the emotional infrastructure that creates ‘memorability’. In the very near future, people will have to understand emotional infrastructure and begin to monetise ‘emotional assets’.

“There are three hindrances working against women, vis-à-vis the board of the future. These are stereotyping the female professional, a personal sense of mid-career guilt and, finally, the proverbial glass ceiling. The stereotype relates to the role of gender in a profession. The woman professional is both a victim and a perpetrator of the stereotype. The bottom line is that the woman professional who wants to go to the top must first refuse to be stereotyped.

– Subroto Bagchi, Co-founder, MindTree Consulting

When exploring some of the best practices that companies have already implemented in India, policies on sexual harassment, flexible working hours and flexible leave emerge as the most common, while crèches, parenting workshops and women’s forums remain less common. Similarly, few companies provide a counsellor to female employees.

Practices that require time away from work are also less prevalent. While some companies allow networking outside the office at conferences, for example, greater benefits will be felt from small-group meetings and mentorship programmes.

Organisations must now focus on how to enable change in individuals or smaller groups rather than on communicating knowledge or goals.

Chart 6 shows the various gender inclusivity practices adopted by organisations in India. Nearly 70 per cent of the companies that participated in the study feel that it is important to have an anti-sexual harassment policy in place. Flexible working options are also considered important, as they enable female employees to maintain a work-life balance.

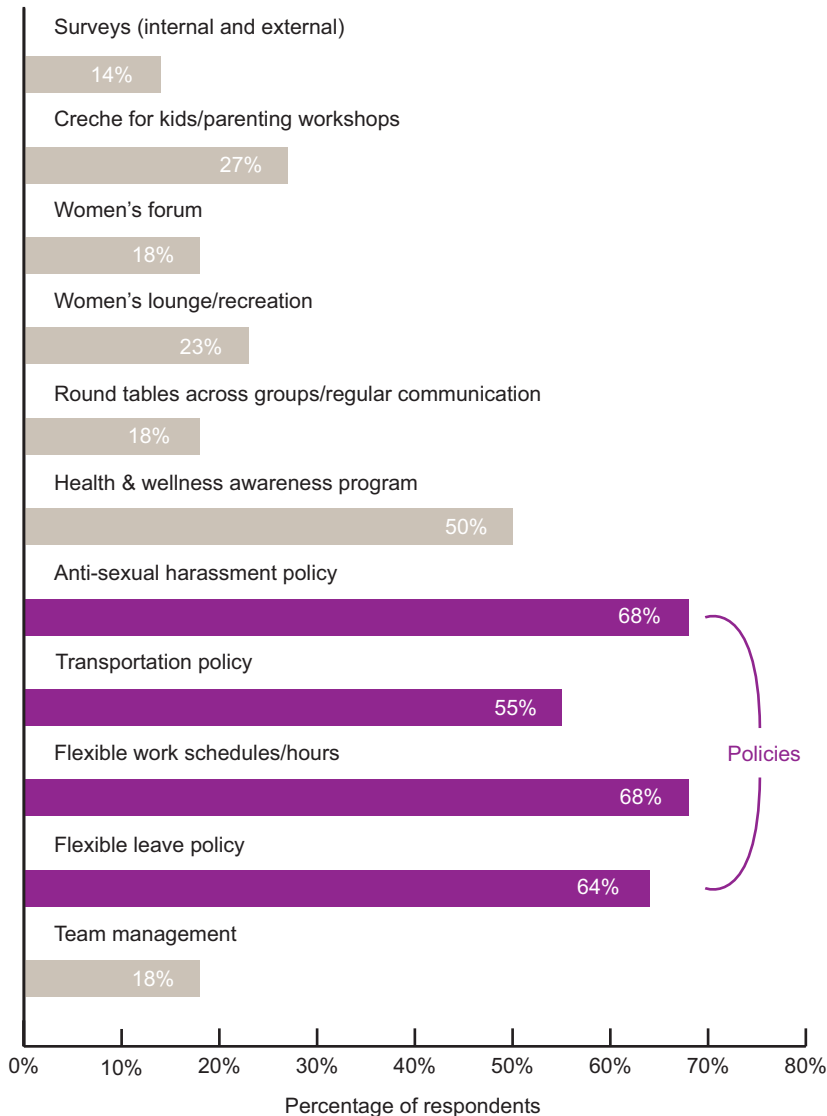
In 2007, nearly 80 per cent of participating companies focused on creating a gender inclusive environment. In 2008, the focus moved to initiatives including career opportunity advancement and being gender neutral (45 per cent each), followed closely by grievance management (41 per cent), and reward and recognition and recruiting and retaining diverse talent (36 per cent each). It is worth noting that while the speed of adoption of these practices has reduced, none of the practices adopted in 2007 has been dropped entirely.

One notable new initiative is the introduction of team outings, which were implemented by 14 per cent of participating organisations in 2008. Team outings help boost overall employee morale; however, they also help create a platform where employees come together as a team, transcending differences of gender, language or ethnicity.

To sum up, most organisations continue to strive to build an inclusive workplace; however, they are at different stages in their journeys. Equal importance is given to being gender neutral in all practices and providing equal career advancement opportunities. However, these efforts have not helped stymie the issue of attrition at middle-management levels or the lack of senior women executives in the organisation.

⁷ Women in IT: Entering the boardroom of the future”, Subroto Bagchi in *NASSCOM Newslines*, February 2008

Chart 6: Best practices to support women at work



Source: Mercer - NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study 2008

In addition, communication is an integral part of all firm-wide efforts. Gender inclusivity is no exception to this. Email is the most frequently used method of communication due to wider reach, followed by company intranets and blogs, which keep employees up to date about what is happening within the organisation and provide an opportunity to discuss issues with subject matter experts. Companies also use newsletters and journals to inform the audience about recent achievements and pipeline activities.

Excerpts - continued

“A woman professional must also know that, at the top, life is very demanding and very de-sexed. It is just not possible to become an Indra Nooyi, Naina Lal Kidwai, Mallika Sarabhai or Vasundhara Raje Scindia by trying to juggle work, home, husband, mother-in-law and making pickle. The other part is that to get to the top, whether you are a man or a woman, you must travel a lot, sometimes work weekends, network outside the workplace, learn on your own initiative, engage continuously and, finally, give an awful lot more than you get.

“On the real and perceived glass ceiling: Many women in modern India have proven that there is indeed a glass ceiling and that it can be broken. We have no dearth of role models before us.

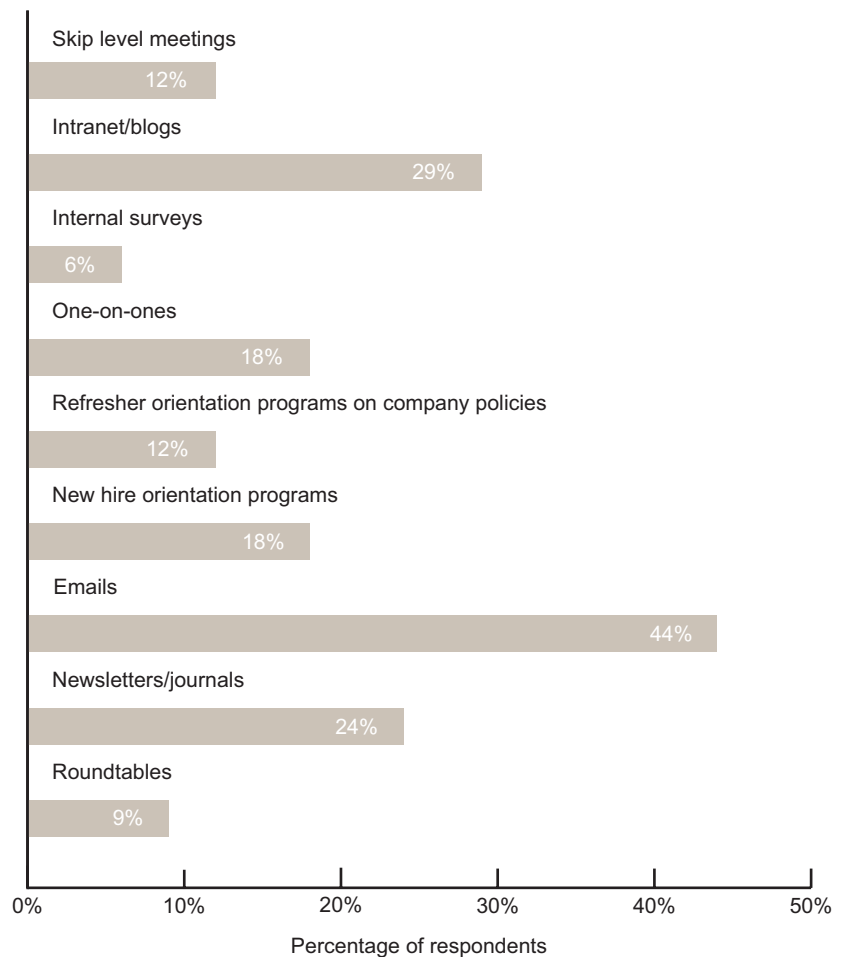
“The future, someone said, is a brick wall; it is meant to keep out folks who do not seriously want to get beyond it. The opportunities in corporate India are exploding. Therefore, what I'd like to say to the women is, please be comfortable with your gender”.

– Subroto Bagchi, Co-founder, MindTree Consulting

The most significant takeaway is that communication is recognised as a critical part of change efforts. While it is important to let women know what the organisation is doing, it is equally important to use communication to convey a message on the kind of culture the organisation is creating. This will go a long way in defining the unstated norms that define working relationships.

It is also important to note, as shown in Chart 7, that organisations have still not adopted a more personalised communication strategy as far as inclusivity is concerned and are still utilising more generic and mass communication channels to effect change. For transformational change and for ingraining values of diversity within the organisation, a top-down communication strategy with focused group-level communications and a lead-by-example style of communications will be required.

Chart 7: Communication efforts



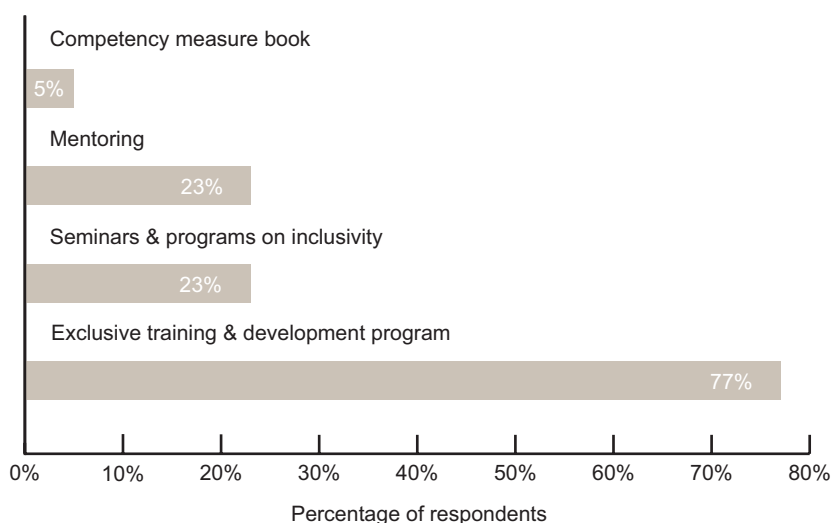
Source: Mercer - NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study 2008

For example, Infosys organises workshops specifically for women and created female portals as part of the inclusivity movement. There is also communication from leaders to create visibility and steer the initiative.

IBM has a women leaders council, which focuses on attracting female employees and ensuring their development and retention. Women are also enabled through networking groups and mentorship programmes and receive visibility in conferences as speakers or participants. Special events like Women’s Day and Mother’s Day are also organised.

Finally, as Chart 8 indicates, IT companies have yet to adopt mentoring and sponsorship programmes effectively. Approximately 80 per cent of participating companies feel that the best measures for developing women employees are exclusive training and development programmes. This may not help develop women leaders from an individual perspective.

Chart 8: Measures for development of women in organisations



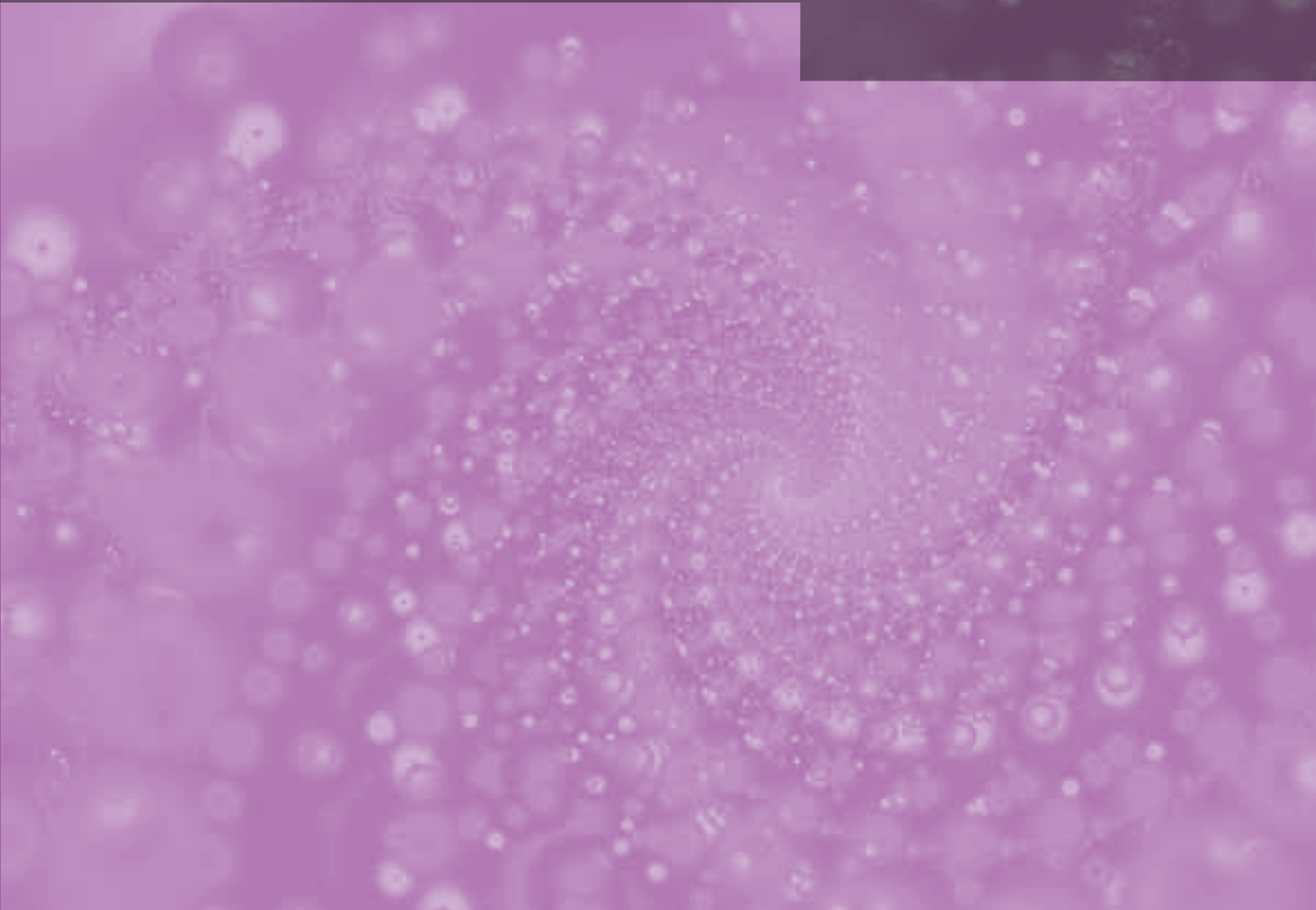
Source: Mercer – NASSCOM *Gender Inclusivity: Building Empowered Organisations* study 2008

Ideas in practice

“An empowered organisation takes pride in the values it stands for and strives to empower the associates to deliver their best in all that they do. In such an organisation, there is complete trust between all associates and everyone is committed and aligned to the organisational goals and aspirations. All employees are fully engaged, which reflects in the quality of the work delivered, and everyone feels that they are an important part of the business they are in. The leadership team takes all decisions collectively and therefore everyone is empowered to contribute. There is no place for gender discrimination in such an organisation, and all are respected for the work and value that is delivered”

– Definition of an empowered organisation by a diversity leader in a Bangalore-based IT company

3. THE TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY: INCLUSIVITY TO EMPOWERMENT



3. THE TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY: INCLUSIVITY TO EMPOWERMENT

At the recent NASSCOM conference on gender inclusivity, a number of business leaders were prepared to ask the hard questions. How do we move beyond where we are now? Why haven't we made more progress in the past few years?

To answer these questions and better understand where technology companies in India need to focus to a meaningful impact, NASSCOM and Mercer spoke with a number of small and medium-sized companies, as well as large IT organisations, to elicit their responses on the structural, cultural and organisational shifts required by various companies to transition from inclusivity to empowerment. Key excerpts appear below:

Organisations with no concrete GI initiatives so far

1. Raise awareness of GI issues and assessment of resistance to change at all levels.
2. Gain leadership buy-in and endorsement.
3. Establish a forum to run and handle GI issues.
4. Conduct employee survey of GI issues and identify gaps.
5. Establish diversity policies and charters such as an anti-sexual harassment policy.
6. Provide nondiscriminatory work environment.
7. Engage employees.
8. Offer communication and training.
9. Understand, articulate and align the benefits of a GI initiative to the business objectives of the organisation.
10. Sensitise recruitment to the diversity initiative and requirement of the company to be an equal opportunity employer.
11. Assess current retention issues among female employees and deploy adequate policies to ensure retention of female employees.

“Many organisations fall into the trap of believing that only someone from a diverse background can drive an inclusive culture. However, research suggests that ‘outsiders’ have often been more effective in bringing about change. For example, men may be considered as ‘outsiders’ to gender issues. Research shows that engaging men has helped to break the stereotypical notion of gender barriers”.

– Rekha M. Menon, Executive Vice President, Accenture India

Organisations with some GI initiatives

1. Establish formal and informal networks for women.
2. Ensure ongoing endorsement and commitment of senior management to the GI initiative and forum.
3. Conduct GI surveys to assess current trends and the impact of GI initiatives.
4. Communicate results of initiative through employee town-hall meetings.
5. Assess and evolve recruitment and progression for women within the company.
6. Introduce employee-friendly policies to strengthen the GI initiative through best practice sharing and external data.
7. Engage employees through best practice sharing and highlighting achievements.
8. Ensure equality in remuneration based on a high-performance work culture.
9. Establish stronger and more aligned support structures such as crèche, flexi-hours and post-maternity leave.
10. Provide equal opportunities in talent development and promotions.
11. Communicate externally, share best practices and celebrate success.

Organisations with established and mature GI initiatives and processes

1. Top management communicates how the GI initiatives have provided business benefits and continue to tie initiative to business model.
2. Share best practices externally and communicate achievements.
3. Create and celebrate role models.
4. Ensure a good gender mix in senior management and leadership.
5. Take very strict and immediate action on gender harassment policies.
6. Conduct employee assessment through surveys and pilot newer initiatives.
7. Create leadership between companies by establishing and sharing resource banks of women leaders and middle managers whose personal requirements for location transfer or flexi-hours can be shared and assisted.
8. Periodically conduct reviews through external and internal committees.
9. Volunteer to lead mentoring circles in other companies through successful role models.
10. Through well-thought-out interventions, ensure that women’s career development evolves within the organisation and that there are no glass ceilings.

Additionally, the respondents provided suggestions unique to the IT and BPO industries in India:

Unique GI requirements of the IT industry

1. Security requirements for women staff who work late and long hours.
2. Highly skilled staff who understand the GI issues well.
3. Strong emphasis on teamwork, irrespective of gender.
4. Cross-cultural exposure.
5. Aggressive and inclusive GI policy that is proactive and stems attrition due to the need for a large pool of skilled talent.
6. The IT industry has a greater pool of women in the workforce, a more global mindset and a better access to technology and information.
7. Greater need to balance work environment and culture.
8. Challenge posed by the recruitment pool, in that there are fewer skilled women available to recruit from, due to the need for technical skills required by the IT sector.
9. Long work schedule that requires policies to help women overcome and balance social and family obligations.
10. Large Gen Y working population with high aspirations and expectations about career paths and development that needs to be managed and addressed.

Unique GI requirements of the BPO industry

1. Presence of large Gen Y working population requires further skill development and advancement.
2. Unnatural hours due to shiftwork require policies on health, safety and security.
3. Policies need to address the balance of work and personal issues.
4. Flexi-hours and telecommuting policies cannot be used in BPO segment, and hence there is a need to cater to the women's population differently, with progressive and adaptive policies.
5. Higher rate of attrition, and hence requirement policies, requires further attention to GI issues.
6. GI policies in the BPO sector need to be centred on the cultural perspective of women employees and showcase long-term viable employment opportunities and career development opportunities for women.

We propose two significant changes in our approach, based on these responses:

1. We need to look at gender inclusivity as a large-scale journey of transformation. This will involve understanding the fundamental forces and stakeholders that shape this movement and the current barriers to success. This awareness will help us look at the issue holistically. It will help us define a model where the stakeholders work together to create an environment for inclusive change. In this paper, we have proposed a contextual framework which defines such an ecosystem with the key players and the forces at work.

2. We need to think through and act on a set of key changes across this matrix of stakeholders. These changes are intended to enable transformation and to create a new state of empowerment for women, the organisations they work for and the society they live in, and the legislative and governmental policies they abide by. The most important requirement for dramatic, exponential change is for the key players to exert their influence in areas they may not have considered before.

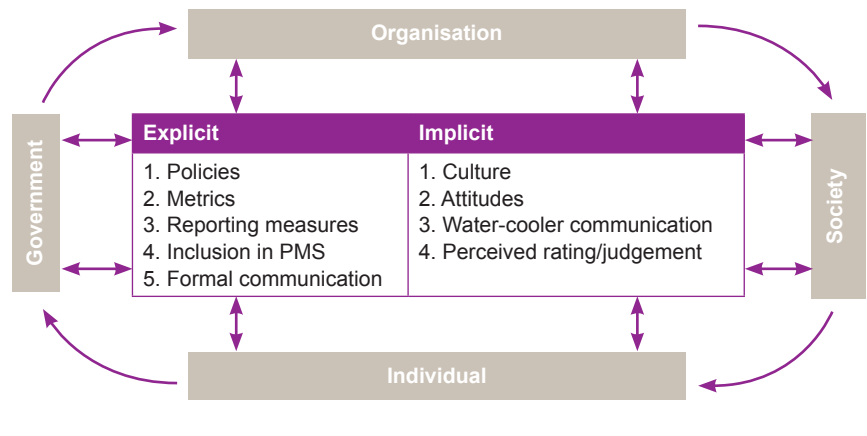
A construct defining the ecosystems at work

We believe that one of the biggest reasons gender initiatives are unsuccessful is our failure to address an array of forces that define the problem and to provide possible solutions. Unless a model explicitly acknowledges these influential forces, it will lead to change that is cosmetic or infrastructural, at best.

Our framework has three parts:

- Stakeholders and influencers
- The journey from identification to empowerment
- Metrics

Chart 9: The inclusivity ecosystem



Stakeholders and influencers

There are two types of influencers. The overt, or extrinsic, influencers include laws, policies and other mandatory requirements. The others are the intrinsic, or often subconscious, unstated beliefs and rules. Overt influencers are easier to address and resolve, since they are visible in the form of policy documents, processes, forms and templates; metrics to be tracked; and legislations to be followed.

All stakeholders have been working on the external handles of gender diversity – laws, permissions, education, policies and processes. These have been drivers of change so far. However, to make the next leap, we need levers that operate far more deeply than these. They must operate at inner levels, within individuals who are the building blocks.

This section will focus, however, on the intrinsic influencers that drive or limit efforts across stakeholders. For example, the Government of India extols women who have succeeded and sends out congratulatory messages encouraging girls to become like female role models such as Kalpana Chawlas and Indra Nooyis. Looking at the more widely sought-after media, e.g. movies, we see that women have been portrayed in roles that are limited to second fiddle and entertainment. Even in portraying a “supermom”, the emphasis is on the woman doing it all, not on a division of work among other family members. It is only in the recent past that we have seen movies or entertainment programmes portraying women in the equal and evolved roles that many fulfil. In addition, in the decade to come, we will see the benefit of this change. In society, changes come from powerful images and mass channels, and not only from formal communiqués like laws.

Stakeholders

We have defined the key stakeholders as the individual, society, the organisation and the Government. These stakeholders make up the ecosystem; however, it is important to qualify them as independent entities:

1. The individual plays a unique role in being the incumbent and main decision maker.
2. Society plays a widely pervasive role as the cultural platform in shaping beliefs, setting norms of acceptability and defining the boundaries of conformity.
3. Organisations are at the forefront of creating new roles and stretching the boundaries of the roles women play and at the forefront of building empowered teams.
4. The Government enables discrete leaps in the change process by introducing legislation, public policies and laws that allow and enable inclusivity and diversity across society.

Mercer considers the Government, society, the organisation and women to be the key stakeholders in effecting change into the inclusivity structure. All these influencers must work cohesively to bring a paradigm shift and lead the change from inclusivity to empowered ecosystems. We examine below the role that each stakeholder plays.

Government

To build a gender inclusive culture in a country, governments generally pass laws on education, safety and protection of women. In the recent past, many national and local governments have played a crucial role in bringing change to the system. They have considered that women's rights are human rights and have passed laws to enable women equal rights to education, employment, voting, social security, compensation, etc. For example:

- The US government, in 1963, passed the Equal Pay Act, which denounces sex discrimination for wages given to opposite sexes for the same job, requiring the same skills and done under similar conditions.
- In 1979, the United Nations also stepped in to protect women's rights, when the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- In 1995, the Government of India passed an amendment to the Factories Act, allowing women to work night shifts and mandating employers to provide adequate safeguards at the workplace and for commuting.
- In India, the Government has passed a law that mandates employers to provide security and transport for women who work odd hours.

In India, the Government has played a role as regulator and lawmaker. It is our belief that it is time for the Government to up the stakes by getting involved in formal and informal efforts to create a truly inclusive nation. This will involve launching communication campaigns on inclusivity aimed at moulding the beliefs and social norms of a generation, as it did for family planning. Options include:

- Creating a social environment that is safe for women.
- Developing more avenues to readdress grievances.
- Establishing additional forums and platforms for women to share experiences and issues.
- Establishing networks to impart skills to women that enable them to pursue financial and emotional independence.

There is a strong case for stakeholders to exercise their influence beyond their direct sphere of operation.

Equally, the Government needs to address the social issues that hold women back, whether they are financial, emotional, capability-related or religious. The scale of change that is necessary requires a reach and influence that only the Government has.

Society

Society dictates the way women are brought up, in terms of subconscious programming of acceptable behaviour. This is true of the expectations of roles that both men and women play in society. The levels of participation, education and career choices are indicative of what society expects. Change here is usually brought about by a minority breaking the norm and becoming a new role model for others.

When it comes to working women, the influence of society is directly felt in the family home. The family plays a pivotal role in many ways, bringing up children with wider vistas of acceptable roles of both genders, of supporting wives and mothers who choose to work, and so on. Families are often constrained in the support they can offer working women, most notably through the absence of dependent care facilities in the broader environment, which is where the Government plays a role. Through the measures discussed earlier, women who are willing to play caregiver could be provided with the training required to convert that willingness into a commercial venture.

When women leave organisations in their mid-thirties, the organisation's willingness and ability to provide a meaningful career is not the only influencing factor. Society views a woman who places her career ahead of family in a multitude of ways – as seen in the portrayal of women in the public space, media and social commentary. The expectation continues to be that a career progresses subject to the family flourishing – an unstated expectation, but one that nonetheless causes many women to look for alternate options.

Social networks that provide informal counselling for women at the crossroads of marriage, motherhood and management by successful women leaders can help provide the emotional support required by many women in the middle of a successful and emerging career.

Organisations

Organisations have done much for the cause of gender inclusivity, and probably the key to success is providing an avenue for women to realise their capabilities and express their ambitions. Individuals and families have been transformed through the financial freedom that a career offers. These changes now need to translate into new paradigms and roles. While organisations have provided opportunities to large numbers of women, they have fallen short of empowering women at senior and leadership levels. This is the next frontier for inclusivity in organisations. Simultaneously, it is essential that companies, to the extent possible, take on activities in local communities or on the national stage that address issues of gender inequity. For example, IBM has trained young girls from rural neighbourhoods in mathematics and science. The microfinance arm of ICICI Bank targets women through self-help groups. As a key decision maker in ICICI said, “In the corporate world, you need to just remove the barriers that prevent women from contributing. In the social sphere, the pendulum is stuck at one side and it needs to be pulled back before it can swing normally again”.

Individuals

Within similar environments, different women chart different routes for themselves. The choices women make are determined partly by rules and regulations and largely by their accepted limitations. In organisations where women are working across functions and even levels, perceptions and myths prevail on how women work, manage and lead. Case studies of successful women leaders reveal time and time again that success comes not from being limited by perceptions but from recognising and working through these very perceptions and beliefs. Women, as individuals, have the greatest leverage in bringing about desired change – where awareness and willingness shatter glass ceilings and walls of expectations.

Looking at the types of influences that shape each of these stakeholders, individually and collectively, we come closer to what the framework will look like.

Ideas in practice

Building an empowered organisation is about creating compelling customer experiences, passionate employees and dramatic growth.

Empowerment is enabling employees to take more control over their jobs and working environments. It enhances the contribution they make as individuals and members of a team and allows them to seize opportunities for personal growth and self-fulfilment through creativity and innovation.

In an empowered organisation culture, people at all levels are encouraged to feel that they can make a difference and build the confidence and skills to do so.

Building a gender-inclusive workplace will only aid in making the organisation culture sturdier. This will be achieved by providing equal employment opportunity; promoting mentoring, coaching and career development programmes; offering performance-based rewards and promotions; ensuring an harassment-free workplaces; and so on.

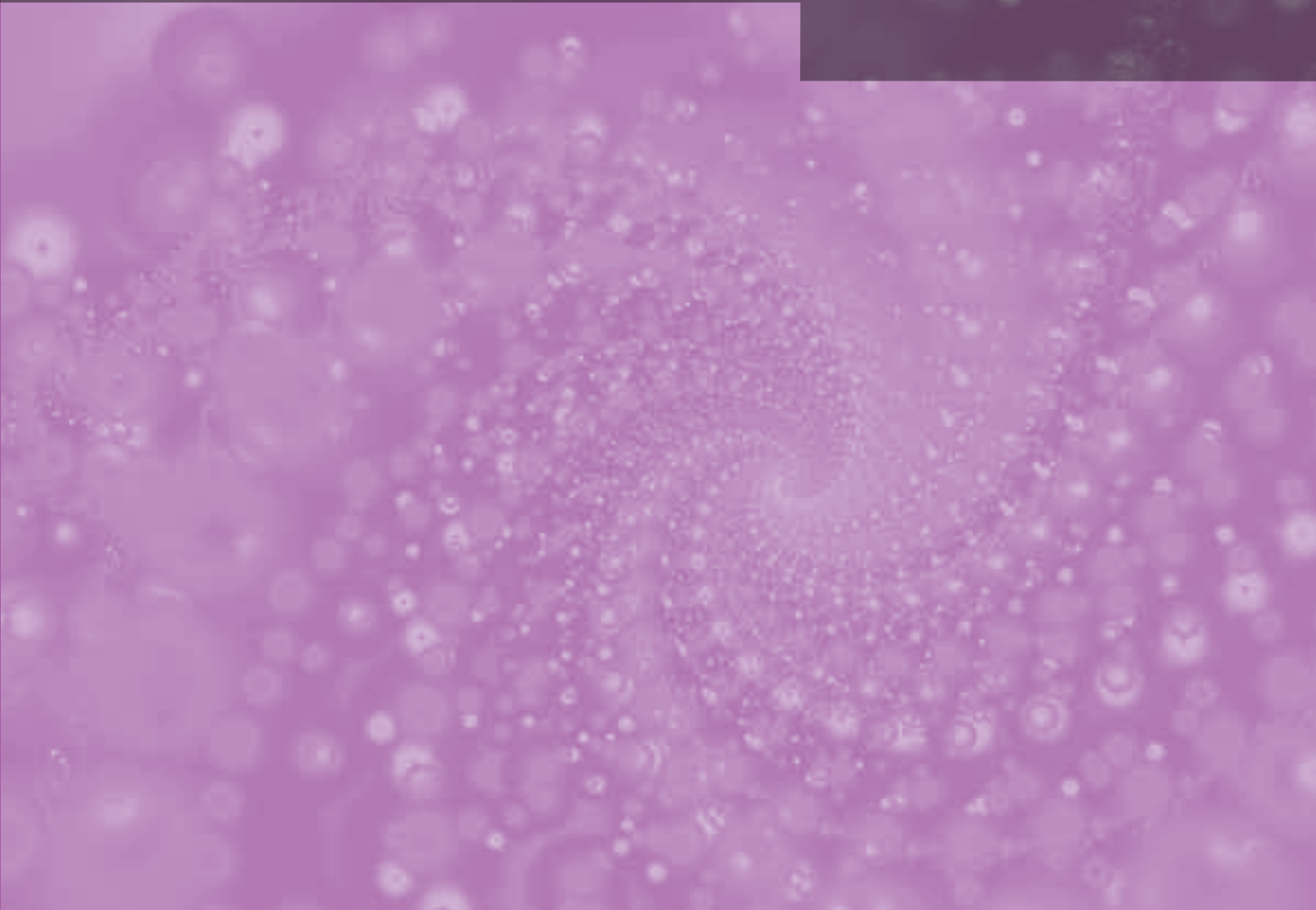
When all is said and done, being sensitive to the emotional needs of the employees and offering them a congenial environment will drive performance to a new height. These needs can be catered to by establishing work-life balance programmes through initiatives like flexi-time, crèche facilities, work from home, counselling, extended leave without pay in special cases, and paternity/adoption leave.

Gender diversity follows suit to an inclusive organisational culture. Focusing on such programmes will add to the available resource pool. Diversity training will help in building a discrimination-free and congenial environment, with arresting cost being one of the many benefits.

When personal aspirations and emotional needs are taken care of, an employee will be empowered to deliver her best. This will result in a positive association of work with a dream job.

An empowered organisation is a powerful differentiator that will attract talent, customers and financial growth. Empowerment drives success.

4. FROM INCUBATION TO IDEAL STATE



4. FROM INCUBATION TO IDEAL STATE

An ideal state in a process of inclusion is one where minorities are totally empowered. In this case, it means that women are empowered to make choices in all spheres of life and that the same opportunities available to anyone else (especially men) are available to them. This is different from saying they are equal, for it is time to move away from the original claim of the equality movement and towards one that recognises differences and tailors responses relevant to those differences. Therefore, the facts that women do have a more diverse set of responsibilities and often need to wear multiple hats should not compromise their chances of success or progress in any of the worlds in which they operate.

The ideal state, however, comes with its set of caveats, namely the following:

- None of this implies a lowering of performance standards or delivery levels, or any sort of concessions, for any of the stakeholders. For instance, in the context of the organisation, this call for recognition of differences does not mean that productivity standards will be lowered or compromised.
- The success of this effort is dependent on increased levels of awareness, acceptance and partnership from both sexes. Therefore, at many levels and in many ways, both men and women need to recalibrate their roles and expectations for this to happen.



The road map

Understanding the transformation process in order for gender inclusivity to become more than transactional requires mapping the journey. Below is our proposal of what this will look like:

Chart 10: Journey of inclusivity

Journey of inclusivity			
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
<p>Novice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated action and minimal integration • Start of awareness • Almost no role models • Some policies, laws exist 	<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure in place – policies, processes, role models available • Some legislation in place on rights, supported with processes • Awareness is high, acceptance is low 	<p>Willingness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on culture and “softer” aspects • Specific actions to make environment equitable • Awareness is very high within and across stakeholders • Acceptance is rising • More action is voluntary and spontaneous • Increased synergy across solders and recognition of a common goal 	<p>Arrived</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness is complete • Acceptance is now ownership • Role models are no longer required • Empowered organisations, individuals and stakeholders, moving to self actualisation

Source: Mercer ©2009

Phase one in the journey to inclusivity is recognising the need for inclusivity. The first steps are usually communicating intent, assigning a team to work on the issue, and then designing and implementing the policies. Measurable targets should include recruitment numbers, the percentage of the workforce that should be women, and policies around workplace safety and comfort. Second steps include defining and implementing policies that support women during key transitions such as marriage, childbirth, etc. These policies and frameworks, pinned in place with metrics that measure processes and change, should be woven into phase two.

Those organisations that were among the first to launch an inclusivity programme are now in phase two. Their processes, policies and metrics are fine-tuned to

capture the smallest change and are regularly recalibrated. Despite this, the size of the women's workforce remains limited in many of these organisations. These companies strive to reach phase three of our model, when the C-suite includes 50 per cent women and women do not see childcare, dependent care and home management as key challenges when taking on career advancement. The chasm between the second and the third phases is a conceptual one, and the tools that got the organisation to the highly successful end of phase two will not see the organisation through to phase three.

When companies reach phase four, inclusivity is no longer an issue. Both men and women are represented in diverse roles and at all career levels in the company and work together to eliminate practices that undermine effectiveness and equity. The expectation will be for equal participation in this workplace, and this remains the biggest challenge to overcome.

During phase two, society supports the growth of women through equal access to education, for example. However, other less-positive elements continue to be a reality, such as the pressure to balance home and work life, an organisational culture that is not receptive of career breaks and telecommuting, family expectations that influence career decisions at key inflexion points, and Government policies that are not pro-women.

In order for organisations to evolve to phase three, stakeholders need to accomplish the following:

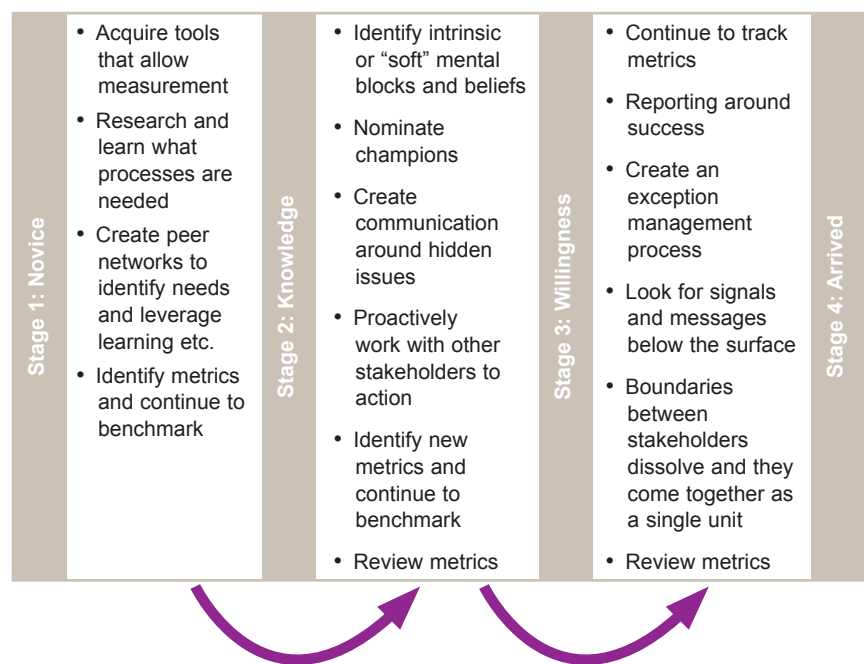
- Women's own recognition of limitations and roles must change.
- Expectations of what women and men will do in society and family must change.
- The infrastructure to free women from many of the responsibilities that tie them down now must be in place to a scale that reaches all women – e.g. crèches and dependent care facilities.
- Career paths must become far more varied, and paths to the boardroom must include the possibility for career breaks and alternate options.
- The stakeholders must work with each other to enable the traction to see change happen.
- Governments must work on social change as much as legislative; governments must facilitate industry by supporting working mothers through infrastructure, maybe through tax advantages, partial funding, etc.
- Fundamentally, all these need to be possible and take effect concurrently, such that the anguish and personal sacrifice entailed today are no longer the case.

Where are we today?

Today, the gender inclusivity movement is spread across phase two, depending on various factors. Our answer to the question “Why aren’t we able to get more traction?” is that we now need to move to phase three, and getting there means that we have to focus on the softer, intangible issues within each stakeholder. This is truly multi-dimensional in nature and therefore more difficult to achieve.

To make the transition between phases easier to implement, we have developed a partial task list that can serve as a blueprint to bridge the gaps.

Chart 11: Blueprint for bridging the gaps



Source: Mercer ©2009

This is an overall blueprint for the action we must take in order to make the quantum leap from one phase to another. The past decade has seen industry and society make the leap from phase one to phase two, where knowledge about processes and all related aspects is plentiful.

What faces us now is the fundamental change required to move from the adherence to rules and acquisition of knowledge to the softer and more powerful “willingness” and cultural acceptance. For this to happen, we will need to approach the issue with a different set of tools and a new mindset. What got us here is not going to take us ahead – we need to recognise and deal with the emotional, cultural and other intangible factors that inhibit the conversion of static rules to living norms.

5.RECOMMENDATIONS

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

We have grouped our recommendations by stakeholder, highlighting where stakeholders need to work outside of their own realms.

We gathered a perspective from the industry as well on how they perceived the roles of the various stakeholders as they relates to the technology sector and the “top priorities” they would recommend for the stakeholders in effecting change.

Individual

Chart 12: Journey of inclusivity – Individual

Journey of inclusivity – Individual			
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Novice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No awareness of need or issue • Acceptance of separateness and membership to small group (e.g. women, community, etc.) • Confined to stereotyped role • No expectations of balance or parity 	Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of new options • Examples of people utilising new laws for justice • Have education, skills and knowledge at will • Recognition of rights, but reluctance to initiate change • Lack of stakeholder support 	Willingness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in forums to voice issues and changes needed • Champion causes • Younger generations often unaware of earlier challenges • Role models now more common • Reach across stakeholders • Ownership of transformation journey 	Arrived <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No perceived barriers • Identify as active and equal member of society • Continue to identify issues and inequities and take initiative to fix • Awareness of laws is across social strata • Old school is considered quaint and irrelevant

Source: Mercer ©2009

In order to progress from phase two to three, women must:

- Recognise their skills and weaknesses.
- Take ownership of their choices.
- Be responsible for upgrading their professional skills.
- Be willing to stand up to disapproval or disagreement.
- Actively learn how to work in the environment as it is.
- Champion their cause and reach out to mentor/coach other women.

- Speak out for their successes and act as proactive role models.
- Advocate with government and organisations for changes, small and big, to make the road smoother for other women.
- Connect and collaborate with people who can help them grow.
- Become more self-reliant, self-confident and assertive with defined purpose.

Organisations

The phases for an organisation are characterised in terms of the culture, communication patterns, processes, etc.

Chart 13: Journey of inclusivity – Organisations

Journey of inclusivity – Organisations			
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
<p>Novice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No awareness of benefits of GI or issue • Divisions exist and very little commonality in process • Policy driven by majority demand 	<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-life balance policies • Leadership/focus group to steer the initiative • Recruiting diverse talent • Equal career advancement • R&R policies tuned to diversity • Metrics captured and reported • GI initiative at a stagnation point and dissatisfaction • Lack of proactive steps to working with other stakeholders 	<p>Willingness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly improved diversity and promotion ratios • Celebrate successes and role models • Focus on mental blocks and attitudes in men and women • Help individuals recognise and deal with own prejudices • Integrating with stakeholders in effort and goals • Provide support to deal with expectations from stakeholders 	<p>Arrived</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion is no longer a current issue • Exception reporting process • Awareness is complete • Process in place for continued improvement on inclusivity issues • Highlight measures of success • Organisations recognised as best employers and enjoy brand recognition, and productivity and profitability

Source: Mercer ©2009

Organisations should consider moving beyond the current transactional phase and:

- Setting up a mentorship programme for women in the organisation.
- Identifying informal channels of communication within the firm and using them effectively.
- Developing career paths for women that allow for breaks in their development.
- Developing training practices that address re-skilling after breaks, re-skilling for new roles, training and coaching in emotional intelligence and coping skills, etc.
- Providing counselling or help to both sexes in times of stress, emotional upheaval, pressure and conflict at work, etc.
- Undertaking an internal study to identify where career paths for women reach a block (This could take the form of an internal labour market (ILM) analysis, for example [see below]. This would help identify the flow of labour within the firm and provide valuable insights.)

Chart 14: Internal labour market maps can target particular work force segments



Source: Mercer ©2009

- Identifying the organisation's talent requirements for the future and working to help develop the necessary skills required either in colleges, schools or other vocational centres.
- Identifying issues in diversity and equity that are integral to the organisation's culture and behaviours, and eradicating them by using small multi-disciplinary teams and publicising the success.
- Working with families – providing family members with the same benefits extended to female employees, such as counsellors or help centres.
- Running all programmes and efforts based on gender neutrality and meritocracy, without any bias for gender or ethnicity .
- Establishing small teams or groups to serve as support groups.
- Providing continuity in terms of counselling, networks and mentors for women who have opted to take a break or are on extended leave.
- Helping employees' families to set up crèches or day care centres, which will then serve the firm and society.
- Identifying, with the help of experts, the social and mental blocks that hold employees back, and crafting individual development plans.

Government

The Government is in the unique position of looking at these phases both from the perspective of changes within and in terms of influencing and facilitating changes for other stakeholders. The diagram below looks at the context of facilitating change.

Chart 15: Journey of inclusivity – Government

Journey of inclusivity – Government			
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
<p>Novice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No awareness of need or issue • Divisions exist and very little commonality in process • Laws and statutes not monitored for effectiveness and relevance 	<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quotas brought in • Some measure of extending basic rights to all • Policies in place • Effective governance is in place • Political bodies showcase diversity performance 	<p>Willingness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tougher laws focus on prevalence • Voice of citizens and independents heard more • Government sets GI as own top goal and becomes role model in all aspects • Government agencies to enforce policies/ culture through awards and rewards • Government acts as enabler to all stakeholders • Government celebrates success of role models 	<p>Arrived</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness is near total • Acceptance is near total • Inclusion no longer a current issue • Country benefits as equal opportunity employer and is a global role model for GI

Source: Mercer ©2009

The Government must:

- Establish a system that will guarantee safe access to education and employment for the female population.
- Expand education in tier-II cities and rural areas to provide courses in skills and vocational training in a commercially relevant and viable way.
- Make it mandatory for organisations with a certain number of employees to have in-house crèches and day care centres, while providing tax benefits

for the same; extend similar benefits for professional home care for working families.

- Create and establish provisions for training, funding and monitoring standards in setting up the infrastructure required for the actions listed above.
- Provide incentives in the form of tax benefits, etc., for organisations which fulfil certain criteria in empowerment of women, e.g., 50 per cent women at senior level.
- Widen the framework for private-public partnership to build employable skills and knowledge.
- Make education mandatory up to professional training and provide incentives to families in lower economic sections to send girls to school, probably a tiered approach to incentives, depending on level of education.
- Capitalise on its unique reach to spread the message of empowerment of women (TV, advertisements, etc.)
- Aim to be a role model by increasing the number of women at all levels in Government.
- Provide continued and adult education for women in rural areas.
- Affirmative action on dowry, female infanticide and domestic violence.

Society

Society encompasses the other stakeholders also and is probably the most intricately linked of the stakeholders. Nonetheless, it is also relatively straightforward to identify and describe the phases.

Chart 16: Journey of inclusivity – Society

Journey of inclusivity – Society			
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
<p>Novice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little common across groups • Individuals crossing barriers, such as a few women pursuing higher education • Emergence of “rebel”/ activist groups/magazines • Common topics of discussion/ debates 	<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents encourage change • Teachers educate on results • Quotas utilised • Public media showcase positive changes • Full awareness of facilities and legislative policies • Sporadic capitalisation of opportunities • Communication through all channels prevalent 	<p>Willingness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergence of social networks • Society understands other stakeholders • Completely committed to change • Socially unacceptable to support differences • Quotas are resisted as force-fits • Old ways are the exception • Emergence of many societal leaders to champion cause 	<p>Arrived</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The very fabric of society changes to be more homogenous, tolerant, etc. • Exceptions to Inclusivity are corrected through peer pressure • Majority issues revert to being operational tweaking • Metrics are positive • No longer a hot issue • More focused on strategic development and is global role model • Continue to absorb best practices and evolve

Source: Mercer ©2009

Society must:

- As a family unit, extend support and share burden of balance.
- Recognise phases when job/career may take priority.
- Recognise needs of working women in terms of safety, stress, health, etc.
- Provide emotional support networks to enable realisation of capabilities and skills.

Government, communities, organisations and individuals that have risen to the call to action with commitment have stood to benefit in building strong individuals, successful enterprises, good governance, healthy societies and empowered nations.

Conclusion

The movement from where we are to where we want to be requires yet another critical ingredient to transition from an incubatory to an ideal state. The success that each stakeholder can achieve is limited by the degree of support and action other stakeholders provide. This is where the final aspect of our framework, and the inherent challenge we face, lies. Each stakeholder is inextricably linked to the others and at multiple levels, at that. Each of those linkages has to work cohesively and in unison, as a call of reason beyond differences and a “willingness” to make a far-reaching difference.

This paper has put forth an attempt to make this work commence and to provide a multi-dimensional and more exhaustive view of how this phenomenon needs to be looked at. The conceptual model and the road maps can and should be used by organisations and stakeholders to assess where they are on the journey and define steps needed to effect the transformation individually and collectively.

We can see why the transformation journey from inclusivity to empowered ecosystems is difficult and complex. It is multi-dimensional and requires individuals and the organisation to gain a more holistic perspective. This is not just another corporate initiative with tick-in-the-box metrics, but a transformational journey.

The framework provided in this paper can be used similarly to a manual for stakeholders to implement a set of recommendations within their ecosystems. Where initiatives are launched, this can bring about change to influence stakeholders and achieve desired results. With any hope, this will create an environment for empowerment and self-actualisation. We invite our readers to work with the framework and the recommendations to increase and expand the scope and expedite the progress of their journeys.

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