

## International Women's Day Special: Saluting Women Champions

By: APAC News Network

On International Women's Day, APAC News Network tracks women professionals who have broken the glass ceilings and climbed the corporate ladder.

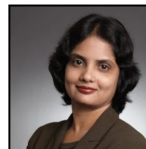
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On the occasion of International Women's Day, APAC News Network spoke with a number of women leaders from the technology, healthcare and education sectors. The focus was on the evolving role of women in the business landscape, the skillsets they acquired thereof, how challenging was the glass ceiling and how they mitigated that and how women are maintaining a work life balance between their personal and professional lives.

Chandrika Kambam, Director – Clinical Services, HealthCare Global Enterprises

*"When people see that you have conviction in what you do and say, they will see your potential and give you that opportunity that you deserve."*



Compared to a few decades back, more and more women are moving towards becoming economically independent. The representation is almost the same as men at the entry level. But as they have to grow and climb the career ladder the number dwindles. At the C-Suite level women representation is very low and continues to be a problem. A similar situation beckons us in business. There are many studies that have shown that women have unique strengths in leadership that help companies propel forward. Both men and women should recognize these strengths and create more diversity at the C-suite level so that companies and businesses can thrive.

Finding a job and becoming economically independent is different from growing in your career. Each level needs you to grow as a person and also acquire skills that are required for the job. e.g. as a manager you are supposed to do what has been told. If you need to become Senior Manager or a General manager, you should start thinking about how you can make a difference for the company, come up with new ideas, be able to communicate better, interpersonal skills developed to be able to manage the team under you and you should be able to communicate to your superiors and peers better. Similarly at each level there are different sets of challenges that need to be overcome. Before you aspire for the next position you should be doing all that the position requires in your current role. Title is only recognition of the person that you already become.

Challenges are there for everyone and at every step. Let me speak about myself. I have been very consistent in my work. I have been constantly working on myself, never stopped learning, acquiring new skills, certificates and have had mentors, guides with whom I discuss about how to build myself to be able to handle challenges of the next level in my career. These steps have given me confidence to face challenges. When people see that you have conviction in what you do and say, they will see your potential and give you that opportunity that you deserve.

For me personal life and professional life are not two different things, they run parallel, sometimes even on weekends work takes precedence and on weekdays personal issues may take precedence. We just have to manage both and ensure that all the responsibilities are handled at the right time. I organize the calendar in advance, I know how my week looks at the beginning of the week. I keep at least one hour in a day, mainly in the morning for my exercise. I have appointed people to help me with routine household work. Definitely family is a big support. I keep my communication channel open with them so that I am there when they need me. Technology has definitely helped us a lot. Many

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things which earlier required us to go in person can now be handled on the go which is of tremendous help. This is how I manage my life. There could be others living and accomplishing in a different but equally effective way. However the principles remain unchanged.

**Manisha Kumar, Cluster COO, HCG Hospitals**

*"I have always tried to align my teams behind a common goal and timelines and also worked in the trenches with them many a time to keep them motivated."*



Women today are rising the corporate ladder and are increasingly taking up more crucial business roles and heading mainstream business functions. That said, there is still an acute dearth of women leaders in business across industries specially in C Suite roles, hence the road to equality seems to be a long one. Women have traditionally faced perception gaps, unconscious bias and disparities at work place – many of these are now being talked about and addressed in corporates and companies today are more and more looking to encourage diversity and inclusion at all levels right from the top. Today we see women entering high positions in many new sectors like real estate, banking finance and manufacturing where they have traditionally been under represented. Organizations are also seeing value add of having women at senior positions in terms of a thriving culture of innovation and creativity and steering performance balanced with a people focus.

Today we need business people who can help to raise the awareness of important issues and champion innovative ideas while inspiring others to be a part of the overall process. We need leaders, who define clear goals, set processes and get all the teams together to work on achieving those goals. This requires vision, deft people management and an ability to lead by example.

There are perception gaps and unconscious biases that we all face, however I have always been unfettered by this and tried to set the right example. I have always tried to align my teams behind a common goal and timelines and also worked in the trenches with them many a time to keep them motivated. There is a point when even people who carry a bias look beyond pre conceived notions and appreciate hard work.

I believe in maintaining a healthy work life integration because compartmentalizing work from personal life is not realistic in our industry. I believe that by prioritizing tasks, triaging matters and delegating effectively, much of this can be accomplished. The other bit is staying organized about all tasks and creating a structured but flexible schedule.

**Neha Lal, Sr General Manager – OPs & HR , GCS Medical College, Hospital & Research Centre**

*"Leadership has no gender but needs traits of both genders to be successful."*



Women in leadership roles not only excel but in many roles which are traditionally women's strengths, such as nurturing, mentoring others, building relationships, exhibiting integrity, engaging in self-development etc. Female leaders were hailed as voices of reason amid the covid caps because of the calm and compassionate way they responded to outbreaks in their countries.

Leadership has no gender but needs traits of both genders to be successful. I've resisted the concept that there are certain career goals that men can have, I 'll never be able to reach. Throughout my career, I have maintained an attitude that if they can have it, I can too, regardless gender. Women need to consider themselves equal players in the game and in tune we need to support other women who are on their way up so more of us believe our career goals are attainable.

Work-life balance is to be balanced in effective way. I have made my life disciplined at both parts and adopted few habits to manage both effectively. Not wasting time in unproductive agenda, keeping self fit, always have to-dos in phone, reminders etc are few adoption and persistently followed, which resulted in satisfaction at all roles – Healthcare professional leader/ boss to mother / wife/ daughter / sister.



**Ardra Kurien, Chief Strategic Management Officer, Rajagiri Hospital**

*"It is important to find a work environment that strikes a healthy balance between your career progression and your wellbeing."*

Women, today, are leading by example, be it while running a business house or running a country. Women in India are innovators and trendsetters. Age is no barrier for woman entrepreneurs who have discovered their passion – the Dadi who sells her speciality sweets or the young woman who has resolved to upscale plastic waste. For years, women have been managing the finances at home. Today, a woman holds the reins of our country's finance.

Women in India will continue to colour the canvas of business enterprises with their passion for transformation and excellence.

Women should look at following these skills to better hone themselves.

1. Follow developments in your industry
2. Embrace the balance of power
3. No room for arrogance and ego
4. Take your team along

## 5. Create growth opportunities for your team

I let my work do the talking even if faced with the glass ceiling. In spite of how high we climb, it is a challenge to stay there unless we constantly reinvent ourselves, learn new skills, and explore new challenges to broaden our areas of expertise.

Make it impossible for them to ignore your contribution.

It is important to find a work environment that strikes a healthy balance between your career progression and your wellbeing. Work comes with its own set of pressure and risks. Use family time to unwind. Just as we dedicate ourselves to our work, we ought to give our family their due appreciation for the love and support they shower on us.



Mitali Biswas, CIO, CK Birla Hospital

*"Learning and constantly upgrading myself is something I enjoy."*

Women are playing a critical role in businesses across industries by bringing in new ideas and innovation helping in the creation of new products and services.

In my profession, I have to learn continuously and keep myself updated. Learning and constantly upgrading myself is something I enjoy. Being a good people leader, effective listening and clear communication are some of the skills that always help.

Solving business challenges keeps me motivated and I am very focussed in whatever I do. I have learnt that Growth and comfort cannot exist together. I have constantly put myself in unknown territories to break the ceiling!

Managing your time and priorities is the the only way to maintain the work life balance. It is also important to take breaks at times and do what you love!



Maya Shahani, Chairperson, The Shahani Group, Social Entrepreneur

*"We applaud the fundamental role women have played over centuries."*

Women have been vital to our civilization in many facets – in the form of a mother, daughter, wife, business leader, teacher, caregiver, and myriad other roles, as well. They have been instrumental in nurturing and guiding us and being an educator in different forms. On this Women's Day, we applaud the fundamental role women have played over centuries, in sustaining families, communities, schools as well as companies, especially during the pandemic which made life complicated for all.

As a tribute to their unending sacrifice, let us pledge equity in education for all the women, and endeavour to make them not only employable but also conscientious leaders of our future.

Neha Jhunjhunwala, Head – Strategic Marketing & Special Projects, Times Professional Learning



*"On this Women's Day, we salute their multi-tasking skills, leadership attributes, and their commitment to balancing work and family, especially during the pandemic"*

Women have contributed significantly to society as a homemaker and as organisational leaders. While the millennium has witnessed a growth of women leaders, there is still a need for greater inclusion and promotion of gender diversity to enable significant contribution to the economy and society at large. On this Women's Day, we salute their multi-tasking skills, leadership attributes, and their commitment to balancing work and family, especially during the pandemic. As we build a resilient and self-reliant nation, we need to enhance the participation of women across all sectors by educating, engaging, and empowering them in liberating and becoming independent.

Anupama Kadambi CXO, Chief Experience Officer, GOFUGAL



*"Where-ever there is a lack of leadership, identify them early, own and drive them"*

Having come from an engineering background, I started my career at Hewlett Packard as a QA. I worked in the roles of software engineer, business consultant and project manager for the first 11 years of my career. Like many working women, I took a career break for 6 years, and restarted part-time in 2011.

I noticed that Gofrugal did not have a owner for the website and there was no digital marketing. I took ownership of the website and set up a digital marketing platform to promote our solutions. Having no experience in marketing before, I did a lot of self-learning to implement marketing-automation in our CRM. During those days, Hubspot was one of the early companies that kickstarted marketing automation. I used to keep a watch on the trends in smashing magazine, Unbounce, Neil Patel. I have executed 1000+ experiments, design variations, experiences, and process improvements. My favorite pass time was trying different products / applications in the market and studying their experiences.

One advice on leadership decisions is 'Where-ever there is a lack of leadership, identify them early, own and drive them'. The bigger the challenge, the bigger the opportunity!

After 8 years as a CMO, I realized the customer attrition was high especially the first year. As a CXO, I realized I needed to get deep into details, identify problem areas. I reviewed touch point experiences-calibrated the process, defined right metrics, segmented customer data. Proactive customer-success calls helped predict customer effort, identify churn early.

It is important to promote people who are accountable, innovate, proactively identify and resolve problems. We were able to boost our renewals significantly. The book 'Effortless Experience' & 'Power of Moments' was an eye-opener for me. I kept listening to podcasts on design and customer success like Creating Customer Success, Customer Success Leader, UI Breakfast UI/UX design and product strategy.



Nivedha Sridhar, Director, Marketing, Facilio

*"We are committed to leaving no stone unturned in creating an environment where every voice has a seat at the table, regardless of gender."*

Facilio began with the aim to declutter property operations, and this has been the north star of all our marketing and messaging efforts. I see my primary mission as conveying the value inherent in data-driven operations, to our customers, from the outset of their interaction with our marketing and messaging efforts. We constantly try to identify themes and build an empathetic connection with our customers – using webinars, events, and direct interviews—to understand the priorities that drive their decisions. We knew the knowledge gap between what operations teams needed, and what they're currently equipped with, was growing. Our marketing engages, builds trust, and actively involves customers as part of this transformation. In 2019, we launched FutureProof, a community for professionals in property operations to come together and share practical best practices and strategies, to drive innovation in our space. As one of the co-creators of the event, it has been most satisfying to engage with the insights of progressive facility managers and commercial real estate leaders and help build a consensus for the future. Since then, we've taken FutureProof to multiple formats including video, interviews, and webinars, as well as the recent launch of REBuild, in the wake of the pandemic. Seeing the property operations community grow, share, and learn from each other through our facilitation has been extremely rewarding for us.

Our mission since day 1 has been clear—to help properties operate efficiently and sustainably. Every day is a prioritization exercise. As a member of the founding team, I've been lucky enough to define the priorities of the marketing function, as we regularly brainstorm with our co-founders and cross-team members. I see my primary mission as conveying the value inherent in data-driven operations, to our customers, from the outset of their interaction with our marketing and messaging efforts. Bringing about a tech-driven disruption in a conventional industry requires commitment across all functions, and it's this holistic approach to delivering transformational value that our customers respond to the most. At Facilio, we're committed to leaving no stone unturned in creating an environment where every voice has a seat at the table, regardless of gender, where we continuously learn and improve through dialogue, and where we aren't afraid to challenge the status quo. Our objectives are aligned towards our larger goal of reimagining property operations, and we have a strong model and culture that passionately works towards this.

Our goal at Facilio is not just to create a new category of data-driven property operations, but to also help the industry evolve into a future-ready version of itself, driven by technology, data, and insights. This meant we needed to build a movement and not just a product. We were creating something that the market had not seen before, and it required us to define and evangelize it. As a team, we ingrained the discipline of removing limiting beliefs and followed the practice of experimentation, staying close to the customer, and deeply embracing a 'figure it out' mindset. Whether it's through educational content, community engagement, category awareness, and product education via webinars, videos, etc., we try to help the operations industry transition towards a smarter, data-driven model of property operations. From there, we've grown to solve O&M gaps across 100m sq. ft at 35+ enterprises in the commercial office, healthcare, retail, banking, and government real estate categories; with marquee customers including a leading UK property owner/operator, a top bank HQ-ed in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, a leading commercial office player in Australia, a popular non-for-profit corporate in the US, and more.

It is important to keep a work-life balance too. Beyond my role at work, I'm also involved with a lot of initiatives to share our learnings regularly, at start-up growth workshops and student mentorship initiatives.

Tags: Anupama Kadambi | Ardra Kurien | CK Birla Hospital | Facilio | GCS Medical College | GCS Medical College Hospital & Research Centre | GOFRUGAL | HCG Hospitals | Manisha Kumar | Maya Shahani | Mitali Biswas | Neha Jhunjunwala | Neha Lal | Nivedha Sridhar | Rajagiri Hospital | The Shahani Group | Times Professional Learning



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