SECOND INNINGS

Barriers Faced By Indian Women On
Re-Entering The Corporate Workforce

SURVEY REPORT
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This survey report is prepared by Open Spaces Consulting (P) Ltd. for the Confederation of Indian Industry - Indian Woman Network (CII-IWN) - Maharashtra Chapter.

The purpose of this report is to capture the views and expectations of employers and prospective women employees with regard to re-entry of Indian women to the corporate workforce, after a career break. We hope that the results presented here will shed light on the matter and influence employers to adopt more women-friendly policies.

We would firstly like to thank all the participants who spared time from their busy schedule to complete the online survey to make this report a success. We had more than 200 participants respond to the online survey.

Secondly, we thank the team that contributed in different capacities and proved that synergy is always possible:

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## CONTENTS

1) Executive Summary......................................................................................................................... 4

2) The Context .................................................................................................................................... 5

3) The Story So Far .................................. .......................................................................................... 6

4) How We Did It .............................................................................................................................. 7

5) Who Are The Respondents.......................................................................................................... 8

6) Women’s World............................................................................................................................ 11

7) Employers Response.................................................................................................................... 16

8) Learnings and Recommendations ............................................................................................... 20
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is prepared by Open Spaces Consulting Ltd for the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

It captures the views and expectations of employers and prospective women employees with regard to re-entry of Indian women to the corporate workforce, after a career break.

Women’s World

Through this survey it is found that women are forced to leave their job because of certain reasons:-

- Maternity and Spouse relocation
- Organizational Politics
- Child care issues
- Lack of opportunities after career break

Most of them also found that employer policies do not make it easy for them to play their second innings.

The top 5 employer policies that women think can ease their re-entry in the workforce are:

- Flexi-time
- Travel - Pick and drop facilities
- Anti-harassment or Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH)
- Maternity bonus
- Sabbatical

Employer’s Response

Through this survey it is found that not many employers are taking special initiatives to hire women after their career break due to various reasons. Only a few companies think that re-entry of women is beneficial to companies as they are more:

- Experienced / Skilled
- Loyal
- Cultural Fit
- Reduction of training cost and time

Our Recommendations

- Women seeking a second career should use sources other than online portals for searching prospective employers while employers make more use of such portals to source resumes.
- Companies make sure that they have policies like POSH, Sabbatical, Pick and drop Facility, Flexi-time, Maternity leave and bonus.
- Employers provide training, mentoring or other inclusion programs to ease the re-entry of women in the workforce.
THE CONTEXT

Numerous studies have documented that, after investing in undergraduate and graduate studies and establishing careers, women are leaving their chosen professions at increasingly higher rates. The fact that work is more demanding and employees spend long hours at work in today’s competitive environment makes it highly difficult for Indian women to have career continuity and they opt out when faced with family, children and social pressure. Many organizations have lost world-class women professionals who have added immense value to their respective companies due to this reason. Attrition is costly for both the firms and the women employees who leave. Employers incur a significant cost in the hiring and development talented employees and they strive to retain the talent they have. Turnover also implies high costs due to missed contributions of experienced employees, instability of departments or teams, disruptions to trusted relations between firms and clients, and loss of proficiency.

It is also a fact that increased gender diversity in organizations promotes better financial performance. The Women Matter Report (2013), released by McKinsey, proves that companies with a higher proportion of women in their executive committees have better financial performance. More role models of women in the industry will attract increased female talent into the workforce. Regardless of commitment at the top and gender diversity initiatives in place, many corporates find women under represented especially at the top levels. Nearer home, despite the growing demand for talent the percentage of working women in the Indian IT sector alone has decreased from 26% in 2010 to 22% in 2012. This raises a red flag especially as studies have shown that women in India are becoming the most important source of talent for IT organizations across the world.

Though a number of employers have come up with several diversity initiatives and programs to bring back the lost female talent, the situation is still alarming. Leaving the workforce may have longer term costs by way of earnings and career advancement. For women, leaving a good job may be particularly damaging to their careers. Women leaving the workforce usually find it difficult to ‘opt back in’ at commensurate job levels. The barriers to re-entry further perpetuate and exacerbate gender inequalities.

Hence, studying re-entry of women in the workforce is especially important, as we may arrive at some of the answers to bring the educated and talented women population back into the workforce after their career break.

In this survey report, we strive to find a solution to the barriers faced by women in re-entering the workforce. Specific objectives are

- Draw up a profile of the women who quit
- Determine the reasons for women leaving the workforce
- Assess if there are any special needs of the women that require to be met
- Determine the requirement of the prospective employers from such recruits
- To understand the nature of difficulties faced by women in re-entry
- The value of career fairs, recruitment forums, and other events in enabling re-entry
THE STORY SO FAR

When we look at what researchers have found so far, we find that there are two top drivers that forces women to leave the organization - educational attainment and childcare issues. One such study found that women with bachelor’s degrees from highly selective colleges and universities who were married and had children were 20 percent less likely to work than women in the same group who did not have children. Some experts speculate that these women tend to come from wealthier backgrounds, take out less in student loans to pay for their education, and are surrounded by peers with similar backgrounds who they marry. They have less debt and spouses with higher earning potential. When their spouses earn enough to support the family without the women’s income, they are able to leave the workforce to raise their children. Other writers however, counter that theory, concluding that women are not choosing to opt-out, but are rather being pushed out by the lack of professional opportunities for advancement and raises. Employers simply do not provide mid-career women with the opportunities that would increase their likelihood of staying in the workforce.

Childcare issues and increasingly eldercare issues contribute to the “opt-out” decision, particularly for women who have lower income and are financially unstable. One of the studies we reviewed found that 40 percent of women took a short break from the workforce to spend more time with their children. The break usually lasted about two to three years. They have not chosen to opt out permanently but lack of job opportunities and women friendly policies by employers make the re-entry to women in workforce a difficult task. More than 90 percent of the women in this study said they were trying to get back into the workforce. This study also found that the women felt they had not opted out as much as had been pushed out. If women were passed over for a promotion, felt undervalued, underutilized at work or were sexually exploited, the prospect of leaving the workforce to spend time with their children became much more appealing.
HOW WE DID IT

The first segment of this survey strives to understand, why women leave the organization, what are their areas of concern and the policies and facilities they are looking for to re-enter the workforce, in short, “What Women Want”.

The second segment of this survey strives to understand what policies and services companies are providing to ease the re-entry of women, in short, What Employers Do.

The survey was online and contained multiple-choice questions primarily revolving around the need and requirement of women, and the readiness of the companies in fulfilling those needs of women. It was conducted over a period of two months, with sample size of 179 women seeking second careers and that of 74 corporates.
WHO ARE THE RESPONDENTS?

- Women = 179
- Employers = 74

**Segment Profile – Women**

About 50% respondents were of the age group 35-44 years, 40% in the age group 25-34 years. 1% in the age group 55-74 years.

About 90% respondents were married.

About 50% respondents have an experience of 10 years or more.
About 70% respondents are post-graduates.

About 70% respondents want to work with a company while 30% want to be entrepreneurs.

About 80% of the respondents are parents.
50% respondents are from IT sector and 20% from finance.

**Segment Profile – Employers**

35% respondents are from IT sector and 25% from finance sector.

Barely 5% women rejoin their company after taking a career break.
WOMEN’S WORLD

Reason for Leaving the Previous Job

37% of women opt out of their job due to maternity/childcare issues and 18% due to spouse relocation, followed by 9% due to long working hours, organizational politics and marriage. Only 2% women have cited sexual harassment as a reason for quitting.

Reasons For Seeking Re-Entry

Major factors of motivation for re-entering the workforce are self-actualization and financial security.
**Time Taken To Find A Job**

The efforts to re-enter the workforce have been going on for more than a year for about 35% respondents, thus indicating the presence of entry barriers.

![Bar chart showing time taken to find a job]

**Modalities Of Job Search**

94% respondents use online portals to search for jobs.

![Bar chart showing modalities of job search]

More than 65% respondents feel that online career portals are crucial to find opportunities of re-entering the workforce.
**Family Support For Re-Entry**

98% respondents have the support of their families in their decision to re-enter the workforce.

**Work-Family Conflict**

A large chunk of respondents (62%) feel that commitment to job will NOT interfere with their family responsibilities.

**Transition Problems Envisaged**

64% respondents feel that it will be difficult for them to gain career momentum on re-entering, and they will have difficulty settling in.
Loss Of Seniority And Position On Re-Entry

About 60% respondents feel they are going to be offered lower level roles, designations and pay upon taking a career break.

Childcare Issues

35% respondents feel that childcare is hindering their re-entry into the workforce while 30% feel the reason to be long career breaks.

What Women Want?

More than 40% respondents want flexible work schedules upon re-entering.
More than 65% respondents want extra benefit of pick and drop facilities whereas 33% would benefit from crèche and daycare facilities.

**Women-Friendly Employer Policies That Can Help**

More than 98% women want

- Anti-harassment or Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH)
- Maternity bonus
- Sabbatical
- Travel - Pick and drop facilities
- Flexi-time
EMPLOYER’S RESPONSE

Women-Friendly Policies

25% companies do not have anti-harassment policy.

More than 50% companies do not have Flexi-time policy.

More than 50% companies do not give the option of Sabbatical to their employees.

More than 50% companies do not have work from home or alternative work arrangement policy.

About 20% companies do not provide maternity leave and bonus.

More than 50% companies do not provide Pick and Drop facilities.

Perceptions Of Employers

Factors affecting re-entry of women:

Need of flexible timings is the most important factor that negatively affects the re-entry of women in workforce. (73%)

21% of employers feel that women who have taken a break will have obsolete skills
70% companies feel the experience of second career women is important while 10% feel it is not.

98% companies feel leadership and collaboration are essential to motivate women for re-entering.

**Company Practices:**

About 60% companies do not actively seek to employ women who want to re-enter the workforce.
55% companies prefer external references as against employing their former employees who want to re-enter.

Hardly 5% companies have women in senior leadership roles.

47% companies hold training for the inclusion of women who want to re-enter while 37% hold mentoring programs.
Importance Of Online Portals

More than 65% companies do not specifically source resumes for second career employees from online portals.

50% companies feel online portals are worthy sources of finding prospective employees.
LEARNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Learnings:

- Only a minimal amount of companies have women in senior leadership roles
- Majority of companies feel that they should not lose experienced women employees only because they have taken a career break due to various reasons
- Women with more than 10 years of work experience find it hard to re-enter the work force because there is lack facilities for them like no flexible timings, pick and drop facilities, women related policies, etc

While 94% women use online portals to search for prospective employers, only about 35% employers use online portals to source resumes of second career women.

While about 98% women look for policies like POSH, Flexi-time, Sabbatical, Pick and Drop facility and maternity leave and bonus facility, only about 50% companies offer the same.

Recommendations:

- Women seeking a second career should use sources other than online job portals for searching jobs like networking, social media, cold calling companies, job fairs, etc
- Companies should make sure that they have policies like POSH, Sabbatical, Pick and drop Facility, Flexi-time, Maternity leave, etc to encourage and ensure women re – enter the workforce
- Employers should provide training, mentoring or other inclusion programs to ease the re-entry of women in the workforce
**About IWN Network**

CII Western Region Launched a one-of-a-kind Women Forum giving the stage directly to women! CII Western Region is launching a special initiative for women in the corporate and business arena across the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Goa coined as Indian Women Network (IWN). Like the phrase goes, it is a network of women, for women and by women.

Through IWN, we hope to provide a platform to discuss issues, opportunities at their work places and learn from each other’s experiences. This network is also extended to students of final year graduation, post graduation and PhD, to guide and provide them with an opportunity to be mentored by experienced professionals.

The theme of the Network is ‘I Am The Change’ which is entwined on three pillars of:

- **Engage** – to support women throughout their careers by providing opportunities through skill enhancement trainings, coaching, mentoring, etc
- **Empower** – to support women by providing guidance regarding health, financial, second career opportunities, security aspects etc.
- **Enable** – to provide opportunities for women professionals/ students to grow personally and professionally through entrepreneurship opportunities, active involvement in community services, etc.

Your active participation will help us provide a platform to share experiences, overcome challenges and provide solutions.

We look forward to your continued support.

For more details and membership fees

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The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government, and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.

CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization, playing a proactive role in India's development process. Founded in 1895, India’s premier business association has over 7200 members, from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect membership of over 100,000 enterprises from around 242 national and regional sectoral industry bodies.

CII charts change by working closely with Government on policy issues, interfacing with thought leaders, and enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and business opportunities for industry through a range of specialized services and strategic global linkages. It also provides a platform for consensus-building and networking on key issues.

Extending its agenda beyond business, CII assists industry to identify and execute corporate citizenship programmes. Partnerships with civil society organizations carry forward corporate initiatives for integrated and inclusive development across diverse domains including affirmative action, healthcare, education, livelihood, diversity management, skill development, empowerment of women, and water, to name a few.

The CII theme of ‘Accelerating Growth, Creating Employment’ for 2014-15 aims to strengthen a growth process that meets the aspirations of today’s India. During the year, CII will specially focus on economic growth, education, skill development, manufacturing, investments, ease of doing business, export competitiveness, legal and regulatory architecture, labour law reforms and entrepreneurship as growth enablers.

With 64 offices, including 9 Centres of Excellence, in India, and 7 overseas offices in Australia, China, Egypt, France, Singapore, UK, and USA, as well as institutional partnerships with 312 counterpart organizations in 106 countries, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.