



## BEST PRACTICES FOR WOMEN - A REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS APPLICATION IN INDIAN IT INDUSTRY

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### Abstract

*Due to liberalization and globalization, competition has become so intense, that managers have less time to respond to changing market situation. In order to remain competitive they have to cut cost, enhance efficiency in operations and increase profitability. Rapid developments in information and communication technology have provided enormous data to the managers to arrive at decision, comparable to market standards. This leads to complex process. How to make decisions in this complex and competitive environment? How to manage the employee retention? In the today era no one can deny the importance and credibility of roles and responsibilities of Human Resource Management in an organization with reference to women participation as it ensures the achievement of maximum growth for the organization. Now the employers also having strong opinion that, their "Human Capitals" are one of the important key drivers in their growth. Women today are present in every field of work. Research has consistently indicated strong correlation between diverse senior management and financial performance of organizations, highlighting business benefits from having considerable number of women employees as part of the workforce. The scarcity of global talent has led to many organizations pro-actively doing their best to recognize, retain, and develop women. In India, keeping women employees on the job has proven difficult in a traditional patriarchal society. With the changing work force demography, and the talent war among the companies to attract and retain the best-in-class candidates, Indian companies continue to work on improving existing policies and facilities for women which projects that now the ability to manage effectively the employee talent within the organization is necessary and becoming more critical everyday due to switchovers in this competitive environment. Employee relationship management (ERM) is a process that companies uses to effectively manage all interactions with employees, ultimately to achieve the goals of the organization. Happy employees are productive employees. Successful businesses know how to manage relationships to build lasting employee satisfaction. The most important part of any business is its people. No business can run effectively without them. But people don't work in a vacuum; they need to communicate and work with others to get their jobs done. To be successful, employers need to manage relationships in the workplace to keep the business functioning smoothly, avoid problems and make sure individual employees are performing at their best. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the new approach of ERM with special reference to women who are working in software industry and suggest possible ways to communicate the concept more effectively so that this concept could be implemented more successfully in Indian Industry. The objective of this study is to understand Employee Relation Management Role in enhancement of employee performance and it is essential to understand the effectiveness of Employee Relations activities and practices which are contributing positively towards women Employee Performance. This study will be undertaken basically on theoretical Ground and by examining the Annual Reports of Indian Industry and interaction and the collected information will be arranged and analyzed systematically. ERM with especial reference to women includes both quantitative and qualitative factors of Performances. The Employee Management tool is a strategic business tool that can help Indian Software Industry to take more focused approach to developing operating strategies and measure the women workforce retention outcomes. This paper will lead to the awareness of the importance of Employee Relationship Management for women workforce retention in software industry. The organization can introduce assigning appropriate importance to the activities – as they deem fit for women retention.*

**Keywords:** *Employee Relations, work-life balance, safe working conditions, attrition, etc.*

Globalization pressures escalate competitiveness and, in response, global companies tend to adopt a handful of Western management practices. One of these is the Employee Relationship Management. However, empirical evidence assessing the transferability and effectiveness of Western best practices into Asian countries is scarce. To compete successfully companies require focus, innovation and ability to enable quick change. The Employee Relations involves the body of work concerned with maintaining employer-employee relationships that contribute to satisfactory productivity, motivation, and morale. Essentially, Employee Relations is concerned with preventing and resolving problems involving individuals which arise out of or affect work situations. Companies provide best quality services enjoy high level of customer retention and

comparatively good rate of employee retention. Customers Retention leads to good business and ultimately increases employee retention level. Retention of employees refers to satisfied employees that results loyal customers. Employees are considered as internal customer as they require the same level of satisfaction against their services rendered for the company as the customer of corporate services or corporate products requires. Employee Relations deal its employees as its customer because ER Managers run their day today business with the help of its employees and for these employees. Satisfied customers exhibit revenue growth and firm level of performance. Progressive Employee Relations practices are found behind success of leading organizations. ERM practices are commonly known by the traditional titles but it is up to the management that chooses the best fit



practices to fulfill the requirements matching to the culture of the organization. Organizations implement Employee Relation Practices to polish skills of its employees which ultimately lead to better organizational performance. ER practices impart a significant role to enhance performance of organizations indirectly. Performance of employee depends upon job satisfaction, compensation and benefits structure, reward plans, promotions, motivation, environment, training and succession planning. Along with this, modern tools, techniques and sophisticated technology used by organizations for Employee Relations create competitive advantage over competitors. Issue of employee retention affects the performance of the entire company. Organizations are realizing that their people are, by far, their most important asset. Motivation creates passion leading to performance. The most effective are Appreciating Letters, paid Time off from work, Self-respect, Flexible timing and lunch hours and performance review meetings. Organizations motivate employees by investing in them financially and emotionally and in return they result positively.

*What Does 'Employee Relations' Mean? The term 'employee relations' refers to a company's efforts to manage relationships between employers and employees. An organization with a good employee relations program provides fair and consistent treatment to all employees so they will be committed to their jobs and loyal to the company. Such programs also aim to prevent and resolve problems arising from situations at work. Employee relations programs are typically part of a human resource strategy designed to ensure the most effective use of people to accomplish the organization's mission. Human resource strategies are deliberate plans companies use to help them gain and maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace. Employee relations programs focus on issues affecting employees, such as pay and benefits, supporting work-life balance, and safe working conditions. One of the most effective ways for a company to ensure good employee relations is to adopt a human resource strategy that places a high value on employees as stakeholders in the business. Stakeholders are people who are committed, financially or otherwise, to a company and are affected by its success or failure. When employees are treated as more than just paid laborers, but as actual stakeholders with the power to affect outcomes, they feel more valued for the job they do.*

**Literature Review:** The great corporate challenge of the age is harnessing the creativity and the productive power of people. As Poole (1986) points out, employment relations are best described as a discipline concerned with the systematic study of all aspects of the employment relationship. This relationship is one in which the employee sells his or her capacity to work in exchange for a wage and other benefits, and the employer hires employees in order that they produce goods or services that can be sold at a profit. Werbler & Harris (2009) researched that employees are ready to make an extra effort if they are satisfied with strategic decisions of their organizations. Employees give importance to employers

for their communication procedures that affect their efficiency and motivation level. Ubeku (1983) stated that Employee Relations are about collective bargaining which concerns Matters for negotiation including Overtime rates, Hours of work Annual leave, Leave allowances, Sick benefits, Out-of-station allowances, Redundancy benefits, Acting allowances, Transfer/disturbances allowances, allowances etc. and Matter for discussion at enterprise level including Method of production, Increased efficiency, Safety, Welfare, Training of workers, Disciplinary procedures, Christmas bonus, Scholarship awards, Long-service awards, Compassionate/casual leaves, Medical facilities, Death benefits etc.

*Elements of a Good Employee Relations Plan: The employment relationship is one of the great innovations behind the rise of the modern business enterprise. It revolutionized the organization of work, providing managers and workers with a very flexible method of coordination and a basis for investing in skills. An effective employee relations program starts with clearly written policies. Employee relations policies describe the company's philosophy, rules, and procedures for addressing employee-related matters and resolving problems in the workplace. Many companies have one or more employee relations representatives, people who work in the human resources department to ensure that company policies are followed fairly and consistently. Employee relations representatives work with employees and supervisors to resolve problems and address concerns. An employee relations program is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Strategies for good employee relations can take many forms and vary by a number of factors, including industry, location, company size, and even individual leadership philosophies.*

*Some of the major objectives of employer-employee relations are to develop and maintain harmonious relations between management and labor so essential for higher productivity of labor and industrial progress in the country; to safeguard the interests of labor as well as management by securing the highest level of mutual understanding and goodwill between all sections in industry; to establish and maintain industrial democracy based on the participation of labor in the management and gains of industry, so that the personality of every individual is fully recognized and developed; to avoid all forms of industrial conflict so as to ensure industrial peace by providing better working and living standards to workers; to raise productivity in an era of full employment by reducing the tendency of higher labor turnover and absenteeism; to bring about Government control over such industrial units which are running at losses for protecting employment or where production needs to be regulated in public interest and to ensure a healthy and balanced social order through recognition of human rights in industry and adaptation of complex social relationships to the advancements of technology.*

*The individual factors those affect the performance or productivity are (a) Working conditions (b) Working hours (c) Nature of job. (d) Employees competencies. (e) Job security. (f) Welfare*



and social security. (g) Training of employees. (h) Salary packages. (i) Liberty at work to perform. (j) Quality of leadership. (k) Motivation of employees. (l) Career development opportunities. (m) Rewards, recognition and incentives (n) Organizational culture. (o) Behavior of employees. (p) Location of work. (q) Management approach. (r) HR policies. (s) Technology at work. (t) Business environment. Thus, the maintenance of good human relationships is the main aim of employer-employee relations because in the absence of such relationships “the whole edifice of industry may collapse.

**Need of Employee Relationship Management:** IT companies are having high degree of attrition. The challenges for these companies are to keep this attrition rate as low as possible. Various companies adopt different techniques to retain their employees like high pay packets, ESOP, other benefits. They try to keep this attrition rate as low as possible to retain super achievers. The need of organizations for people and people for organizations will be more difficult to satisfy in the today’s competitive business environment. Organization’s competitive advantage could be generated from human resources (HR) and organization performance is influenced by a set of effective HRM practices. Software is a wealth and job creating industry, which has in just a few years, grown to US \$ 1 trillion, employing millions of professionals worldwide. The Indian software industry has burgeoned, showing a nearly 50% Compounded annual growth rate over the recent years. Being a knowledge-based industry, a high intellectual capital lends competitive advantage to a firm. With a global explosion in market-opportunities in the IT sector, the shortage of manpower both in numbers and skills is a prime challenge for HR professionals. The related issues are varied indeed: recruitment of world-class workforce and their retention, compensation and career planning, technological obsolescence and employee turnover. With the advent of a work situation where more and more companies are having to concede that their valued employees are leaving them, a new concept of career and human resource Management is bound to emerge. The focus of this new paradigm should not only be to attract, motivate and retain key ‘knowledge workers’, but also on how to reinvent careers when the loyalty of the employees is to their ‘brain ware’ rather than to the organization. With lifetime employment in one company not on the agenda of most employees, jobs will become short term. Today’s high-tech employees desire a continuous up-gradation of skills, and want work to be exciting and entertaining a trend that requires designing work systems that fulfill such expectations. As employees gain greater expertise and control over their careers, they would reinvest their gain back into their work. HR practitioners must also play a proactive role in software industry. As business partners, they need to be aware of business strategies, and the opportunities and threats facing

the organization. As strategists, HR professionals require to achieve integration and fit to an organization’s business strategy. As interventionists, they need to adopt an all embracing approach to understanding organizational issues, and their effect on people. Finally, as innovators, they should introduce new processes and procedures, which they believe will increase organizational effectiveness.

### **ERM Strategies and Policies for Software Professionals**

(a) *Motivation & Retention of Employees:* Retention and motivation of personnel are major HR concerns today. People a Gartner group company specializing in management of human capital in IT organizations has observed that the average tenure for an IT professional is less than three years. Further, the use of new technologies, the support of learning and training, and a challenging environment ranked higher than competitive pay structures as effective retention practices. Recent survey of 1028 software professionals from 14 Indian software companies, showed that while the professional gave importance to personal and cultural job-fit, HR managers believed that the key to retention was salary and career satisfaction. Money was a prime motivator for ‘starters’, but for those into their third or fourth jobs, their value-addition to the organization was more important. Monetarily, offering ‘the best salaries in industry’ is the minimum every company is doing, apart from performance based bonuses, long-service awards, and stock options. Many organizations frequently conduct employee satisfaction and organization climate surveys, and are setting up Manpower Allocation Cells (MAC) to assign ‘the right project to the right person’. In fact, some are even helping employees with their personal and domestic responsibilities to satisfy & motivate their workforce!

(b) *Best Talent Attraction:* In a tight job market, many organizations often experience precipitous and simultaneous demands for the same kinds of professionals. In their quest for manpower, they are cajole talent around the world. In such a seller’s market, software companies are striving to understand which organizational, job, and reward factors contribute to attracting the best talent one having the right blend of technical and person-bound skills. This would mean a knowledge of ‘the tools of the trade’ combined with conceptualization and communication skills, capacity for analytical and logical thinking, leadership and team building, creativity and innovation. The Indian software industry suffers from a shortage of experienced people such as systems analysts and project managers, and attracting them is a key HR challenge.

(c) *Compensation and Reward:* Increasing demands of technology coupled with a short supply of professionals has increased the costs of delivering the technology. This makes incentive compensation a significant feature, with the result that software companies have moved from conventional pay-for-time methods to a combination of pay-for-knowledge



and pay-for performance plans. With the determinants of pay being profit, performance and value-addition, emphasis is now on profit sharing or performance-based pay, keeping in view the long-term organizational objectives rather than short-term production-based bonuses. Skills, competencies, and commitment supersede loyalty, hard work and length of service. This pressurizes HR teams to devise optimized compensation packages, although compensation is not the motivator in this industry.

(d) *Increasing loyalty and commitment:* As with any other professional, what really matters to software professionals is selecting 'the best place to work with', which is what every company is striving to be. The global nature of this industry and the 'project-environment' has added new cultural dimensions to these firms. In a value-driven culture, values are determined and shared throughout the organization. Typically, areas in which values are expressed are: performance, competence, competitiveness, innovation, teamwork, quality, customer service, and care and consideration for people. Flat structure, open and informal culture, authority based on expertise and ability rather than position, and flexi-timings are some of the norms software firms follow. The idea is to make the work place a 'fun place' with the hope of increasing loyalty and commitment.

(f) *The Demand Supply Gap:* Shortage of IT professionals is global in nature and not peculiar to the Indian software industry alone. W. Strigel, founder of Software Productivity Centre Inc. (1999) has projected the shortage of software professionals to be one million by 2060. Infact, a survey reports that 75 per cent of US companies planned to reengineer their applications using newer technologies, but found that 72 per cent of their existing staff lacked the skills needed in these technologies, and 14 per cent were not even retainable.

(g) *Integrating HR strategy with Business Strategy:* The strategic HR role focuses on aligning HR practices with business strategy. The HR professional is expected to be a strategic partner contributing to the success of business plans, which to a great extent depend on HR policies pertaining to recruitment, retention, motivation, and reward. The other major areas of concern for HR personnel in this context are, management of change, matching resources to future business requirements, organizational effectiveness, and employee development.

(h) *Encouraging Quality and Customer focus:* Today's corporate culture needs to actively support quality and customer orientation. With globalization and rapid technological change, quality is of utmost importance for the Indian companies, which earn most of their revenues through exports. Hence, the HR professional as a strategic partner needs to encourage a culture of superior quality to ensure customer satisfaction, the only real measure of quality of a product or service. To be competitive today, an organization

needs to be customer responsive. Responsiveness includes innovation, quick decision-making, leading an industry in price or value, and effectively linking with suppliers and vendors to build a value chain for customers. Employee attitudes correlate highly with customer attitude.

(j) *Value Addition training for up-gradation of Skills:* Rapid and unpredictable technological changes, and the increased emphasis on quality of services are compelling software businesses to recruit adaptable and competent employees. Software professionals themselves expect their employers provide them with all the training they may need in order to perform not only in their current projects, but also in related ones that they may subsequently hold within the organization. This is because a creative engineer or scientist who has learned how to accomplish something has little interest in doing it again. Once they have satisfied their curiosity, they may abruptly lose interest and seek an immediate change". And when the rate of technological change is high may be higher than the time required acquiring competence in one area professionals could undergo psychological turbulence owing to the need to work in a new technology throughout their career. They want to gain new knowledge, which will be utilized by their organization. On the basis of the new learning they want to work in higher segments of software value chain.

#### **Overview of Indian IT Industry and Participation of Women Employee:**

India is the world's largest sourcing destination for the information technology (IT) industry employs about 10 million Indians and continues to contribute significantly to the social and economic transformation in the country. The IT industry has not only transformed India's image on the global platform, but has also fuelled economic growth by energizing the higher education sector especially in engineering and computer science. India's cost competitiveness in providing IT services, which is approximately 3-4 times cheaper than the US. The Indian IT sector is still in the growing stage, and as the need for talent grows across all levels, woman-power, if leveraged, can bring significant benefits to all stakeholders. The Indian IT revolution heralded a new era in the organized labour market of the country. In the last two decades, with the proliferation of jobs in the field of IT/ITES, more and more women have entered the workforce at entry level positions. NASSCOM estimates that approximately 30 percent of the employees of IT/ITES organizations are composed of women. Various studies have found that the leakage of female talent takes place in the early stages of their career where women have to juggle various familial roles and responsibilities and professional demands. Globally, organizations are strategizing about gender inclusivity and building a pipeline of female talent in the middle and senior management levels. In this context, it is interesting to examine the software services sector and the



factors that affect women's persistence in IT careers. The characteristics of the software services industry in India and the nature of its work pose some unique challenges for professionals in the industry, especially for women. The organizations in the software industry in India are project based and as the industry has matured, more complex and strategic projects have been outsourced to India<sup>2</sup>. This requires a strong operational and delivery focus in a 24/7 environment.

This creates pressure on software professionals to work longer hours. This pressure is an outcome of two factors. Firstly, the time differences with the US and Europe which is the dominant trade partners in the industry, which necessitate employees to work evenings in India and maintain the concept of a 24-hour knowledge factory. Secondly, the project orientation of the industry, with rapid technology changes that make skills quickly obsolete, requires software professionals to frequently re-skill. Consequently, software professionals need to put in extra training and educational hours to keep up with these changes. Those women who aspire to play a bigger role in technology need to maintain a consistently high learning curve. The time required for professional development will have to come out of personal time of the employees. Long working hours, unpredictable workloads and the constant pressure of updating skills have a negative impact on work-family balance. The nature of the industry and the fact that most women software professionals are in 'the crucial phase in women's lives' i.e. 23-38 years, where women are drawn into marriage and motherhood, put increasing pressure on maintaining a work-life balance. In a transitioning society like India, where traditionally a woman's role is redefined in relation to herself, her family and society, the new and expanded role of women with a strong occupational identity is putting pressure on their persistence with their careers. To successfully tap into this huge talent pool, professional service providers and other industries alike have to pay special attention to women as a source of educated and employable talent. Back in 2003, the number of women employees in Infosys was only 19% making women a minority in the organization. This impacted not only the organizational culture, but also the policies and support systems setup for employees, key decisions on process improvements and risk assessment. Given this context, if organizations need to strengthen their talent pipeline of women within the organization, there is a need to ensure that more women to remain in the workforce. Only if significant number of women persisted in the workforce through the early career stages, would the talent pool of senior women leaders in organizations get strengthened.

**Data Discussion-A Case Study of Infosys Women Inclusivity Initiative (IWIN's):** IWIN's (Infosys Women Inclusivity Initiative) efforts and results in creating a gender

inclusive work environment as well groom more women leaders at Infosys. An Indian IT giant. Infosys is the first Indian IT company to set up a dedicated office for diversity and inclusion. Methodology included focus group discussions with employees, benchmarking practices among the global companies, and consultation with academicians to understand and relate better to research conducted on gender inclusivity.

*Birth of IWIN:* The Company formed Infosys Women Inclusive Network (IWIN) to addresses specific needs towards the development, engagement, growth, and retention of women by promoting an inclusive workplace where the potential of women is leveraged and every woman feels valued, heard, and fully involved with the company. Infosys like many Indian IT organizations is located in the outskirts of Indian cities it operates in and this presented in itself a safety threat for women who applied. That combined with the fact that the infrastructure and public transport at these cities were still in its infancy. Infosys, being an equal opportunity employer believed in hiring from colleges which was not for a particular gender. With women's only engineering colleges coming up, this again was restricting the pool of talent available for hiring. Infosys has always believed in giving equal opportunities and hence other issues such as equal pay for women, discrimination in performance ratings etc., were not our battles to fight. These are considered general hygiene factors that has helped Infosys emerge as a globally respected organization for gender inclusion. Therefore the key challenges that presented were - Create a safe and harmonious work place for women - Identify and engage with talent from multiple sources - Ensure equal opportunities for both men and women - Create inclusion and retention policies catering to this group The key initiatives and programs of IWIN are all mapped to attract, increase, and retain (AIR) women employees with the intent to expand the bottom of the pyramid and to chart out a strategy to retain women as they move up in their career life cycle. Infosys attracts talent by pioneering exclusive programs like Campus Connect, SPARK, industry electives, and internship programs. Campus Connect - It is an Infosys program to help increase India's competitiveness in the knowledge economy. Campus Connect aims at evolving a model through which Infosys and engineering institutions can partner for competitiveness, enhance the pool of highly capable talent for growth requirements in the IT space. It is aimed at creating an effective means of backward integration into the supply chain by going into the college campuses from where the IT industry gets its people for its growth. Spark - As part of this initiative a group of students along with members of faculty visit the nearest Infosys DC and spend the day observing the IT services delivery environment. The event is designed and conducted by Infosys volunteers. The agenda is customized for the target



audience which also includes special batches for women, rural institutes and Government-run institutes. Initiatives like SPARK, a program that aims at raising the aspiration levels of students, have made young Indians think of bigger opportunities and challenges that awaited them once they completed their education.

While the above listed are a few initiatives that Infosys pioneered to attract talent, there has been an endless list of initiatives conducted to create a positive environment at work. ASHI - Infosys places a lot of importance on safety of women in and out of the campus. Anti sexual harassment initiative is a very strong program within Infosys. All employees have to undergo ASHI training and multiple avenues are provided for employees to raise a concern. All complaints / concerns are looked into and addressed by trained individuals. Safety - Self-defense classes are held in the campus to train women to be more prepared when faced with an unsafe situation. The organization provides special taxis to women with a security guard to make sure that women reach home safely on days when they end up working late to meet client deadlines. This is primarily done as a measure to ensure safety of employees. An automated message is sent in the evening, to remind employees about the importance of travelling back home on time and to use safe means of transport. Others - Simple but extremely effective changes like including women in all recruitment panels, talking about importance of safety and harassment free work environment, influencing the public transport system to increase the frequency of buses to the office locations and hiring from women-only technical colleges has shown us significant results in attracting and retaining women employees. Today, Infosys has 91% of women returning from maternity leave. It is interesting to note that every day 7 women avail the option of maternity leave. Though the effectiveness of these initiatives is measured not by numerical targets, numbers do help us understand whether the needle is moving in the positive direction. At Infosys we not only measure the increase in percentage of women joining the organization but also the increase in number of women across levels in the organization. Apart from launching inclusive policies, we also track the usage of policies for effectiveness and ensure that the usage is moving up. It is interesting to note that equal percentage of men and women make use of the flexible workplace policies. For women at mid to senior management, an exclusive program called IWIL (Infosys Women In Leadership) was designed in partnership with a premier business school in India (Indian Institute of Management). Aimed at empowering women to take up leadership roles and nurture talent to take up leadership roles in future. IWIL has helped women discover latent strengths, re-evaluate their potential and renew their aspirations. With subsequent batches, empowering more women employees, the impact will be felt on overall

workforce demography. The road ahead looks extremely bright with hope of developing best-in-class women leaders. The pool of women will be further developed through 'tier-leadership' program which is open for both men and women. This program also presents scope for building sponsorship programs for women, networking opportunities, thereby making women build their own circles of influence. These programs coupled with goals to increase women representation in unrepresented areas, levels or with low representation will be the key to sustain and grow gender inclusivity program at Infosys. Other inclusion programs: At Infosys gender inclusion continues to be a major focus area; however, the focus of diversity & inclusion is much larger one. Though our stance as an equal opportunity continues, a diverse talent pool comes with its own set of challenges. For example an employee with disability, though treated on par with any other employee, may require certain reasonable accommodations at workplace to perform and deliver at his/her optimum potential. Hence, an employee resource group for minority/micro-inequity groups has been encouraged. • Family matters - At Infosys, 50,000 parents are continuing to grow. The Family Matters network is essentially a support group that helps employees cope with the ever growing challenges of managing family and work. Family matters also offer parenting workshops, relationship as well as newsletters every quarter. • Creating Common Ground - CCG is a differentiated focus of Infosys, This has led to creating a unique forum, that is, Ineffability.

*Focus on Women's Security by Initiatives of NASSCOM:* Women comprise about 65% of IT-BPM workforce in India. In the coming years this percentage is only likely to increase and therefore one of the key aspects for the industry is ensuring safety of its employees and in particular women employees. The industry is cognizant of the fact and stands poised for the safety and security of its women and is committed towards providing an appropriate environment by adhering to robust security practices, managing and upgrading comprehensive employee security program across regions. As a routine feature the IT-BPM industry invests a lot in the area of security, gender diversity and inclusivity. The industry believes that working at any hours of the day is a fundamental right of every woman and all stakeholders must work together in partnership to create a conducive and secure environment for women. Overall organization leadership and management teams are dedicated towards undertaking measures which ensure security both at office premises and while commuting to or back from work. The enclosed document has been prepared as a compendium of recommended best practices in several IT & BPM companies in India and can be even be adopted by other industries for enhancing security of their women employees.

The Indian IT-BPM sector is one of the largest employers in India and with over 800,000 women employed across



levels and has been driving the agenda of gender diversity across large and small companies.”The contribution of women to the growth of our industry has been immense and it is constant endeavor to provide a safe and secure working environment for all employees. The courage and commitment of women employees that despite the heightened security concerns, there is no any decline in attendance, productivity and applicants to jobs in this industry. The industry follows robust practices and has further enhanced its awareness programs for employees to make them aware of these practices.

NASSCOM has been conducting several sessions for member organizations and other stakeholders, regarding the sharing of best practices on women’s safety. The aim has been to help organizations re-enforce a secure work environment conducive for women employees. The month of February, 2013 was identified as the Women’s Safety month and workshops on ‘Women Safety’ were held across locations. NASSCOM had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Oriental Insurance Co. Ltd. to introduce a common health insurance programme called the ‘Technology/Knowledge Worker Health Plan’, for its members. The key objective of the programme is to provide a comprehensive, flexible and affordable health insurance cover for employees of the IT sector. The plan is aimed in particular at small and medium companies, bringing technology into the domain of health insurance management. More than 120 companies have signed up for this plan covering more than 40,000 employees. This has helped NASSCOM members achieve up to 30 percent savings in premium.

**Security arrangements at Office Premises:** Office premises are electronically & personally guarded by security guards which prohibit entry to unauthorized personnel • Premises are under surveillance using CCTV camera. With due permissions companies are willing to share the footage with the police if required

**Only authorized vehicles with valid stickers are allowed** inside the premises after due inspection by the security guards. Inspection includes engine, dicky and chassis • Adequate lighting is provided within and outside the main building areas that include premise entrances, parking lots and perimeter area Safe Commuting – Travelling to Work from Home & Back • Home pick and drops are provided for women employees for night shifts as stipulated by Shops and Establishment Act. •

**Cabs ferrying women workforce are monitored** using global positioning systems (GPS). The transport team monitors cab speed through GPS and appropriate instructions are given when found to be over speeding or diverting the usual route. Some companies have even installed panic button in the cabs in select regions. • Most routes are worked out in such a manner that as far as

possible woman employee is not the first one to be picked up or last one to be dropped. In case such a route is unavoidable, a guard is always provided to escort the women employee. • In case if a women employee is a second pick up and suddenly the first male employee doesn’t show up then respective companies inform the women employee that they will be picked up once guard is sent or a third male employee is requested to pick up the women employee • In cases where there is a bi lane and the movement of cab is restricted, guards / male employee pick up / drop the women employees at the doorstep and remain halted until it is confirmed that the employee has entered safely at her residence. • Boarding and de boarding is done in secure and well lit areas • Some companies have a feedback form with each guard which the woman employee is required to sign after every drop / pick up. • Effective checks and controls on the vehicle movement in order to check any unwarranted activities of cab drivers, such as picking up strangers and staying away from the designated routes. • Breath analyzers are used to carry out random checks on drivers to prevent drunk drivers from driving. Disciplinary action and penalties are imposed on the vendor if found guilty •

**SMS Alerts:** Women employees get a SMS and are expected to press yes or no when they reach. In case the response is no or deferred, the team at company starts to investigate. • Maintaining daily track sheet of the women employees who are commuting late in the evening with all the details such as name, complete address, mobile no, emergency mobile no, reporting manager Mobile no., accompanying person name and mobile no. (Any male employee or office boy or security guard), Car details, Driver no. & name, Out time, Approx. travel time to reach to their respective destinations. These details are available only to the transport department at the office and not the drivers.

**Emergency Response Systems:** 24x7 Emergency helpline number and other important numbers are displayed in the cabs. Employees are regularly sensitized about availability of these numbers which can be used to report emergency, life safety and security threatening situations • some companies have patrolling vehicles for night. These are equipped with mobile phones and emergency numbers and pick up random route for checking and for quick responding in any emergency situation. Measures for safe hiring • Guards and Drivers are hired from licensed agencies who maintain diligent records of these employees such as recent photograph/ Name/ Father Name / Mobile no. / License number for drivers / Permanent Address / Present Address/ Appointment letter/ Police notification. This ensures that nobody enters the premises without a valid identity proof. Creating Awareness • Self Defense training for the women employees by professional trainers to help them get trained in handling emergency situations • Transport Security team carries out regular briefing sessions for escort guards & drivers



sensitizing them about their roles and responsibilities while escorting women employees • Floor huddles and employee discussions to educate and reiterate employees regarding safety and security guidelines. • Companies running their own Safety Campaigns which are a set of composite events including activities like screening of videos, messages from senior leaderships, rewards for drivers & vendors, felicitating role models etc. • Making available to employees key government contact list specially local police authorities.

**Feedback Mechanism:** Well defined process for seeking feedback from employees through an easy to use web interface. Secrecy of individual identity is assured and maintained when providing such feedback. Employee surveys are undertaken at regular intervals soliciting a broad based participation to identify opportunities for improvement in security systems. • Security Workforce / Personnel Training: Security personnel especially male Guards are sensitized towards showing respect and care when engaging / dealing with Women Security Colleagues and Women Employees of the organization. • Train the Driver: Regular training & counseling sessions for drivers to sensitize them on following

- o Need for safe driving
- o Sharing of Emergency Contact Numbers of Security, Transport and Key Management Personnel in Security and Transport departments
- o Safety and security of employees especially women employees
- o Showing respect when engaging with women employees
- o Not moving out on duty if security escort is not available especially when lone women employee is commuting
- o How to contact and report a emergency situation which could impact safety of employee especially women employees

**Addressing Medical Emergencies:** Companies also support women employees in the event of a medical emergency. Medical aid room with round the clock availability for essential first aid as well as comprehensive medical care program through the empanelled hospitals. Advisories for women employees • Women employees are advised to ensure their mobile phones are charged before they leave for or from work • If the identity of a co-commuter is suspected, request him to display the I-Card. If the I-card is not available, report the matter to the authorities immediately. • Do not permit any outsider to board the vehicle under any circumstances. In case of help required by someone in cases like a road accident, call 100 or the office transport helpdesk. • Women are advised not to display valuables/currency to the driver, avoid conversations giving sharing personal details and be attentive in case of change in route. • Follow the allocated roster and stop only at the designated place as per the schedule • Call the helpline and report in cases such as non availability of security escort for a women employee (if she is the first to board or last to disembark) , inappropriate behavior by drivers or if under the influence of alcohol, over-speeding by cabs, unscheduled breaks for refueling / picking up friends, Vehicle breakdown, driver communicating

on the mobile while driving, use of unacceptable language and absence of I-card .

**Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work places:** Committee's as prescribed by Vishaka guidelines have been setup in organizations to deal and prevent Sexual harassment. This committee is responsible for independently handling any complaints on sexual harassment at the workplace. • Awareness sessions on what constitutes sexual harassment with all employees. The focus of these sessions is to promote gender sensitivity including understanding of and how to deal with harassment cases at workplace. The conduct of these sessions is arranged in such a manner that it shall: aim to create awareness around workplace / sexual harassment issues by defining key concepts o Highlight the prevalent laws / guidelines covering this topic / cases o Provide a brief overview of the organization policy on subject matter, its' ambit and scope o Enable attendees to identify harassment cases and understand sensitivities involved while handling such cases o Share instances and actions taken to build employee confidence in the process.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, the themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis highlighted the pervasive factors that impact the Employee Relationship Management. The societal role expectations, women's career ambitions, and the nature of the IT industry challenges the way they manage their professional and personal lives. While their self-identities primarily lie in their work, they are strongly influenced to perform the roles of homemaker and dependent care provider given the societal expectations; this does require negotiation both at home and at work in terms of how and when work can be done. Furthermore, women who had taken a slow track in their career growth, mentioned that this was a conscious choice as they felt their families needed them more at that point in time. An implication is that organizations may not be effectively utilizing their talent; however implementing ERM policies and practices would facilitate women in pursuing their career goals and dependent care responsibilities. With an increasing number of women entering the workforce and the Indian IT industry facing a talent shortage, it appears that understanding the role of work and family in the lives of women professionals will become an important HR concern. Indian women IT professionals can achieve the work family balance by setting priorities in their work and personal lives and by having support systems both at work, formally through HR policies and programmes, and informally through supervisor and co-worker support and at home. The data raised issues that need to be addressed both from an academic and practice point of view. The identified dimensions could serve as a platform for further research on women IT professionals and the work life balance which will serve as a guide for organizations to address issues of working women by designing and implementing sound ERM policies and



practices for facilitating the work family balance. This, in turn, would go a long way in enabling women to perform better at work, be more committed to the organization, and ultimately contribute to the growth of the economy and positively impact society as whole.

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