



March 2013



Thinking Aloud

The Neglected Half - Jay

Podium

Interview with **Dr. Swati Vitonde**, Director Technical & Finance, Ross Lifescience Pvt. Ltd

We Recommend

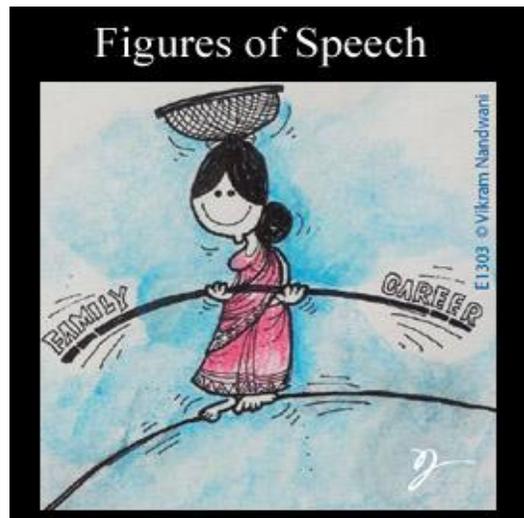
Inspiring videos of powerful women in the corporate world

Standing Ovation

Ananya Trust India

Dear Reader,

Since the first decade of 1900, when the International Women' s Day was first celebrated starting from the US and then going on to become a worldwide phenomenon, significant milestones have been achieved in the journey of empowering women. Though the progress has been commendable, there seems to be still a long way to go. According to studies conducted by Catalyst (<http://www.catalyst.org/>), a non-profit organisation with a mission to expand opportunities for women and business, there were 14.3% executive officers in Fortune 500 companies, up slightly from 13.5% in 2009. On the proportion of board seats held by women, the percentage was 16.6% in 2012 as compared to 9.6% in 1995. While these indicators have improved with time, yet they show that the journey is very long. In this month' s ET we visit the topic of women in corporate India where the statistics are far more disappointing. According to India based Forum for Women in Leadership (WILL), nearly 40% of women occupy positions in Indian organisations, but only 10% occupy leadership roles, moreover, only 3% occupy board seats and out of them leaving out owner-promoters, the figure is a miniscule 1.5%. The Indian corporate space and more importantly the social system has to take leaps and not just steps to create a level-playing field. Hope you like this issue and please do let us know what you think.



In **Thinking Aloud** Jay tries to parse through some trends, statistics and data to see why Indian women are so under-represented in the upper echelons of the corporate world. We can see the appearance of a crack in the wall when we look at literacy rates and later the wall seems to crumble when it comes to choices between family and career and at a corporate level when designing career paths for women professionals becomes a challenging task. But he says that the outlook is not bleak, with the right attitude and concentrated efforts we can build a fortified nation by harnessing the power of women.

Podium this month features **Dr. Swati Vitonde**, Director Technical & Finance, Ross Lifescience Pvt. Ltd., who shares with us her thoughts about the International Women' s Day and what is lacking in the Indian context which hinders women in the corporate field. She is elated that in recent years a paradigm shift has occurred but much distance is still to be covered. She says that it is that extra bit of energy and determination which will help women in going the distance and tells us that everyone must have a dream and a goal and once one is achieved, aim at something else.

In **We Recommend** this month, we share with you links to videos of the most powerful women in the corporate world. We have chosen videos of the top five women according to the Forbes list of ' Most Powerful Women in Business 2012' . The list includes well known luminaries such as Sheryl Sandberg, Indra Nooyi, Irene Rosenfeld, Ginni Rometty, Ursula Burns, Meg Whitman and Maria das Gracias Silva among others. The selected videos inspiring awe among listeners include a speech to a graduating class of Harvard, interviews to news agencies and speech at forums. Happy viewing!

Standing Ovation this month features Ananya Trust, a Bangalore based organisation which runs a unique concept school for the underprivileged children: a part residential (5 days a week) school that enables learning by bringing out the curiosity in children. Every child is treated as per his/her ability and not as per age and the curriculum of study is flexible so as to help children cope up with the academic requirements. Supported by a dedicated teaching staff, the organisation aims to bring out the best among children. For its unique method and its efforts, Ananya Trust deserves a Standing Ovation!

In **Figures of Speech**, Vikram displays a ' balancing act' of women played day in and day out!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Linked In](#) & [Google+](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!



Thinking Aloud

The Neglected Half - Jay

When Sheryl Sandberg speaks, the world listens. After all, as the Chief Operating Officer of the world' s 3rd largest ' nation' – Facebook (membership over a billion) - , she is an influential voice in today' s world. And, as an outspoken votary of women' s issues she is creating waves with her call for a second women' s revolution (' one which will change the metrics of the world' in Arianna Huffington' s words). Her recent book, ' Leaning In' , is being seen as a manifesto for the ' new woman' .

Do these issues make sense to the Indian woman too? Well, admittedly there are unique challenges for a woman in our society. The cultural baggage is so strong that despite there being some very powerful female political leaders in the past (Indira Gandhi being the most prominent), and even today (Jayalalitha, Mamata Banerjee and Mayawati,

to name just a few), the balance in society has continued to be tilted heavily in favour of men.

The international Women' s Day – March 8 – is an annual event that is ritually observed and a quick look at history tells us that it began as International Working Women' s Day. I say ritually, for recent events (and daily news stories) make sorry reading about the treatment of women in India. But all is not lost. I believe that modern education is the trigger that will liberate women and change mind-sets in our male dominated world.

The recent census brought to light some interesting facts that are relevant to our context: nationally the literacy rate is 64.8% (composed of 75.3% for men and 53.7% for women, a substantial difference of over 20%). A closer look reveals that expectedly, the gap is higher in rural India while the gap in urban India is about 13%. As in almost every aspect, the urban & rural divide is telling. Until the education gulf is bridged many challenges will continue.

Corporate India has its own set of issues to face. Chiefly, how to groom professional women for senior leadership roles? The IT sector has seen a huge influx of young female professionals at the entry level jobs as part of the campus hires. Over time, many have risen to the Team Lead roles. That is also the time when most of them have begun raising a family. The dilemma for the professional woman gets accentuated at this stage. Currently, I see that the when compelled to make a choice between children/family and career, the latter takes the back seat. But does this always have to be so? No easy solutions here, as the source of this reality lie in our socio-cultural context.

A working mother herself, Sandberg is candid enough to admit that she does not have the answer on how to make the right choices. However, what she does urge is that young professional women should not stop seeking higher responsibility and ease up in their career from their early years in anticipation of the dilemmas that they are likely to face a few years later. As she very observantly comments, ' Women rarely make one big decision to leave the workforce. Instead, they make a lot of small decisions along the way.' And, the cultural message in this case, is that family should always be above everything, particularly career.

Will the new Indian woman get her due in the coming years? Not an easy question to answer. However, what is clear to me is that if you wish to see a stronger nation then you cannot neglect the huge role that the female population has to necessarily play. And, for this to happen, in the vanguard you will find the professional career woman leading large & successful enterprises!

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Podium

**Dr. Swati Vitonde, Director Technical
& Finance, Ross Lifescience Pvt. Ltd**



Dr. Swati, a Ph.D. from the University from Pune in the subject of 'Environmental Science' and a M.Sc. in Chemistry from Mumbai University, is currently a Director with Ross Lifescience Pvt. Ltd., a contract research organisation. For Ross, she has led and managed various research projects and authored documents for submission to the government and other regulatory authorities. In addition to this she also manages the finance function of the organisation, including ensuring regulatory compliances, business projections and budgeting, business strategy and overlooking organisation-wide administration. Prior to joining Ross, she worked in senior position for various companies such as S.C. Johnson Products (Manager R, D & E; Consultant), Elkay Chemicals (Business development Manager) and Lever Johnson, Consumer Products (Product Development Manager) among

others.

Dr. Swati's publications have been featured in Indian and international journals and she has applied for a patent for an innovative product. She has also participated and presented a paper at the 'International Conference for Women Scientists' held in China in 2010. Dr. Swati who has won the 'Woman Entrepreneur of the Year 2009' award from the Rotary Club, North Pune, is an ardent reader and also loves to travel. While at University of Pune she was a part of the cricket team which went on to win the intercollegiate cricket tournament.

ET: As a professional woman & co-founder of a scientific start-up firm, what is the significance of the International Women's Day to you?

SV: International women's day is the "celebration" of achievement of success of women in today's world in all spheres of activity - be it science, politics, arts, music or literature and also all segments and strata of society. The day was celebrated in the 1900's to address the issues related to women such as gender discrimination and inequality. The new millennium has witnessed a significant change and attitudinal shift in both women's and society's thoughts about women's equality and emancipation.

With more women in the boardroom, greater equality in legislative rights, and an increased critical mass of women's visibility as impressive role models in every aspect of life, one could think that women have gained true equality. But the unfortunate fact is that women are still not paid equally as compared to their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers in business or politics, and globally women's education, health and the violence against them is worse than that of men.

I would like to see the day celebrated when a woman in her heart & soul would feel liberated & confident enough to be the active species on this earth. Till then the society's endeavour should be to create a conducive environment for her to achieve this.

ET: Women's empowerment is a much discussed and debated topic. What according to you is still lacking in the Indian context?

SV: Women's fundamental role in India today is still considered as the "home-maker" with second priority to work which affects her career prospects. Unless the other gender recognises home-making as an equal responsibility, it would be very difficult for majority of the women in India to step out of home and pursue a professional career.

Although the government of India is doing everything for helping women entrepreneurs, there is a greater need today to support women in identifying professional courses suiting their needs and outlining support systems in terms of easy finance.

In the terms of employed women, a greater emphasis on safety at workplace and concessions in terms of leave to look after family priorities, need to be addressed.

ET: In India, women at workplaces have been experiencing a positive momentum in the form of women centric policies, etc., what are some of the pitfalls that organisations should be aware of?

SV: The women centric policies that organisations are pursuing are definitely encouraging and would help women in the long run to achieve their professional goals.

The characteristics of women, mainly her caring attitude, the ability to empathise with people and multitasking ability, if recognised and utilised well could help organizations help address man-management issues.

Certainly it would also help organisations if there is greater representation of women on the management board.

ET: We see many female professionals graduating with high honours from top academic institutions (be it Medical, Management, Engineering, Pharmacy, Accounting, etc.). Not all of them study further to fulfil their academic aspirations as other personal events overtake them in life. You went on to complete your Ph.D. recently. Please share with us some of the learning from your career.

SV: It is a universal law that you need extra energy to do the extra work. Similarly as a woman when you have to perform extra work you need more energy in terms of your health as well as a self-driven force required to carry out that EXTRA duty/assignment which you intend to take up.

When I look back to obtaining my Ph.D., the factors which drove the mission were my dream goal, dedication, perseverance, management and ultimately hard work. I think if you really decide to achieve something all the energy surrounding you comes to help you to achieve this.

ET: What is your advice to budding women technocrats and others who hesitate to follow their dreams?

SV: I think one should not stop at any point of time in life. Once complacency sets in and you slow down your pace of life, then life starts becoming boring. You always need to have goals/dream in life. Once you are haunted by this dream, everything falls in place and then you really can chase the dream. I think anybody - irrespective of gender - should always have a goal, one after another, and create an ability within the self to have a fire to achieve it. The different parameters for achieving goals can be self-discipline, requisite knowledge, a sound mind and body and sensitivity towards the environment around and a tremendous driving force.

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We Recommend

Inspiring videos of powerful women in the corporate world

As we celebrate the success of women this month, we present videos of some of the most powerful women in the corporate world. We have chosen some of the best videos of the top five women as per the Forbes list of ' Most Powerful Women in Business 2012' (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jennagoudreau/2012/08/22/worlds-most-powerful-women-in-business-indra-nooyi-sheryl-sandberg-meg-whitman/>). The list of videos has been selected from various sources and though some are three or four years old, they are simply inspiring!

1) Sheryl Sandberg (COO Facebook) at her alma mater

Sheryl, second in command at the social networking giant, Facebook, addresses the HBS class of 2012. An inspiring talk in which Sheryl says that the main aim should be building a career and not only the CV. She shares her experiences about how she made her professional decisions and the results are for everyone to see!

Link: <http://www.businessinsider.com/sheryl-sandbergs-full-hbs-speech-get-on-a-rocketship-whenever-you-get-the-chance-2012-5>

2) Indra Nooyi (Chairman and CEO, PepsiCo) on her career trajectory

Indra Nooyi, speaks with Wall Street Journal' s Alan Murray at the inaugural ' Women In the Economy' event, 2011. She speaks on how her career was shaped over the past thirty years and what helped her reach where she is today.

Link: <http://live.wsj.com/video/pepsis-indra-nooyi-on-balancing-work-and-family-/44313778-BE51-4C1A-9323-8757ED876F78.html#!44313778-BE51-4C1A-9323-8757ED876F78>

3) Irene Rosenfeld (Chairman and CEO, Kraft Foods) on taking critical decisions

Irene Rosenfeld talks with Bloomberg about Kraft' s US\$ 20 bn acquisition of Cadbury in September 2010. Under censure from some noted shareholders, the CEO talks of decision making based on the belief of acquisition synergies.

Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT_5DQIksDo

4) Virginia Rometty (Chairman & CEO, IBM)

Virginia (' Ginni') Rometty speaks with Fortune Magazine about her one year at the helm and 31 years at IBM. She says that at IBM it is about realising the bigger impact that the company' s products have on the market at large, which she terms as the higher purpose' . She goes on to share about what made her the persona that she

is today.

Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT_5DQlksDo

5) Ursula Burns (Chairman & CEO, Xerox)

Ursula Burns talks about her journey with Xerox which started 30 years back as an intern at Xerox, in a new documentary film 'Makers: Women Who Make America' an initiative of PBS and AOL. She says that one of the most important learning from her mother was that 'if you have a chance to speak, you should speak and if you have an opinion, you should make it known'.

Link: <http://www.dailyfinance.com/2013/02/25/ursula-burns-makers-pbs-xerox/>

Happy Viewing!

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Standing Ovation

Ananya Trust India



Ananya Trust is a unique concept school which was set up in 1998 by a group of dedicated individuals who saw the need of educating the poor and underprivileged children of the society, under the leadership of Dr. Shashi Rao. The Ananya Trust, situated outside the city of Bangalore (India), was set up to provide a unique learning space for those children who are not accepted in the mainstream schools.

'Ananya' meaning unique, brings out uniquely the spirit of curiosity in children and allows them to find answers through enquiry, exploration and experiment. The school is located on a coconut grove. The philosophy of the school has been freedom and responsibility. For the children, this is home, school and a haven where all their needs are met.

Emphasis is laid on self-learning through a creative approach. The open classrooms with an adaptable curriculum cater to the individual needs of the children and study materials are arranged by levels of difficulty and are made available to the children. A striking and important aspect of Ananya, is that the children spend the weekdays at the school and are required to go home over the weekend which enables them to maintain the family bond. This way the children get acclimatized to the fact that they will one day eventually leave Ananya Trust. This also means getting them used to the idea of thinking about what they want to be and what they want to do next.

The success of Ananya can be attributed to the teachers who have selflessly dedicated themselves to the needs of the children. The charter on which the trust works is as follows:

- Children ‘ ask’ and the teachers ‘ act’ in helping them seek answers through enquiry, exploration and experiment. They are also taught to ‘ accept’ themselves and one another. Ananya Trust as a learning community is a place where students and teachers alike, are asking, seeking and finding answers to their own questions
- There is no hierarchical division of children. The children are grouped according to ability rather than age
- The focus of education is not only on the academic development, but also on the emotional, social and physical aspects of each child

For its uniqueness and its efforts in nurturing the children, the Ananya Trust truly deserves a ***Standing Ovation.***

If you want to get more information and support Ananya Trust, you can visit the website at www.ananyatrustindia.org.

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