

by Sobha Menon

WOMEN need mentoring more than men in the corporate environment — that's what women in senior positions say. And so, in a trend that showed a huge change of mindset towards their female workforce, several companies selected some promising senior executives for a mentoring programme designed for women only.

The companies, included Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Fidelity Investments, Genpact, Infosys Technologies, ONGC Ltd., Pepsi Foods, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Power, UCB India, Zensar Technologies, Citigroup India, Nokia India, Taj Safaris, ICICI Bank, Bharti Enterprises and Avaya Globalconnect. The programme on "creating women business leaders" was conducted by Forum for Women in Leadership.

Says Pinny Mann, head — facilities planning and management, Bharti Enterprises: "I do realise that times are changing, but even now women are pushed away from taking on more challenging roles — I know that to get myself into a more senior position will be a challenge. And since I have a male mentor — Sammy Medora of KPMG — I'd like to find out how a man thinks. Men have their smoking corners and pubs where they discuss how to take themselves to the next level, but for women it's difficult." Having worked a long stint with an MNC, Mann also wonders why Indian organisations aren't more process-oriented and how she can deal with such a situation. "I think it stifles growth because everyone in the organisation then works to please the man at the top, not to drive growth," Mann says, and it's something she feels passionately about.

For Aparna Sharma, director — HR, UCB India, "a programme of this sort where other women talk about the kind of issues that you face makes you feel much better". Working in the biopharma sector where there still aren't too many women in prominent positions, Sharma often finds it can get lonely at the top. "This is just the medium you need — there's a common thread and at the end of deliberations, aspiration levels rise," she says.

THE PROGRAMME has given Sharma much more clarity too, regarding her goals and how she should go about achieving it. "Women need to constantly think about what else they need to do other than routine work; they need to showcase their achievements; they also need to get access to the right forums for better visibility," says Sharma.

As for Prameela Kalive, associate VP and global head — HR, Zensar Technologies — she sees paradigm changes in leadership. And what's being thrown up is something women should welcome. "Leadership is increasingly about collaboration and sharing and so the focus will shift to strong empathy skills, emotional quotient rather than intelligence quotient — and these are traits that are natural to women," says Kalive. But there are areas where women lose out. "For instance, we fight for our team but hesitate to negotiate for ourselves. We need to pick networking skills, we need to dream for ourselves rather than our families, we need to seek visibility and demand recognition," she says.

Not just that. According to Poonam Barua, convener of Will Forum, "Why we went through mentoring is because women need to aspire beyond what they

are doing. But the corporate dynamics is such that they give up their aspirations and many even drop out." Industries are now beginning to realise that they are losing some of their best workers because the environment they provide isn't woman-friendly and they need to change it. "This mentoring

programme will help women recognise their own potential rather than look for women role models. It's also a partnership of men and women to help women realise their aspirations by asking some basic questions: How do I make my presence felt? What else am I going to do today? From the inputs I've

received from various mentees, sometimes it takes just a little guidance to give one's career direction," says Barua.

The other differentiator for this programme is the fact that it provides cross-industry mentoring for women in business leadership. "Mentoring women programmes have become

increasingly popular and successful in the US and Europe with several women being mentored across industry by successful women executives. This one, however, is a partnership between men and women," says Barua. And it just might change the environment in industry. sobha.menon@mailtoday.in

Bringing out the best in you

New mentoring methods make you realise your own potential. So don't look for role models



ALL SET TO CHANGE MINDSETS



'Women should start dreaming for themselves, not just for their families'

PRAMEELA KALIVE,
Zensar Technologies



'Such discussions make you realise other women deal with the same issues as you'

APARNA SHARMA,
UCB India



'To push myself into a more senior position would be a challenge — mentoring would help'

PINNY MANN,
Bharti Enterprises



Why more and more women are turning into CARROTS

CARROTS. That's short for women with Clothes Acquired Rashly Requiring Owners to Slim. It's the latest disorder that weight-conscious women are acquiring and you may have it too. So read on —

I AM a carrot — not the long, thin orange variety, but one of those women who buy clothes that are too small for them. That's CARROTS (Clothes Acquired Rashly Requiring Owners To Slim) for you. If I fit into a 14, I buy a 12.

If I like the dress, but can't quite do the zip up, I buy it anyway. Why do I do this? Because I'm convinced I am

about to lose weight. This is how I think: 'Look, there's a great dress, but it's not in my size. Maybe I can fit into a size smaller.'

I then try on the dress, fall in love with it and buy it even though it's too tiny. The dress then sits in the wardrobe waiting for me to lose weight. Apparently, a third of us are CARROTS. Yes, one-third of womankind spends money on something they cannot wear, convinced they are on the verge of losing that last half-stone that no one ever loses.

I have friends who have bought skirts they cannot do up, but have

hidden the gaping hole in the waistband under a long top.

I know others who buy bikinis out of which everything is spilling. The point of these clothes, though, is that it gives us something to slim for.

What's the point in slimming down if not to fit those lovely clothes? We will buy these items because, in our minds, that is how slim we will be.

We don't care about the expense. We don't care that we are kidding ourselves. We just want that dress no matter what. It's only a last half-stone then we'll be in it. How difficult can that be? — *Daily Mail*