

# Business Manager

Making HR People Complete

## Women HR Leaders

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**COVER**

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Sushmita Basu

# Women HR Leaders

The HR Women-Celebrating Success

In the galaxy of stars through difficulties

Breaking the moulds all through

Power of believing in self

Winning Isn't Everything, but Wanting to Win is

Being Professional handling tough situations...

Be Woman & Write your destiny

Transforming from Home Manager to HR Manager

Challenging journey of establishing business HR

Women- The Natural Leaders

-Smita Dash Sahoo

- Dr. Aparna Sharma

- Dr. Mandeep Maitra

- Dr. Tarnvi Gautam

- Dr. Shalini Sarin

- Dr. Tanaya Mishra

- Dr. Sujaya Banerjee

- Padma Singh

- Sushmita Basu

- A.S. Sharma

Dr. Aparna Sharma

Director-HR, DBOI Global Services (Deutsche Bank Group)

Aparna is a Post Graduate in (PM & IR) from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai of the 1996 batch. She has worked with Nocil, Monsanto, Novartis & UCB before joining the Deutsche Bank group as Director-HR for 2 of their Service Centres in India. She was conferred the "WOMAN SUPER ACHIEVER" award in December 2011 by the 6th Employer Branding awards (Regional Round). Also, conferred the "HR SUPER ACHIEVER AWARD" by STAR NEWS at the 20th World HRD Congress 2012, Mumbai as part of the "HR & Leadership Awards" for Excellence in Human Resources Development at a glittering award ceremony on February 16, 2012. Aparna is an active member of various professional associations like, Indian Society of Training & Development (ISTD), All India Management Association (AIMA), National Institute of Personnel Management (NIPM), National HRD Network, and Sumedhas. Currently, she has been appointed as the Honorary Treasurer of National HRD Network, Mumbai Chapter (2012-2014) and is a member of the Executive Committee. On the personal front, Aparna is a very avid reader, poetess, intrepid traveler, nature and wildlife enthusiast, amateur photographer, has a passion for gardening and a keen people collector.

# In the galaxy of stars through difficulties

**A**s I got to down to pen this piece went into flashback mode. What experiences have made me the professional that I am today? What were the challenges faced during a sixteen year career?

I come from a conservative family where women worked but it was not actively encouraged. In the mid 1990's girls from towns like Ujjain, mostly, became homemakers after graduation. I too might have become one, were it not for the inner drive "Dare to be different" - make a mark! Drawing inspiration from my doctor aunt - the World was my canvas. In hindsight, stepping into the corporate world was an accident....

I originally wanted to join the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) but had to take on an alternate profession as I had to become financially independent early in life and owing to the stringent norms of the administrative services, time was not in my favor. This initial disappointment did not deter me and I took on the challenge head-on.

After completing my graduation from TISS, I applied to a leading chemical company. During the interview told the panel that would consider joining them only if they allowed me to work on the shop floor. The panel was aghast! Why does

this young girl want to commit professional harakari by working in a highly unionized environment? I was firm and am fortunate the panel reposed faith in me. It was baptism by fire. There was a new crisis every day. Workers went on a go slow on the smallest pretext for e.g. there is less sugar in tea today. I learnt to be cool under pressure, build good relations with workers and appeal to their fatherly instincts since many of them had daughters my age.

It has been a roller coaster ride since then. I often reflect on experiences.

What is it that drives me? 'Be a Contributor'. The intent is to add value to the organization and people that I work for/with. In short 'make a difference'. Some say you have to be born with such drive others say it can be acquired. I believe it is a combination of both. A few strands.

Education is a passport to a job but your past track record is the basis for a new assignment meaning that you have to be a contributor continuously. You need an inquisitive mindset, constant hunger for knowledge and insights. Accept challenges head-on for in every solution lie rich experiences and long term rewards. It is this drive to contribute that has, mostly, enabled me to generate transformative insights which have impacted the organization in a positive and

IN THE GALAXY OF STARS THROUGH DIFFICULTIES -DR. APARNA SHARMA

Challenge is that of work life balance. Women, who work, continue to be homemakers, though not in the earlier sense, and are constantly struggling to excel in both the worlds. Support from the organization and spouse, smoothen the process although must admit that it gets very difficult at times.



IN THE GALAXY OF STARS THROUGH DIFFICULTIES -DR. APARNA SHARMA

lasting way. Sharing of knowledge has helped me evolve. By writing-speaking what you know knowledge becomes part of your DNA. Meeting students, aspiring professionals has kept me abreast with how Gen Y is thinking, tailor HR solutions to attract such talent and provoke thought within.

Yet there have been many challenges along the journey. Some roles are traditionally performed by men. There are others which are more welcoming of women. Changing mindsets was a challenge. I was once told 'you cannot do this since this required me to work through the night'. I asked my senior for the brief and time frame. With the support of colleagues and better time management, completed the job before midnight. All I requested was a home drop for team which the senior readily agreed to. Similarly, I spent over twenty days with the sales team to make farmer/field visits. The farmers

I just finished reading the Geeta once, only very recently. However, as the immortal lines of Geeta quoted above speak, I have always valued Commitment, Ambition and Strive to achieve Excellence in all that I do since my childhood. I sincerely strive to make a positive difference in others lives and always continue to improve myself with truth and knowledge.

Stumbling upon a profession almost by accident, three things that have worked for me in this serendipitous career choice have been; strategic perspective, involvement as a change agent and team orientation and people management. I demonstrated my strategic perspective even during my first job interview, as narrated above.

As a change agent, I have played an integral part in setting up and revitalizing the human resources teams and defining the culture of the organization, in three out of my four previous

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were impressed to see a lady work shoulder to shoulder with her male colleagues that sales surged. If you have confidence in your abilities, are willing to learn, and honest to yourself about your limitations, no challenge is too big to accept. When men want to discuss a problem outside of work, they can meet for a drink after office. Found that difficult to do due to home commitments. I got around it by requesting colleagues to meet earlier over coffee/chai or closer home so that travel time is reduced.

Another challenge is that of work life balance. Women, who work, continue to be homemakers, though not in the earlier sense, and are constantly struggling to excel in both the worlds. Support from the organization and spouse, smoothen the process although must admit that it gets very difficult at times. In such situations, I have sailed through with the belief that this too shall pass and given my best.

I also believe that Indian women are blessed with special powers that allow them to multi-task with relative ease. Gender & now, Generational Diversity continue to be a challenge while organizations are trying various creative ways to create & retain a sustainable competent workforce.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

roles. One of the striking highlights as a change agent has been when I worked on the performance management process following the merger of one of my previous organizations. With a strategic perspective, I took the best of both organizations and created a new process for evaluating performance. In the capability development effort, there is an equally compelling story to tell. I came up with a revolutionary idea to decentralize training in collaboration with employees from the business. This not only increased my team's capacity but also created ownership and made training real for employees.

The third aspect of my career that has worked for me has been my team orientation and people management skills. My colleagues vouch "Aparna is a people's person". Working with people comes naturally to me; a necessary trait, considering MY profession.

I maintain that even though I came into this profession by chance and had a second chance to get into to the administrative services, I chose not to stray from the path as I am extremely passionate about people as assets. I have been able to successfully create successors in all organizations by giving autonomy, empowering staff and mentoring them.

Being a woman has been a source of strength in my journey of contributing to organisations and the society at large. **RM**

*(Views are personal)*