



Bridging the Gender Gap in India's Tech Leadership

Roundtable Discussion

Our Message

Thank you for attending or showing interest in our roundtable discussion.

Our roundtable events on equity, diversity, and inclusion are designed to be informal, allowing participants to openly discuss bold topics, share knowledge, and challenge thinking.

Since In Diverse Company launched, we have had the pleasure of meeting numerous inspiring thought-leaders in the ED&I space. We set up our events programme to share some of these truly inspirational stories and provide evidence of the power of inclusion within the workplace. Also, our roundtables are a fantastic networking opportunity, creating a community for those working along the ED&I journey.

We are happy to share some of the key insights from our latest roundtable discussion - "Bridging the Gender Gap in Tech Leadership".

If you have any additional comments or feedback, please let us know.



"When people are in an environment where they can perform at their best, engagement, productivity and business performance increase. For this to happen, organisations should aim to shift mindsets and hold inclusion at the heart of business decisions."

Johanna Beresford CEO, In Diverse Company

About

According to [451 Research](#), India's IT-BPM industry currently employs nearly 3.9 million people, of which over 34% are women. While this percentage is much better than the overall female share (24%) of India's total workforce, analysis indicates that over 51% of entry-level recruits are women, and 25% of managers are women. Still, less than 1% are in the C-Suite.

On the 23rd of April 2024, In Diverse Company hosted a virtual roundtable discussion on Bridging the Gender Gap in India's Tech Leadership. Industry experts from India joined us to share some of the unique challenges they face concerning gender inclusion in this industry, initiatives their organisations have taken to overcome these, and what they think needs to be done further and better.

In particular, we discussed:

- Current scenario – how far we've come and what needs to change
- Women's barriers to entry and retention
- Importance of gender representation at all levels of the organisation
- Sector-specific challenges and how to overcome them
- Case studies and personal experiences



The Participants



Swapna Maraju

Head of People and Culture
Recro



Naganagouda S J

Chief People Officer
Tally Solutions



Pamela Kundu

Head of Solution Consulting (India Region)
Sprinklr



Sukanya Ramachandran

Head of Diversity Equity and Inclusion
Wipro



Johanna Beresford

Chief Executive Officer
In Diverse Company

We had the privilege of hosting several other distinguished speakers who chose to remain anonymous.

Key Insights

Speakers mentioned three levels of factors that act in tandem with each other to impact women in India's tech sector negatively:

- The larger societal discourse around women and the expectations that they are burdened with. For instance, the expectation that caregiving is primarily their responsibility, or when they are dissuaded at a young age from pursuing “masculine” interests like tech and engineering.
- Systemic factors such as industry and organisational norms that discourage women from entering, staying, and advancing in this industry. For instance, the expectation that to be considered for leadership roles and receive promotions, working long hours is more important than the quality of work. This puts many women into a lose-lose situation – where they must either sacrifice caregiving time or their professional aspirations. Another systemic factor is the so-called “bro culture”, which manifests as men supporting and advocating for their male colleagues at all levels of the organisation.
- Individual factors—from psychological barriers, such as feeling a lack of confidence and limiting one's aspirations, to a perceived skills deficit in communication behaviours (e.g., speaking assertively in difficult situations). It is important to note that the onus for supporting these factors does not lie solely with women—mentorship opportunities, training, and support are required as well.

Key Insights

Although there is a long way to go in this journey, we must also look back at and celebrate the progress we've made over the last few years. A solution-focused, positive-psychology approach that doesn't look at the situation from just a problem-focused lens would allow us to understand and further leverage the factors already working in our favour.

The representation of women in the pool of engineering graduates is increasing. Therefore, focusing on attracting, hiring, and retaining female employees is not just a "nice-to-have" but a must-have that will make an organisation future-proof for when this will become mandatory.



"We cannot do it without men! So, if a lot of people who are in that "bro circle" agree to challenge this culture and change it and say 'okay, if you are productive for 8 hours, we will still give you the chance to prove your ability as a leader', only then it happens. That's one of the biggest barriers I've observed."

Pamela Kundu, Head of Solution Consulting (India) at Sprinklr

Key Takeaways

- For positive changes to occur, the agenda of bridging the gender gap can't just be owned by a few specific stakeholders in the organisation (e.g., Human Resources, the Diversity & Inclusion team)—it needs to be owned collectively by the leadership team. Experts can facilitate driving the agenda, but leadership needs to own it.
- Given the changing demographics in educational institutions, the gender ratio in the pool of potential employees will change over the coming 5-10 years. Therefore, organisations cannot look at fixing the gender gap as a one-time agenda to fix a temporary problem. Instead, they need to look at the levers in their organisation that reduce the gender gap and look at integrating it into business-as-usual.
- Core to the agenda is the participation of their male colleagues as allies. They need to participate in pushing back against and changing unfair cultural norms, ideas and attitudes. This allyship is what will make sustainable change possible.
- It is important to also focus on the role psychological barriers play when it comes to the gender gap. This cannot be addressed by a change in systems and policies alone, but through initiatives which offer a more personal touch such as coaching and mentoring. Role models also play a huge role in mobilising confidence, hope and self-belief.
- Organisations must be holistic in their approach to addressing the issue. A myopic approach can lead to unintended negative consequences. For instance, one speaker mentioned how their successful initiative focused on addressing the gender gap in senior leadership had an unintended negative impact on their pipeline of female managers.
- A one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Businesses need to drive this agenda from a political, cultural and economic perspective, taking into account contextual and cultural nuances.



Thank you!

Want to get in touch with us for future events, contribute to our thought leadership, or have a chat about ED&I? Send us an email at info@indiversecompany.com.



“...inclusivity should not be a strategy or an agenda; it should become “business-as-usual”. Because there is no running away from the fact that the next generation of engineers and technocrats are all going to be more than 50% women.”

Naganagouda S J, Chief People Officer at Tally Solutions