

Saundarya Rajesh's business module aims to absolve women of struggles that she herself faced looking for a flexible job after motherhood in the mid-1990s

Leading by example



BEHIND every successful man, there is a woman. But behind every successful woman, there is her life-altering experience. For Saundarya Rajesh, 42, a management degree holder, it's her four years of struggle to get a flexible job after motherhood that led to the creation of a business module, AVTAR I-WIN or Interim Women manager's Interface Network, a platform for women seeking part-time employment.

Explains Saundarya, "I

used to work in a multinational bank before motherhood and home-care took precedence over a full-time career. I enjoyed my job very much. But during the mid 90s, there were not many flexible job opportunities available. After a long arduous search of about four years, I decided to take up flexi-time assignment in teaching that came my way in 1996."

The next four years was a struggle for Saundarya. She realised that to ensure flexi-

ble job opportunities for women, she has to become an entrepreneur. In 2000, she set up AVTAR Career Creators, a company offering career options to a variety of talent segments. Later in 2005, a research undertaken by her company gave the necessary impetus to provide flexible job opportunities to women, which she found difficult to get after motherhood.

Saundarya says, "In September 2005, we observed that close to 18 per cent of women

in the Indian workforce were quitting, never to return primarily because 'flexible working' was not a prevalent concept in the corporate world. This prompted us to conceive an idea of an alternate talent pool — a group that did not pursue linear careers but can work productively for small periods of time, providing a solution to India's talent problems. Thus, our service was born — AVTAR I-WIN."

But it wasn't easy. Saundarya had to identify women

seeking flexible jobs, as they don't appear on job boards or see press ads advertising open positions. "Both conventional and unconventional methods were used to reach this audience and to spread the message of flexible working. Also, since flexi-working was not a common working style in India, we had to develop new competencies and skills to enable organisations to employ women on flexible working arrangements."

A mother of two, she says that her hard work has finally paid dividends, as her company has managed to place more than 2,500 women on flexible work assignments in 30 organisations. She attributes her success to her family who had to compromise, while she pursued her dreams. "I have not often been able to do the exact same things that a full-time stay-at-home mom would do. But I think when you involve your family in your aspirations and make them understand that everyone's dreams is important, they become your biggest supporters."

She also has a few words of advice to those women seeking a career, but confined to a domestic life due to marriage or motherhood. "If you are truly keen on a career, you will find it! Don't hate the break in your career! Accept it as part of the deal of being a woman. Breaks can be a catalyst in life — they help you assess your strengths and limitations, make you reflect on what you really want out of life and set you on that path. If you are persistent and are able to manage your home front successfully, a career is surely waiting for you!"

Remember ladies, your dream for a career is just a click away. For details, visit www.avtariwin.com

—Ashok Kumar Shaw

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