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THE AVTAR OF SUCCESS

Saundarya Rajesh, the Founder and President of AVTAR Career Creators is a luminous example of a successful woman entrepreneur. Madhuvanti SK talks to her about her organization, views and more...

Saundarya Rajesh is a woman of the twenty first century who understands the needs of women professionals in the con-

temporary business scenario. In today's hectic and fast paced world, where women balance both professional and personal lives, there is a need for flexibility on the work front. While there is not much awareness about flexi time jobs in many parts of the country, Saundarya Rajesh through her company has played a major role in popularizing the idea of flexi-time jobs.

Says Saundarya, "Among the 6300 women who have thus far registered on the AVTAR I-WIN network, approximately 2500 have found flexi-working opportunities. There is undeniably not as much awareness about flexi-working as we would like. After the launch of AVTAR I-WIN in 2005 as India's first National registry of flexi-working women professionals, we

have been relentlessly creating awareness by addressing the corporate world on related issues. Flexi-working acts as a solution to attract and retain full-time employees."

AVTAR has also addressed many forums such as Diversity & Inclusion Asia conference- 2008 at Hong Kong, the Human Resource Conference by the University of Beijing 2007, VITAL VOICES of Asia – a Hillary Clinton initiative for Women Leadership, etc. They have conducted many surveys on flexible working which includes a Nation-wide survey on Work-life Balance in association with Outlook Business Magazine. "I use every forum, every platform to tell people that we need to be open minded about working hours being made flexible for women," says Saundarya. "This is because, very soon, not just men, but women – young and old alike would begin to demand flexibility in their careers. We

have had reasonably good success in this area."

In a society like India, a man's necessity for flexible working is less compared to women. Saundarya is in concurrence with this idea. However, this has changed over the years. "If you look at members of the Free-Gen (1945-1960) or Gen X (1960-1970), the primary identity is that of work which explains why many men suffer from depression after retirement. However, there is a gradual change in this trend. The E-Gens (1970-1980) and Gen Y's (born 1980-1990) are keener on participating equally in parenting. With an increase in nuclear families and women entering the workforce, it is necessary for men to share responsibility at home. Therefore, as time lapses, we might see more men seeking flexi-time jobs. With increasing financial security, we are also witnessing a possible trend where men are interest-

ed in experimenting with new ways of working and taking sabbaticals to pursue their dreams," opines Saundarya.

Over the years, there has been a major renaissance in the attitude of corporates in adopting flexi-jobs, a concept which would be beneficial in the long run. "Yes, there are definite benefits for the individual and the organization," she says, "today, we see a positive response to Flexi-working in many large Indian and Multi-national corporations. Many MNCs have offered this to their employees. They would not have taken such a decision had they not deemed it beneficial in the long run."

With highly committed people like Saundarya Rajesh working hard to popularize flexi time jobs, it will cease to remain a distant dream.