

'Women don't see enough role models at the top'

Our Bureau

CHENNAI

IF less than 2% of boards of India Inc have women directors, more disquieting is the fact that more women drop out of the workforce simply because they don't see too many role models.

"Today, companies clearly want to capitalise on the talent that women bring to leadership. But, if she doesn't see enough women who are acclaimed successes or who have traversed the same path and met the same challenges, she begins to feel that there is probably something wrong either with the system or with herself", said Saundarya Rajesh, founder-president, Avtar Career Creators. A study by Avtar Career Creators in 2009 found women in the 27-33 age group with few or no women role models whose success stories could be emulated.

To nurture women managers, Standard Chartered Bank has embarked on a nationwide exercise with Avtar to create an interface between its middle managerial women employees and top women leaders across the country.

The oldest MNC bank in India organised this effort ahead of the international women's day as part of its diversity and inclusion initiatives, aimed at increasing the number of women managers. At town hall sessions organised by the bank, the women employees listened to the powerful success stories of women leaders.

The meetings saw women professionals gathering at Gurgoan, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. The four speakers were: PepsiCo's ED of marketing, Punita Lal, author and marketing strategist Rama Bijapurkar, Tata Steel's head of HR, IR & Commercial, Suchitra Guha and JWT senior veep and managing partner, Anita Gupta. They answered questions ranging from simple ones like "How did you land your first job?" to thought provoking ones like, "does gender diversity actually lead to opinion diversity?"