

Women prefer flexi-timing jobs: survey

M. Dinesh Varma

CHENNAI: Women seem to prefer flexi-timing jobs that help them juggle multiple roles at critical phases in life over a full-time career engagement that could potentially disrupt work-life balance, according to a survey among working women.

The study, 'VIEWPORT 2010 - Flexible Careers - Moment of Truth' carried out through September-November 2010 by Chennai-based consultancy Avtar Career Creators, reveals that 91 per cent of the women professionals surveyed resorted to flexi-working at some point of time in their careers, but only 25 per cent availed this through a policy offered by their employers. The rest of the respondents had negotiated it informally through discussions with their supervisors and mentors.

"This overwhelming decree in support of flexibility could be a reflection of the times when a woman's self-actualisation is not uni-dimensional and that she requires flexibility to don the many roles that she does," said Saundarya Rajesh, Avtar founder-president.

The study covered the responses of 341 senior women professionals across India as well as the policies and practices around flexi-working followed by 45 top organisations.

One of the key findings of the study is that while corporates realise the need for gender diversity across every level —with over 61 per cent believing that there is robust business case in support of flexible working —they are apprehensive about instituting a flexi-work policy because it demands change not only in the minds of the managers but also in the very culture of the organisation.

Ms. Rajesh points out that the Indian woman, more so than her counterparts around the world, requires flexibility at crucial junctures in her life.

A typical Avtar case ran, who took up a flexi-timing job as M&A consultant with Thomson Reuters for a three-year period to bring up her children and later turned full-time at the same organisation.

Ms. Rajesh points out that flexi careers is a win-win situation for women professionals as well as the organisation.

"From a corporate perspective it is always better to pace down the career of women for a few years to help tide over a phase of overriding domestic duties than to have her leave the organisation after having invested in grooming a staffer," she said.