

News

Do women make better HR managers?

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There is a general belief that women make better HR managers than men. Is it really the case or is it just another myth?

Elaborating the case in favour of women HR managers, Nikul Shah, president, global HR and Corporate Services, Omnitech InfoSolutions Ltd explains, "With due respect to both genders, it is very much evident in today's global scenario that women definitely make better HR managers. This is because women acclimatise better to new situations, are more likely to farm out and to reward people than men do. Plus they're getting better at doing what men conventionally have done well. Further, women are better able to head businesses towards transformation. They endow more wisely. Several looks at stock investing says they're better off with women investing the wealth!"

Historically, especially in India, women have been shouldered with only home and family responsibilities while men have been seen as the bread-winners. As Shah points out, "Since the industrial revolution — or maybe at least the 1930s — the organisation was patently masculine. The overriding 'mechanical school' of organisational theory, was founded on such ideas as centralised supremacy, specialty and expertise, labour division, principles, rules, and regulations. The recent emerging organisations, however, was more feminine in gender because it revolves around collaboration, the delegation of authority, openness, trust, empowerment, concern for the people, an emphasis on interpersonal relations, and the inexorableness of interdependence." Such change calls for a greater role for women employees, who are counting on their natural strengths.

Gender – a minor factor

Do women managers also share the same view that women have an edge when it comes to working with and managing people? Women may be better HR managers because of their inherent traits but looking at how this profession itself has shaped up in the recent past, men and women share an equal platform. As Sheeba Satish, HR Manager, Fundsupermart opines, "Gender is not the measure of a good HR Manager, though it is true that generally HR has been the preferred choice of profession for women. Traditionally, HRM has been seen as a woman centric role, as it revolves around people management and leans heavily on soft skills. Today, with abundance of technology and information, human capital is the differentiating factor for the success of any business. Thus, we have seen a steady shift in perception of HR as a profession. Gradually, it has moved towards a healthy mix of men and women in HR workforce."

Woman - Ideal HR Manager?

While gender might only slightly contribute to how people perform as HR managers, there are many other qualities that make an ideal HR manager. Some of these qualities are explained by Hanuman Tripathi, core founder and group MD, Infrasoft Technologies, "The first and foremost quality an HR Manager must have is people orientation. Being service driven is a necessary quality, implying that the person should take pleasure in doing something for others constantly. Ideally, they need to have an understanding of the business and its dependence on people. Though a balanced viewpoint would be that some HR Managers are successful because of individual competency, personality and passion and not their gender, strictly, in my personal opinion, I believe that women make better HR Managers than men."

While there is no one side to this coin, most professionals also agree with the view that women HR managers must not let their weaknesses come in the way of their natural strengths. Sheeba admits, "The emotional side that is associated

with women can tend to bog them down. High pressure situations where egos and emotions run high could prove to be more taxing on women as compared to men. They are slightly more susceptible to it than men. At times, it is important to disconnect and have an objective view.” Shah also feels that emotions can sometimes pull one back on the corporate ladder, “Given the demands of a masculine environments, poignant display can advocate weakness, and women should avoid showing these kind of emotional break-downs when upset.”

Final verdict: what comes naturally to women can also be a hurdle in their path. As an HR manager, what matters most is putting things in perspective and keeping a balanced view!