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The Female Entrepreneurs Who Turned A Flexible Schedule Into A Sustainable Business



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Asia

I cover female entrepreneurs and startups in India.
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Leaving the corporate rigmarole for family can promise a harsh attempt to return for many women, but in India, a group of women have found an opportunity to turn a need for a flexible work-life schedule into a sustainable career path, and a sustainable business.

Approximately 36 percent of Indian women pull out of the workforce to meet family demands – whether for childcare or eldercare. It's not an unusual figure; around 31 percent of women in the US take time off work for the same reasons.

But according to the New York based Centre for Talent Innovation, an overwhelming 91 percent of Indian women do wish to return to work after taking a break to raise children (as compared to 89 percent in the US). However, Indian women find it harder to get back into a career momentum after taking a break.

In 2009, a group of three women, all career professionals who had worked with Citibank in India, found themselves stepping back from the corporate rat race in order to seek more family time, and more occupational flexibility.

What evolved, with a bit of encouragement from former employers at Citibank India, is an enterprise called [Tvameva Solutions](#), which offers corporate and institutional training primarily for the financial services industry.



A Tvameva Solutions training session in action. Photo courtesy of Tvameva Solutions.

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Led by the three original founders, Meeta Jamkhedkar, Srividya Raman, and Arunanjali Maria, the entire team is comprised of women from highly educated backgrounds, working together, but on their own hours and in their own locations.

“We have not actually gone and sought out women, it just so happened that the people we were attracting were women like ourselves,” says Tvameva Business Solutions Director Meeta Jamkhedkar.

Comprised of a diverse crew with career backgrounds ranging from a former US-based engineer to someone who once headed a call center sales team of 200, the women find themselves collaborating on their own terms.

“We have some meetings start at 9am because someone has to look after an aging parent, some meetings are at 9:30pm because that’s when someone else is free – an another member of the team starts working at 4am because that’s when she has time aside from family commitments,” says Jamkhedkar, “it’s these bizarre cycles which fit together so beautifully, it’s a massive strength – and work is very effective by allowing people to just be.”

One major advantage of this female-friendly business is that everyone works on an equal footing, says Jamkhedkar.

“Nobody is looking to become Vice President by stepping on anyone else’s head, there’s no negative competition, and no negative pressure, instead there is a lot of collaboration,” she says.

The success of the company in India has seen the women-run enterprise expand out to Hong Kong, with another professional returnee leading the growth.

“The odd person will ask ‘how are you going to survive re-entering a career’,” says Soundari Mukherjea, Director of the Hong Kong branch, Tvameva Solutions Overseas, who formerly worked in retail banking. “I had over 10 years of a break, I don’t think it was limiting in any way.”

But there are still certain limitations to being a female-only enterprise in India.

“Sometimes we do wish there were more men on board” says Jamkhedkar, “projects in the interiors of India require a large team of men, we’ve pulled back because we can’t send women in.”

Ventures in the Middle East have also had to be put on hold due to the lack of a requisite male trainer for corporate assignments there.

Ultimately though Jamkhedkar and Mukherjea emphasize that the business relies on the competency of its employees over and above anything else. “What we find is that once you learn how to drive a car, you can drive a car – that skill never goes away,” says Jamkhedkar.