



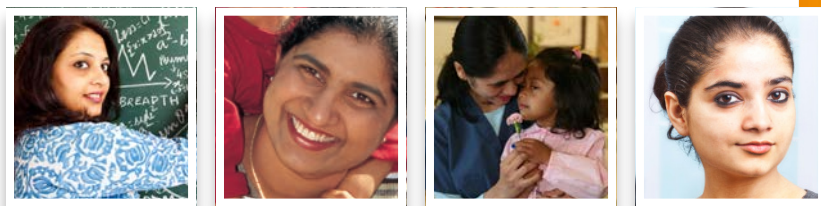
Strategies to Support Professional Women in India

Insights from employers on supporting family care needs and career aspirations

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Strategies to Support Professional Women in India

Doing business globally presents organizations with unique challenges. This is particularly true in India where fast-changing workforce demographics now include rapidly growing numbers of ambitious, dedicated, college-educated women in need of family supports as they pursue their careers. These women are integral to an organization's success or failure in the Indian market and, as a result, are of increasing interest to employers. In fact, a key finding in the 2013 MasterCard Worldwide Index of Women's Advancement for South Asia is summed up by Division President South Asia Ari Sarker who noted, "As emerging economies in the region step up to establish their presence in the global economy, it is important that the barriers preventing women in these markets from seizing economic opportunities be eliminated." Yet two key barriers — access to high-quality child care and the availability of career supports in the workplace — remain. This makes understanding current employer-sponsored initiatives related to family care and career support an imperative.



To that end, **Horizons Workforce Consulting**[®] interviewed leaders from a variety of organizations with large populations of employees working in India about their workforces and their initiatives with regard to women. The study included formal interviews with nine companies and informal conversations with six more.

Who are India's Employees?

Much has changed — both in terms of the landscape for employer-sponsored child care and the provision of work/life supports — since Horizons Workforce Consulting completed its first child care study of India three years ago.

The typical age of employees today is older, now closer to 30 than mid-20s. Unlike three years ago, many more employees today have children. These employees are also more often married and part of dual-earning couples, illustrating a workforce navigating new and growing challenges related to balancing professional lives with families. Also noted was a significant trend in women who do not want to opt out of their careers to stay home with young children. This was true even among families that could afford to have one spouse opt out of employment. The staying power of these women may well be fortunate since some economists wonder if the Indian economy could keep up with the demand for highly skilled or educated workers if large numbers of women who are employed in the labor force did decide to "opt out."

This influx of women — and in particular, working mothers — is perhaps one reason the child care landscape has evolved to include more child care centers in key cities such as Bangalore, Mumbai, Gurgaon, and Hyderabad. Indeed, there is growing interest from companies across industries to open offices in India to benefit from the country's educated and committed labor force that includes many college-educated women, advents that would require more family supports.

A Support System without Oversight

What has not changed, compared to three years ago, is the lack of oversight in the child care service delivery system. There is still no governing body in India that defines a minimum level of standards for the education and care of young children in group settings. This creates significant complications for companies looking to establish employer-sponsored child care programs. No regulations and no standards mean that there is no framework for measuring, evaluating, or even defining what quality early care and education should be in India, creating liability concerns — and hence, funding obstacles — because of this lack of oversight. Among the companies we spoke to — all of whom have work locations outside of India — some have organizational global policies to govern child care provisions, but most do not. Instead, they rely on national child care provisions to meet local issues and needs. The absence of those regulations in India has created a significant obstacle to consider when establishing child care supports, specifically related to issues around safety and liability. In response, **Bright Horizons®**, a company that serves clients in a variety of geographies around the globe, has filled this void in high-quality standards by establishing an international best-practice approach for employer-sponsored early care and education. This framework represents the highest-quality, best practices in education, safety, hygiene, staff development, curriculum, risk management, and space design. It also provides a range of models for employers looking to invest in employer-sponsored child care provisions.



Benchmark Results

Companies were interviewed at length about the types of current dependent-care and overall support provisions offered to their employees in India. The table below provides details about the nine companies, represented by A through I, that participated in this study. Companies also told us about the specific types of arrangements offered to employees as well as the company initiatives they aim to fulfill.

Focus	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
India Population	7,000	4,000	700	1,400	5,000	5,000	45,000	33,000	4,000
Geographic Area of Focus	Gurgaon Bangalore	Bangalore	Bangalore	Gurgaon	Mumbai	Gurgaon Bangalore	Bangalore	Multiple Cities	Bangalore
% Female Pop	Approx. 50%	Approx. 22%	Approx. 20%	Approx. 25%	Approx. 32%	19%	25%	4%	35%
Average Age of Workforce	Approx. 29 yrs	Approx. 30 yrs	Approx. 27 yrs	Approx. 30 yrs.	Approx. 32 yrs	Early 30's	Mid 20's	NA	28 yrs
Has Workplace Child Care	No	No	Yes	Near site	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Type of Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives	Women's Advancement	Gender	Women's Retention	Gender Talent Management	Sr. Women's Advancement	Gender	Disability Women's Advancement	Gender Disability Inclusion	Gender
Flexibility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Informal	Yes	Yes	Yes



School-Age Programs

Employees living and working in India are very focused on positive educational outcomes for their children of all ages. As recognition of both this priority and the need for parents to know they are doing all they can for their children while growing their careers, one company offers a number of initiatives designed to support employees *and* their children. One of these initiatives targets employees with dependents ages 6 to 12 with organized physical-activity events at local sports academies. This initiative is designed to measure the link between healthy physical activity and better educational outcomes and also to support parents by providing positive social networking opportunities between employees in all levels of the organization.

Return to Work

A few companies that participated in this study offer parent resources designed to support the reintegration of women returning to work after the birth or adoption of a child. Along with child care, such programs enhance the potential for women to return to work *successfully* and form a critical area of focus for organizations that view work/life supports within the business context.

While all companies in the benchmark provide paid leave for up to three months, several offer additional months of paid leave. One company links the EAP provider to the employee going through the transition, offering one-on-one support in important areas such as managing parenthood and work, leaving a child while at work, and managing practical issues such as lactation plans.

There were also efforts to provide roadmaps for mothers returning to work. Many of today's working mothers in India are the first to be "professionals" in their families. As a result, working women in professional environments do not have many role models to look to as examples of how to manage work and care for a very young child. Further, while extended families in India still play a part in managing child care arrangements, many people (particularly in areas like Bangalore and Gurgaon) do not have the family support structure they once had, making child care centers more essential. One participating company with an on-site child care center uses the infant program to promote the viability of female employees' ability to successfully return to work. This gives women in the organization a much-needed "model" for considering how they can have both children and a career. For the business, the value when employees utilize this benefit and successfully integrate work and family is significant.



Employer-Sponsored Child Care

For those companies that offer on-site child care for their employees, only one interviewed organization uses a “tie-up” with existing local programs near the work site. The concept of a “tie-up” refers to an arrangement between the employer and a local child care provider to gain access for employees into an existing child care center(s). While the center is also open to other parties (generally the community), agreements on employee access are defined between the center and the employer. Below is a breakdown of information regarding tie-up relationships among participating companies:

- One organization in the benchmark defined standards for the centers in the tie-up relationship with a written agreement. “We are very particular around safety and hygiene in programs that will serve employees’ children.” Each center participating in the tie-up has been visited by the company and agrees to offer a 20% discount to employees who use their services.
- Several organizations in Hyderabad told us they were using tie-up arrangements that are bundled through an association. For example, companies that are members of the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), a trade association of the Information Technology and Business Processing Outsourcing industry, can choose to participate in and offer information to their employees about how to access the participating local child care centers included in the tie-up relationship. These arrangements are not formally defined and likely do not have quality service agreements. They offer access to employees at a discount of 10% and utilize a local provider that, in this case, has three child care centers in the system.
- Some organizations in the benchmark could find no local high-quality child care centers. Corporate involvement in child care provision for employees carries an expectation around quality and liability concerns; without licensing or regulation, these organizations found it challenging to consider a tie-up arrangement or contract for services. As a result, for these organizations, a tie-up relationship for their employees was not an option.
- Two companies that currently do not have an on-site child care solution have discussed the local option for some type of tie-up arrangement but have not proceeded. While the availability of child care centers has increased in their geographic region, quality and access issues remain a concern.

Companies Providing Full-Service Child Care

For the nine companies that were interviewed in this study (see Chart on page 3), five currently provide employees with access to full-service child care.

Components	C	D	E	H	I
Number of Programs	1	3	1	7	1
Capacity	Approx. 30	Varies	Approx. 25	Approx. 25-30	Approx. 25
Management	3 rd party	Tie-Up	3 rd Party	3 rd Party	3 rd Party
Employee Pays Tuition	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Target	Bangalore	Gurgaon	Mumbai	Multiple Cities	Bangalore
Schedule	8:00-6:00	Days	8:00-8:00	Days	8:00-8:00
Access	Includes community, other businesses	Includes community	Includes community	Employees only	Employees only
Notes	Accessing a center near site within the business park	Set standards to tie-up. 20% discount for employees	Employer start-up funding, reduced tuition for employees	Serves manufacturing population	Very positive employee response, plans to expand the center

The chart above outlines features of child care centers among the five companies interviewed that currently provide on-site or near-site care. Although there are differences between how these organizations provide child care to their employees, taken together, they offer good examples of different forms of employer-sponsored child care investment options.

A breakdown of what was offered:

- Two organizations developed centers that provide services only to employees, while the other three are open to the community and/or other business partners.
- One company provides access in seven locations around India to serve their manufacturing plants. These centers are only open to employees and do not charge a tuition.
- One organization works with three existing child care centers near the workplace in a “tie-up” relationship (see above).

The centers are in various states of “maturity.” Each is relatively small (approximately 30 children), and all are operated by a 3rd party vendor:

- One company has offered a child care center to its employees for more than seven years. It is operated by a management company and has evolved into a program that serves other companies in the business park.
- One company invested funds to support the development of a new center opening near their workplace. The company negotiated with the provider for priority access and reduced-fee tuition for its employees. The center is open to the community as well.
- One organization’s child care center has been operational for more than two years. This on-site center serves only employees and has been very well received. Plans are underway to expand the capacity of the program to serve more employee families.

Creating a Child Care Program

Employers use different approaches to structure child care center investments for their workforces. Such programs can be highly customizable and include a variety of services. These investments are influenced by the type of relationship and level of accountability agreed upon with the child care provider. An on-site program that limits enrollment to serve only employees of the sponsoring organization can provide a fully customizable and controllable model. While child care tie-ups require smaller investments, this approach also offers the least amount of control and accountability. When choosing a child care model, there are a number of decisions and opportunities that should be considered:

- **Target Audience:** Is the center open to employees only? Centers that are closed to the community or other businesses will affect capacity but enhance level of control.
- **Program Specifics:** Negotiating tuition discounts, priority access, quality service levels, and program enhancements are just a few ways companies can leverage a child care investment.
- **Location:** On-site vs. near-site is a significant decision point. If the company has space and sufficient demand, on-site will have the biggest impact. However, near-site can also be a very valuable option, particularly if it means leveraging an existing center or collaborating with other companies to build something centrally located to the funding partners.
- **Financial:** Factors such as start-up costs and whether or not you can offer access to corporate space can both influence the level of corporate investment and the ease of access for employees.
- **Provider Relationship:** Issues such as contract versus letter of agreement, assumptions about liability, responsibility, and quality will all influence the type of partnership, accountability, and level of customization an organization has with a child care vendor.

Gender Diversity & Inclusion Efforts

Another area of focus for this benchmarking study was current approaches to gender diversity and inclusion by employers operating in India. Among companies participating in the study, such initiatives focused mostly on the advancement, mobility, and retention of women, and on creating a work environment where male and female employees can work together successfully. One company states the specific goal of its diversity and inclusion efforts as the desire to have “men and women working together to cultivate opportunities to attract, retain, and develop women...” While companies support talent management of both genders, these participating companies point out that a key focus is maximizing the talent contributions specifically of women. They are considering strategies, including dependent-care support, that will enable women to continue in the workforce during key life stage transitions such as getting married and having children.



“There is a recognition that the company, and senior leadership within, must do more to attract, retain and grow the pipeline for women’s contributions.”

-CEO mandate of participating company

Other efforts to support women’s advancement include strategies aimed at their career growth and development. One company noted, **“There is a clear cutoff for women’s involvement. Once you go up the ladder, they tend to drop off.”** A few examples of what companies are doing on this front include:

- Building “pathways to sponsorship” by connecting potentially high-achieving female employees with senior women in the organization.
- Sponsoring talks by senior women leaders within the organization on how women can be successful in their career at the company.
- Tying local diversity and inclusion efforts to global initiatives. Such efforts, however, also explore these issues with an eye toward the local realities for professional women including cultural mores about family care responsibilities and working women as well as internal organizational priorities.
- Helping women to create their “personal brand.” Encouraging women to think about their careers as a “brand” communicates the need for regular training, strategic networking, skill building, and mentoring from others.

Several companies have stated targets or goals to increase the representation of women. One company cited it as a mandate from the CEO. **“There is a recognition that the company, and senior leadership within, must do more to attract, retain, and grow the pipeline for women’s contributions,”** read one comment.

Organizations reported several strategies for overcoming obstacles to increasing women’s participation in the workforce, such as:

- Working with line managers to create a more inclusive work environment for women (and men).
- Establishing metrics to track, by gender, participation at various levels of the organization, including college hires.
- Holding senior leaders accountable by using a talent-management scorecard to track the progression of women within an individual leader’s division.

Although diversity and inclusion are important efforts, there are times that organizations step back from the priority. One company experiencing a restructuring acknowledges that leadership, while supportive of women’s advancement, is less engaged on these issues and more focused on, **“bringing the business back to profitability.”**

Conclusions

Over the next five years, many more organizations in India will be looking at women's advancement and career development and considering strategies to support positive growth. The evolution of this important area of talent management will continue to be measured and evaluated as a key business strategy. Organizations, even those going through restructuring, will see the importance of supporting both a women's ability to contribute fully in the workforce and her success with family care commitments. For organizations that offer supports, and get them right, there are substantial competitive rewards.

Each company featured in the study illustrated a commitment to supporting the workforce and improving the access to these important family care resources in India. The sharing of information between organizations about programs, practices, and policies in the area of women's advancement and dependent-care services will help facilitate the necessary increase in the number of programs, as well as the enhancement of the quality standards to meet the needs of the employees and the sponsoring organizations. HR professionals have a history of working together to connect best practices and lessons learned to the discipline of human capital management. This study is an illustration of that history — generous contributions by HR professionals in the spirit of supporting the workforce in India and promoting the understanding of work/life provisions for the Indian workforce both today and in the future.

Methodology

Data consists of phone interviews that were conducted between March and April 2013 with nine companies in India.

About Horizons

Workforce Consulting

Horizons Workforce Consulting partners with employers across industries to increase the effectiveness of their people strategies.

About Bright Horizons

For more than 25 years, Bright Horizons has led the way in early childhood education and a robust family of solutions at work including child care, back-up care for children and adults/elders, educational advising, tuition assistance management, and global consulting.

We partner with leading employers around the world and across nearly every industry, including colleges and universities, hospitals, financial services, pharmaceuticals, and government agencies, to help increase productivity and engagement, enhance employee well-being, and improve recruitment and retention.

To learn more, please contact Stephen Kramer, SVP, Strategic Growth and Operations.

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