HOOVER INSTITUTION

Report On Women In The Workforce

Insights From Private Companies In India

FUTURE OF WORK FOR WOMEN INITIATIVE

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FUTURE OF WORK FOR WOMEN

HOOVER INSTITUTION

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Executive Summary

Globally, hundreds of millions of women want to enter the workforce but are not able to. India's female labor force participation remains notably low—hovering between 20% and 30% in many estimates—indicating that fewer women are entering the workforce, more are dropping out, and those who remain are less likely to be promoted or advance into leadership roles (World Bank, 2025). Yet leading companies increasingly view women's workforce integration as both a strategic imperative and a powerful lever for business growth.

This report provides detailed implementation data from 20+ private companies in India, including specific costs, retention metrics, and program results. Unlike most reports that focus on describing workforce gender gaps, this report delivers an overview on concrete, tested solutions across manufacturing, tech, and corporate sectors, with suggested step-by-step implementation guides for companies of all sizes. The analysis breaks down what actually works in the Indian context through a combination of quantitative metrics and qualitative insights, supported by recent data from major employers like IBM, Walmart, and Tech Mahindra who have successfully scaled women's participation in their workforces.

1. Local, remote, and flexible work drive more women to enter

Local hiring dramatically boosts female recruitment success, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns where commuting barriers and cultural constraints loom large. Tech Mahindra's hyperlocal model and Universal Sports Limited's community-based referral system have proven that reducing travel time and providing safe, reliable transport directly increases women's participation. Concurrently, remote and hybrid work—now comprising 12.7% and 28.2% of full-time roles respectively—offers crucial flexibility for women balancing caregiving responsibilities (Forbes Advisor, 2024). By 2025, up to 90 million Indians may be working remotely, a shift that could significantly expand women's labor force participation if companies also invest in infrastructure, managerial support, and reliable connectivity (World Bank, 2023).

2. Childcare and community-centric workplace policies ensure retention

While flexible work options are vital, evidence from Aditya Birla Capital and Dell shows that structured policies—extended maternity leave, on-site childcare, and phase-back programs—can reduce attrition by as much as 60-70%. ITC's 75% retention success through "husband counseling" underscores the value of engaging families to overcome cultural barriers. Similarly, Walmart's 'Respark' initiative and IBM's creche services help women return confidently post-maternity. Across sectors, safe transportation, hostel accommodations, and mid-shift meals (as seen in Tech Mahindra's model) further mitigate high dropout rates, particularly in manufacturing and operational settings.

3. Proactive career support enables women's career progression and leadership

Organizations that actively develop women's career trajectories—via mentorship, leadership training, and robust managerial accountability—consistently see higher promotion rates and a more balanced talent pipeline. Flipkart's Vidyarthini mentorship program in supply chain management, IBM's 50/50 gender balance target, and Wipro's 'Begin Again' reentry initiative showcase the impact of formal advancement pathways. Structured sponsorship, quarterly skill workshops, and clear progression metrics (as practiced by Walmart) address imposter syndrome and ensure women have the confidence and technical depth to pursue mid- and senior-level roles.

Beyond these three core strategies, the report also highlights key challenges and barriers that limit women's workforce participation—ranging from structural issues such as geographical constraints and safety concerns to biases in hiring, retention, and promotion practices. Additionally, the Future of Work for Women Initiative outlines a strategic roadmap for integrating 100 million women into the workforce by 2040, focusing on scalable employment solutions in India. The business case for hiring and retaining female talent is clear—gender diversity leads to higher retention, improved productivity, better cost efficiency, and increased market impact. When effectively combined, these approaches significantly reduce dropout rates, expand the talent pipeline, and boost women's upward mobility. As demonstrated by forward-thinking companies in this report, investing in women's workforce integration yields measurable business benefits—enhanced productivity, improved retention, and stronger leadership—while also contributing to broader economic and social progress in India.

Private companies included in the report:

Partner Organizations/Institutions:

Business case for hiring and retaining more female talent

In the current competitive business environment, integrating women into the workforce represents both a strategic imperative and a significant business opportunity. Leading companies demonstrate that integrating women into the workforce yields tangible business benefits, drives innovation, and fosters sustainable social impact.

Direct business benefits

1. Improved retention and workplace stability

Companies that actively support female employees through policies such as maternity support and flexible work arrangements experience enhanced retention rates (Zhang, 2020). For instance, organizations implementing such policies have reported significant reductions in attrition among skilled talent, leading to greater workforce stability (PwC, 2017). Flexible work options after maternity leave are particularly helpful to parents returning after leave, with 98% of moms wanting to go back to work after maternity leave, but only 13% feeling it is viable on a full-time basis (Maven Clinic, 2024).

Vahan's experience demonstrates that women consistently show higher loyalty and better retention rates, contributing directly to workforce stability. This finding is reinforced by evidence that flexible workers are more likely to be engaged, which can lead to 43% more revenue and a 20% increase in employee performance (Maven, 2022). Aditya Birla Capital's results align with this trend, where maternity support and flexible work policies have significantly reduced attrition rates among skilled talent. Their Maternity Support Program facilitates work-life integration through leaves, flexible options, and travel policies. HerKey's implementation of customized retention strategies in challenging industries has yielded measurable cost reductions through improved workforce stability. This approach is supported by research showing that personalized retention efforts can increase their effectiveness and reduce costs (Gallup, 2024).

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2. Increased productivity and performance

Diverse workplaces that promote gender inclusion see improvements in productivity and employee satisfaction (Zhang, 2020). Studies have shown that companies with more than 30% female executives tend to outperform those with fewer female leaders, highlighting the positive impact of gender diversity on organizational outcomes and workplace morale (McKinsey & Company, 2024). Supporting this, a study of New Zealand firms found that when women make up at least 30% of a corporate board, the impact on financial performance becomes statistically significant, aligning with the "critical mass effect" that drives corporate governance and strategic decision-making improvements (Duppati et al., 2019). Another study also confirmed that contrary to traditional biases, women tend to score slightly higher than men in job performance ratings, indicating a small but significant advantage for female employees (Roth et al., 2010). Studies also find that in labor markets where women face barriers to entry, the women who do enter the workforce tend to be highly talented due to positive selection effects. This means that firms hiring more women in such environments can expect higher average productivity among female hires (Ashraf et al., 2024).

In practice, IBM's 125-year history of workplace inclusion provides compelling evidence that diverse workplaces improve productivity and employee satisfaction. Their data shows that equal opportunities for career advancement directly correlate with improved organizational outcomes and strengthened workplace morale. Tech Mahindra's experience in the caregiving economy also demonstrates how women's participation increases both productivity and family well-being, creating a positive feedback loop for workforce stability. Additionally, firms with greater female board representation in New Zealand exhibited more independent decision-making and less risk-averse behavior, which helped them capitalize on market growth opportunities (Duppati et al., 2019).

3. Better cost management and efficiency

Gender diversity contributes to cost benefits through improved retention and reduced recruitment expenses (Zhang, 2020). This is supported by a study in the Journal of Management, which found that gender-diverse organizations experience lower turnover rates, resulting in significant cost savings (Kossek et al., 2017). Companies with higher gender diversity in management have reported profit increases ranging from 5% to 20%, underscoring the financial

advantages of fostering an inclusive workplace (International Labour Organization, 2019). A comprehensive analysis published in the Academy of Management Journal corroborates these findings, demonstrating that firms with greater gender diversity in top management teams exhibit superior financial performance, particularly in innovation-intensive industries (Dezső & Ross, 2012). Further supporting this, a longitudinal study of New Zealand firms found that companies with at least one woman on the board experienced higher share price performance, sales, earnings per share (EPS), and funds from operations, with the effect becoming more pronounced post-GFC (2010–2016) (Duppati et. al, 2019).

HerKey's career advancement and retention strategies have demonstrably reduced costs in challenging industries. This aligns with research published in the Strategic Management Journal, which shows that gender-diverse teams are associated with improved problem-solving and decision-making, leading to better organizational outcomes and cost efficiencies (Post & Byron, 2015). GetScale's experience in the gig economy shows that women deliver better outcomes and higher stability when provided with appropriate support systems. These improvements in retention and stability translate directly to reduced recruitment and training costs. A longitudinal study in the Journal of Applied Psychology provides evidence that organizations implementing targeted interventions to address gender biases in promotion processes see significant improvements in female representation in leadership roles and overall employee retention (Heilman & Caleo, 2018).

These findings suggest that addressing promotion biases and retention challenges could improve workforce stability and reduce recruitment costs. Moreover, women perform equally or better than men in performance evaluations but face systemic barriers in career progression (Roth et al., 2010). Studies also suggest that firms adhering to equal pay policies across genders could experience a 50% productivity boost on average. This is further supported by research in the American Economic Review, which demonstrates that reducing gender pay gaps not only enhances productivity but also leads to increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment among female employees (Card et al., 2016). However, firms that actively promote and support women in lower-LFPR (Labor Force Participation Rate) countries can achieve even higher productivity gains by attracting top-tier female talent (Ashraf et al., 2024).

4. Increased market impact and innovation in multiple sectors:

Increased women-led business performance: Upaya Social Ventures' portfolio demonstrates that women-led ventures are more likely to hire female employees and foster inclusive workplace cultures. Their founders, while often from privileged backgrounds, create multiplicative effects by addressing gender gaps in employment and leadership. This creates a sustainable cycle of workforce expansion and leadership development. This aligns with recent findings from the 2024 Wells Fargo Impact of Women-Owned Business Report, which shows that women-owned businesses increased at nearly double the rate of those owned by men between 2019 and 2023, with the growth rate accelerating to 4.5 times from 2022 to 2023 (Wells Fargo, 2024).

New market development: Companies that embrace gender diversity are better positioned to understand and serve diverse customer bases, leading to the opening of new markets and customer segments (Zhang, 2020). Women in underrepresented labor markets have higher representation in leadership positions when hired and are more likely to be promoted due to their higher relative ability (Ashraf et al., 2024). This not only fosters a stronger leadership pipeline but also enhances innovation and expands market opportunities. A study by Gallup found that gender-diverse business units have higher average revenue compared to less diverse units, highlighting the market advantages of diversity (University of California, Berkeley – Executive Education, 2025). This is further supported by data showing that women-owned businesses generated approximately $1.9 trillion in earnings and employed 10.9 million people (Wells Fargo, 2024). Pollinate Group's success with women entrepreneurs from marginalized communities shows how women's integration can open new markets. Their model of free training and zero-cost inventory enables sustainable micro-entrepreneurship without migration requirements, demonstrating viable approaches to market expansion in underserved areas. This approach aligns with findings that women entrepreneurs often prioritize sustainability, community well-being, and ethical practices within their business models (Clarify Capital, 2024).

Industry leadership benefits: Organizations leading in gender diversity often enjoy enhanced market positioning and brand value (Zhang, 2020). For example, companies in the top quartile for board-gender diversity are 27% more likely to outperform financially than those in the bottom quartile, demonstrating the competitive edge provided by diverse leadership (McKinsey & Company, 2023). A study found that women tend to be rated higher in managerial positions, reinforcing the case for gender-inclusive leadership development programs. Organizations prioritizing structured mentorship and promotion frameworks for women can maximize the benefits of their high performance in leadership roles (Roth et al., 2010). This is supported by data showing that female-founded businesses outperform those founded by men by 63% (North One, 2023). The introduction of gender diversity reporting regulations by the New Zealand Stock Exchange (NZX) in 2012 led to a significant rise in female board representation, demonstrating how policy interventions can drive inclusivity and improve corporate performance (Duppati et al., 2019). If firms adjust wage policies to attract more women, particularly in underrepresented regions, they can increase their productivity by up to 50% while still maintaining cost-efficiency. In contrast, more rigid wage policies and stringent labor laws limit firms from leveraging female talent fully (Ashraf et al., 2024). These practices can be seen in IBM's historical commitment to diversity since 1899 has strengthened their market position and brand value. Similarly, Tech Mahindra's promotion of non-traditional roles has enhanced their industry leadership position while delivering business benefits. This trend is reflected in the fact that women-led tech companies achieve a 35% higher ROI compared to those run by men (North One, 2023).

5. Increased Social Returns

Engaging women not only benefits businesses but also enhances family well-being and community resilience. Studies have shown that increasing women's participation in the workforce can lead to significant economic gains. For instance, research by the International Monetary Fund suggests that closing gender gaps in labor force participation could increase GDP by an average of 35% in countries with high gender inequality (Ostry, 2018). Programs that support women's participation in the workforce have been shown to improve household economics and contribute to broader social stability, creating positive feedback loops that benefit business operations through an improved company reputation and strengthened community relations.

ITC's programs provide clear evidence that engaging women in entrepreneurial roles enhances both family well-being and community resilience. This aligns with findings from the World Bank, which indicate that women's economic empowerment is crucial for poverty reduction and economic growth. Their research shows that women tend to invest more of their earnings in their families and communities, leading to improved health, education, and overall well-being (World Bank, 2022). Pollinate Group demonstrates closed gender gaps in health, finances, and leadership within rural communities. These outcomes are consistent with broader economic research. A study published in the Journal of Economic Literature found that increasing women's control over household resources leads to greater investments in children's health and education, contributing to long-term community development (Women Empowerment and Economic Development, 2018). Tech Mahindra reports improved household economics through women's participation in the caregiving economy. This creates positive feedback loops that benefit business operations through more social license to operate. Overall, leading to improved company reputation through social impact and improved community relations.

6. Enhanced Leadership Pipeline Development

Collaborations between companies, universities, and the private sector that focus on integrating women into the workforce help develop robust leadership pipelines (Zhang, 2020). Initiatives offering flexible job opportunities and targeted skill development enable women to rejoin the workforce in skilled roles, addressing critical talent shortages and fostering leadership diversity (PwC, 2017). For instance, "Back to Business" Returnships provide 3-6 month, competitively paid programs for women returning to work at mid to senior levels after an extended break, offering temporary transitional support to bridge the gap (Flexa, 2023). While job performance ratings tend to favor women, promotion potential ratings still favor men. This suggests that despite equal or better performance, women may face obstacles in career advancement, highlighting the need for structured promotion pathways to retain high-performing female talent (Roth et al., 2010). Women's leadership development programs (WLDPs) can help address this disparity by providing higher promotion rates, increased sponsorship, and a better understanding of organizational structure and processes (Coffman, 2023). HerKey's collaboration with universities and private sectors shows how women's integration enhances leadership development pipelines. Their flexible job opportunities and targeted skilling programs enable women on career breaks to rejoin the workforce in skilled white-collar roles, addressing critical talent shortages.

Implementation Opportunities

Current pilot programs offer immediate implementation opportunities:
- Partner with Udaiti Foundation's cluster-based approach with Godrej Foundation
- Join IBM's collaboration with FICCI, CII, and NASSCOM
- Participate in US Consulate's academic partnership programs
- Engage with King Center's community influence programs targeting religious and sports leaders

Organizations can begin implementation by:
- Identifying relevant pilot programs aligned with their sector
- Engaging with existing successful initiatives for partnership opportunities
- Starting with proven programs that match their organizational context
- Measuring specific outcomes based on documented success metrics

The data from multiple organizations consistently shows that integrating women into the workforce delivers measurable business benefits while creating broader social impact. Companies can leverage existing successful pilots and partnerships to accelerate their own implementation of women's workforce integration initiatives.

Women in the Workforce Report: Key Takeaways

1. Hiring local women for local jobs significantly improves recruitment success and retention, because geographical location and remote work is crucial for driving women's workforce entry

A recurring insight across industries is that hiring local women for local jobs significantly improves both recruitment success and retention. For many women—especially those from Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns—proximity to work is not just a matter of convenience; it can be the deciding factor in whether they enter or remain in the workforce. Geographical location emerges as a pivotal consideration: women often have less flexibility to relocate or commute long distances due to safety concerns, caregiving responsibilities, and traditional gender norms that dictate their mobility.

Geographical location matters a lot to women

Women's workforce participation is often constrained by cultural expectations and safety concerns. Long commutes or relocation far from family support systems can act as immediate deterrents—particularly for blue-collar and manufacturing roles that require shift work. Companies like Walmart have observed that state-level restrictions, such as limitations on women's night shifts, exacerbate these challenges.

Evidence consistently shows that inadequate infrastructure creates significant barriers across sectors. Physical workplace conditions present significant barriers to women's participation. Evidence also shows that high humidity, lack of air conditioning, and physically demanding tasks create uncomfortable and potentially unsafe environments. The Udaiti Foundation's research highlights critical needs for safe accommodations and workplace facilities, while the King Center at Stanford identifies safe transportation, childcare, and flexible work options as essential infrastructure requirements. Companies achieving the strongest results, such as USI and Modine Thermal Systems, demonstrate the effectiveness of significant infrastructure investments in improving workplace conditions and retention.

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The impact of these restrictions is particularly severe in operational roles, where shift work is often essential. Companies like Walmart note that these structural barriers affect recruitment even at senior levels, especially in technical industries where facility locations may be less accessible. By hiring local candidates, organizations reduce travel time and exposure to unsafe or culturally sensitive situations, thereby increasing both the supply of female candidates and their willingness to stay.

Many women also bear caregiving responsibilities for children or elderly family members, leaving them with fewer options to travel or relocate for work. When employment opportunities are within close proximity, family members— particularly husbands or in-laws—are more likely to approve of, and even support, women's decision to work. This alignment with social norms at the community level can be crucial for improving retention.

Community-based hiring also enables women to form support systems with peers who face similar challenges. This peer support can help overcome cultural taboos and build resilience in navigating workplace expectations. Tech Mahindra's hyperlocal hiring model exemplifies this by recruiting cohorts of women from the same village or neighborhood, thereby creating immediate support networks that reduce feelings of isolation and improve job satisfaction.

Companies that manage to hire local women have higher worker recruitment success

USI has expanded women's employment opportunities in sports equipment manufacturing through a community-based referral system and dedicated transportation services. These measures directly address the most pressing challenges—accessibility and safety—particularly for women from marginalized backgrounds (including widows and differently-abled individuals). By ensuring safe, reliable transport, USI builds trust with employees and their families, enabling women to consistently attend work without fear of harassment or insecurity. As a result, the company has observed higher retention rates and improved community goodwill. Recognizing the importance of location-specific strategies, Tech Mahindra focuses on recruiting women directly from the communities where its facilities operate. The company tackles practical barriers by offering safe transport and childcare support—critical components for women balancing work with caregiving.

Hiring in cohorts from the same region fosters camaraderie and reduces attrition. IBM, for instance, has partnered with educational institutions and recruitment agencies to achieve gender parity across all organizational levels, focusing on expanding recruitment in smaller towns and engineering colleges. This approach is particularly impactful in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns where traditional gender roles and limited infrastructure often pose significant barriers to women's long-term employment.

ITC has pioneered remote work opportunities in agarbatti production, creating employment pathways for women who cannot commute daily or relocate. This model integrates localized retention strategies, ensuring that women can balance household responsibilities with work, which, in turn, builds long-term trust and engagement. By allowing women to generate income from their homes or community centers, ITC removes the need for lengthy commutes and alleviates concerns around workplace safety.

The rising importance of remote work

While local on-site hiring is essential for industries requiring physical presence—such as manufacturing, distribution centers, or shop-floor roles—remote and hybrid work models are increasingly critical in sectors like technology, finance, and customer support. According to recent data, 12.7% of full-time employees in India now work entirely from home, and 28.2% operate in hybrid arrangements (Forbes Advisor, 2024). Projections suggest that 60 to 90 million Indians could be working remotely by 2025, pointing to substantial opportunities for women who need greater flexibility (McKinsey & Company, 2024).

Corporate success stories in remote implementation

The technology sector offers particularly instructive examples of how remote work can address sector-specific retention challenges. Flipkart's experience with high attrition rates among women, driven by work-life balance challenges and relocation issues, has led to innovative solutions through remote and local flexible workspaces. GetScale's implementation of remote work has yielded higher retention rates among women, supported by consistent communication and comprehensive benefits packages, including insurance for gig workers. Similarly, Aditya Birla Capital's "Career Restart with ABC" program has achieved remarkable results, reducing attrition by 60-70% while creating new pathways for women to reenter the workforce through gig roles.

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Companies have found that flexible work policies are crucial for addressing key retention challenges. Renault-Nissan's comprehensive approach combines remote work options with extended maternity leave to support women during critical life transitions. Walmart has developed targeted programs to prevent dropouts after significant life events, implementing mentorships and upskilling initiatives while ensuring fair ratings and pay parity for returning mothers.

However success in remote work implementation requires robust support systems. Aditya Birla Capital's comprehensive approach demonstrates this through policies that include managerial sensitization, travel allowances for nannies, and maintained communication during maternity leave through their "Accelerate Team." These support systems ensure that remote work arrangements effectively address the complex challenges women face in maintaining career momentum.

Suggestions for combining localized hiring and remote work for improving women's recruitment and retention

Local hiring strategies are particularly effective when combined with remote or hybrid options:
- Location-Based staffing + remote-friendly policies: Companies can onboard women from Tier 2 and Tier 3 locations through local facilities or community centers, then offer ongoing roles and upskilling remotely. This dual approach expands employment access without requiring relocation.
- Infrastructure investment: As highlighted by the Udaiti Foundation, safe accommodations, childcare, and reliable internet are vital for women to thrive in both on-site and remote capacities.
- Community engagement and trust-building: Partnerships with local NGOs, self-help groups, or community leaders help organizations build credibility and ensure a sustained pipeline of female candidates.

2. Beyond flexible work, childcare and community-centric models are critical for women's retention

Organizations that successfully retain women in their workforce consistently demonstrate that comprehensive support systems—including childcare, flexible policies, and community-centric approaches—are critical to sustaining women's long-term engagement. While flexible work arrangements are important, evidence shows they are not sufficient on their own. Addressing deeper cultural barriers, ensuring family buy-in, and providing holistic support at every life stage are equally essential to prevent attrition and foster women's career growth.

Cultural barriers create persistent challenges for women's workforce participation

Evidence shows the impact of cultural barriers across all organizational levels. Marriage and family responsibilities emerge as primary constraints, with data from multiple companies indicating high attrition rates due to these factors. Aditya Birla Capital's experience reveals that post-maternity retention presents a significant challenge, while Upaya Social Ventures reports that traditional norms particularly affect sectors like waste management and agriculture. Housing discrimination against single women also adds another layer of complexity, especially in rural areas where digital connectivity limitations further restrict employment options.

Comprehensive work-life balance support systems are essential for long-term engagement

Organizations leading in retention have developed sophisticated maternity support systems. IBM's inclusive policies provide extended maternity leave, creche services for both men and women, and paid childcare support during business travel. Their buddy system helps women on sabbatical reintegrate into the workforce. Similarly, Aditya Birla Capital's comprehensive approach includes managerial sensitization, travel allowances for nannies, and maintained communication during maternity leave through their "Accelerate Team." Recognizing the unique challenges women face, the company has developed comprehensive hiring, training, and retention programs designed to break down systemic barriers and ensure women can thrive in these roles. ABC has introduced a dedicated maternity program, including nanny allowances, on-site childcare facilities, and flexible working arrangements to

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support women returning to work after parental leave. These policies aim to tackle one of the most significant drop-off points in women's career trajectories—maternity and caregiving responsibilities. As a result, attrition rates among women at the mid-management level have decreased by 60-70% since implementing these initiatives, and return-to-work rates—referred to as "Returnity" within the organization—have significantly improved.

This trend can be seen in many other leading organizations. Dell's integrated approach, combining maternity allowances, flexible working hours, and childcare support, has reduced attrition by 60-70%. Walmart's "Respark" program demonstrates similar success through a comprehensive package that includes fair ratings, pay parity, and robust childcare benefits, while actively addressing challenges like imposter syndrome that can impact women's workplace confidence.

Moreover, companies have found success by extending support beyond the workplace to address cultural and family dynamics. ITC's innovative husband counseling program has achieved a remarkable 75% retention rate, demonstrating the effectiveness of engaging family support systems. Renault-Nissan fosters an inclusive environment through a combination of practical support, such as extended maternity leave and flexible scheduling, complemented by engagement activities like Women's Day celebrations that reinforce a supportive culture.

The Udaiti Foundation's research highlights how physical infrastructure plays a crucial role in retention. Their advocacy for safe accommodations, worker dormitories, and on-site facilities in logistics and manufacturing sectors demonstrates the importance of practical workplace support. Tech Mahindra exemplifies this approach through comprehensive support measures including safe transportation, mid-meal snacks, and hostel accommodations, combined with resilience-building programs.

The evidence consistently shows that successful retention strategies must address multiple dimensions of work-life balance. Organizations achieving the highest retention rates implement comprehensive support systems that recognize and respond to women's evolving needs across different life stages, while actively working to transform workplace cultures and infrastructure. These multifaceted approaches demonstrate that effective retention requires sustained investment in both policies and support systems that enable women to maintain their careers while managing personal responsibilities.

Different sectors require tailored approaches to retention: manufacturing needs safety infrastructure, gig opportunities need targeted recruitment and safety measures, while office work needs inclusive recruitment policies

Upaya Social Ventures has achieved strong retention rates in waste management and rural manufacturing through self-help groups and comprehensive training programs. In contrast, the banking sector faces unique challenges related to family relocation, while manufacturing industries require focused attention on workplace safety infrastructure to retain women effectively. Organizations that embed their retention strategies within community structures show promising results. SAHA/BOMA's community-driven model has achieved high retention rates by positioning women as valued rural water operators, offering formal salaries for financial stability and allowing role transfers within families when necessary. Pollinate Group's long-term engagement model, running from three months to three years, focuses on developing community role models, with a target of establishing 15 role models by 2024.

The Udaiti Foundation takes a holistic, research-to-action approach to addressing gender disparities in employment. Through sector-specific pilot programs and data-backed evidence building, Udaiti aims to identify effective strategies for increasing women's representation in industries such as manufacturing, banking, and pharmaceuticals. Udaiti's flagship 30/30 program is designed to close the gender gap in key sectors by targeting a 30% representation of women in roles such as manufacturing, sales, and banking by 2030. Pilots in these industries aim to address unique barriers, such as the lack of safe accommodation and mobility in manufacturing or societal biases against women in sales. These pilot programs are designed with a focus on policy alignment and stakeholder collaboration. For instance, Udaiti works with local governments to include safe housing and infrastructure for women in zoning regulations for industrial corridors. By doing so, they aim to create systemic changes that outlast the scope of individual pilots.

Tailoring workforce initiatives to the demands of specific sectors has also proven critical to advancing women's participation in historically male-dominated industries. In the e-commerce sector, Flipkart's Vidyarthini program targets young women for mentorship and training in supply chain

management, a field traditionally dominated by men. This initiative goes beyond just intentional recruitment strategies, but also creates long-term career development pathways, equipping women with the skills and support needed to thrive in high-demand roles that often do not focus on recruiting more women or creating more of these opportunities. Through creating these programs, women are better able to combat attrition through constructing growth.

Wipro has structured its diversity initiatives around recruitment, retention, and career re-entry, specifically targeting women in STEM and leadership roles. Wipro sources talent through campus recruitment, where women represent 50% of hires, alongside direct sourcing, employee referrals, and AI-driven screening tools. These practices ensure diverse hiring while maintaining a focus on equal opportunities for men and women across technical and non-technical roles.

Manufacturing and shop floor roles need safety and supportive work conditions

Manufacturing success correlates strongly with dedicated transportation services and workplace safety measures. Safety concerns emerge as a primary barrier to expanded hiring of women, particularly in operational and field-based roles. Companies report hesitation in hiring women for positions requiring late hours or potentially unsafe conditions due to reputational risk concerns. This challenge is particularly acute in the gig economy and manufacturing sectors, where work conditions may present additional safety considerations. Evidence from successful companies shows that robust safety systems and protocols are essential for expanding women's participation in these roles.

The manufacturing sector shows a striking gap between ambition and reality in women's workforce participation. Despite industry targets of 30% female representation, most companies report only 2-3% women in shop floor roles, highlighting the magnitude of the challenge. However, companies implementing comprehensive solutions demonstrate remarkable success. Universal Sports Limited (USI) in Jalandhar, Punjab provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of targeted approaches through their community-based recruitment and dedicated transportation services. Their significant infrastructure investment, including ₹70,000 monthly for cooling systems, shows the importance of physical workplace improvements.

Tech Mahindra reinforces these findings through their focus on integrating women into shop floor and manufacturing roles via targeted skilling programs and systemic changes, while data from Tamil Nadu's electronics sector, where women comprise 80% of workers, demonstrates the potential for high female participation when proper support systems are in place.

Gig Economy Opportunities need targeted recruitment and better safety measures

The gig economy presents unique potential for flexible employment, though current data reveals persistent challenges in scaling women's participation. Organizations face significant challenges in building diverse talent pipelines, particularly for technical and specialized roles. Flipkart's experience with supply chain positions demonstrates the difficulty in recruiting women for operationally demanding roles, while HerKey reports that smaller companies often lack motivation for diversity initiatives. The evidence shows that recruitment platforms struggle with both screening processes and incentivizing recruiters to engage female candidates. GetScale and Vahan's data reveals persistent preconceptions about gig economy roles that deter women from applying, while employer hesitation due to safety concerns further limits opportunities.

Companies like GetScale report marginal customer acquisition costs ranging from $150 to $400-$500 for gig workers, varying by recruitment difficulty. Their experience shows that targeted recruitment strategies, such as demographic-specific campaigns, yield better results. Vahan's experience highlights that the sector remains predominantly male-dominated due to safety concerns and physical demands, emphasizing the need for focused solutions. However, success stories from companies like BookMyBai, GetMyHelp, and Pollinate Group demonstrate viable pathways through structured roles in domestic support, clean energy sales, and small business entrepreneurship.

Office and corporate roles need focused recruitment and inclusive policies

Corporate environments show more promising statistics in women's participation, though challenges persist. Dell's achievement of 40% female workforce representation provides evidence for the effectiveness of focused recruitment strategies, particularly in complex roles requiring critical thinking, including cloud services and AI positions.

IBM's experience reinforces the importance of prioritizing STEM recruitment while developing flexible work arrangements. HerKey's insights reveal that while demand for diversity initiatives remains strong among multinational corporations, smaller companies show minimal interest, indicating the need for broader engagement strategies.

3. Women's career progression in the company needs proactive and structured support policies

Comprehensive, structured support systems have proven essential for enabling sustainable progress in women's career advancement across all educational backgrounds. The data from successful organizations reveals that when companies implement robust support structures, they can successfully advance women in both education-intensive and entry-level roles. We list and describe the strategies that can be used to support women's career advancement below.

Professional Development strategies improve Retention

Evidence shows that fixed mindsets and limited career progression opportunities significantly impact women's retention in the workforce. Many women report lacking a "growth mindset" due to workplace biases, leading to hesitancy in pursuing leadership roles. Walmart identifies imposter syndrome and belonging challenges in male-dominated fields as key factors undermining women's confidence and career longevity. Companies like Dell demonstrate success through targeted solutions including upskilling initiatives, internal training programs, and managerial sensitization efforts.

Structured mentorship programs consistently demonstrate measurable positive outcomes for women's career advancement. Flipkart's Vidyarthini program provides strong evidence for this approach, showing particular success in traditionally male-dominated areas like supply chain management. The program's results demonstrate that targeted mentorship creates clear progression paths for women in operational roles. IBM's experience further supports this conclusion - their strategic college partnerships for STEM roles, combined with comprehensive leadership development initiatives, have proven effective in progressing toward their 50/50 gender balance target. HerKey's accelerator programs provide additional evidence that combining career counseling with network-building opportunities delivers tangible advancement results.

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Active management engagement also proves essential for successful career progression initiatives. Aditya Birla Capital's experience with training managers to support women through key life stages demonstrates the effectiveness of structured management involvement. Their implementation of mid-manager lifecycle touchpoints shows particular success in addressing career development challenges. The evidence indicates that without active management participation, even well-designed advancement programs struggle to achieve their goals.

Emphasizing adaptability and providing thorough on-the-job training can create successful career paths

The contemporary workforce presents diverse opportunities that span different educational requirements, with evidence showing success patterns in both scenarios. Technical and professional positions, such as those in STEM fields and white-collar sectors, demonstrate clear benefits from formal education requirements. Companies like IBM and HerKey provide compelling evidence for this approach, successfully maintaining high standards for technical roles while achieving strong diversity outcomes. However, many valuable roles show excellent results without requiring extensive formal education.

Many women face deeply ingrained societal barriers, such as low confidence and self-belief, stemming from generations of exclusion from economic participation. To overcome this, Pollinate provides a visual and audio-based training program, which is language-agnostic and accessible even to those with limited literacy. They also work directly with families, educating them on the importance of women's economic contributions and fostering an environment of support at home.

Wipro's "Begin Again" program supports women returning to the workforce after a career break of six months or more. It provides tailored training, interview preparation, and skill development to ease their transition into technical or leadership roles. By embedding these initiatives into its broader business strategy, Wipro demonstrates how companies can address both recruitment and retention challenges in STEM while promoting leadership opportunities for women.

Supportive workplace cultures show a clear correlation with successful career progression

Professional community development proves crucial for sustained career advancement. Walmart's initiatives provide compelling evidence for this connection - their approach of ensuring female representation on hiring panels and maintaining equal representation slates has demonstrated measurable impact. Their collaboration with Google's "I Am Remarkable" program shows additional benefits from confidence-building and community development. Flipkart's experience reinforces these findings, showing positive results from combining practical support like childcare facilities with broader inclusivity programs.

HerKey's experience with technology-enabled networking through WhatsApp groups demonstrates the effectiveness of modern community-building approaches. Upaya Social Ventures provides complementary evidence through their success with inclusive networks that make professional events more accessible for women founders. IBM's collaboration with external forums like FICCI, CII, and NASSCOM further supports the importance of broad professional networks, showing positive results from industry-wide engagement and knowledge sharing.

Sustained career progression requires comprehensive, long-term support systems. The King Center's research provides robust evidence for this conclusion, showing significantly improved outcomes from programs that combine childcare support, safe commuting options, and continuous upskilling opportunities. Organizations like SAHA/BOMA reinforce these findings through their success with holistic support systems that include financial and collective benefits. These examples consistently demonstrate that creating sustainable career pathways requires addressing both professional and personal support needs.

Moreover, IBM has a zero-tolerance policy for non-inclusive behavior, aiming to create a workplace where employees can bring their 'whole selves' to work. To retain talent, IBM focuses on creating an inclusive culture where employees are not judged for who they are. They offer mentorship and coaching to ensure diversity at all levels and work through programs like 'Aspire for Her' for board membership training. As a result, IBM has mostly been successful in the face of attrition or hiring challenges, as the company' policies have resulted in a balanced recruitment at bottom and mid-levels, and retention is not a significant issue.

Walmart offers a wide range of programs, including fostering connection and community. Through working with allies in organizations, Walmart aims to battle uniquely female challenges like imposter syndrome and maternity with policies and benefits that make the workplace more inclusive. With these efforts in growing talent internally, Walmart ensures that women are not only recruited into the workforce, but also prepared for advancement into leadership and specialized roles. As currently Walmart's goals include increasing the percentage of women across all levels.

Different sectors require customized training programs for career development

The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) system highlights specific challenges in connecting trained talent with employment opportunities. Evidence shows a significant gap in job matching platforms that effectively connect ITI graduates with relevant employers. Beyond technical skills, employers emphasize the need for additional professional training in soft skills and workplace readiness. Upaya Social Ventures' experience demonstrates that women face particular challenges in accessing ITI opportunities due to travel restrictions, limited capital access, and inadequate networking opportunities.

Renault-Nissan's comprehensive skill-building initiatives demonstrate this effectively - their 4-wheeler driving training and month-long soft skills programs show measurable success in preparing women for specific workplace challenges. Tech Mahindra's Project Kaabil provides additional support for this approach, showing positive outcomes through targeted training programs that address sector-specific needs. The evidence consistently indicates that industry-specific training, when properly structured, creates more effective career development pathways.

Key Challenges and Barriers to Women's Workforce Integration

Companies face complex, interconnected challenges in integrating women into the workforce, with evidence showing that barriers exist at multiple levels - from structural and systemic issues to specific operational concerns. Data from leading organizations reveals that these challenges significantly impact both recruitment and retention efforts, requiring comprehensive solutions that address both immediate and underlying issues.

Company Challenge	Actionable Solutions
Structural and Geographic Barriers	• Local Hiring and Community-Based Models • Measurement and Tracking Systems
Cultural and Societal Constraints	• Family and Spousal Engagement • Robust Maternity and Caregiving Policies • Community Integration • Retention and Career Development Systems • Flexible Work Policy Framework • Maternity and Life Stage Support
Workplace Environment and Infrastructure	• Facility Upgrades and Safe Working Conditions • Resource Sharing and Partnerships • Manager Enablement and Accountability
Talent Pipeline and Recruitment Challenges	• Intentional Outreach and Recruitment Partnerships • Incentive Structures • Recruitment and Hiring Processes
Safety and Risk Management	• Robust Safety Protocols • Policy Assurance
Industry-Specific Training and Education	• Job Matching Platforms and Localized Skill-Building • Soft Skills and Entrepreneurial Training • Travel and Capital Support • Training and Development Implementation

Company Challenge: **Structural and Geographic Barriers**

Location poses a fundamental challenge for women's workforce participation in manufacturing, as work locations/plants often lie far from urban centers and create commuting or relocation hurdles. Restrictions on women's night shift work in some states, such as Maharashtra, exacerbate these difficulties, severely impacting operational roles and senior-level recruitment.

Actionable Solutions for Companies:

- **Local Hiring and Community-Based Models**
  - Focus on hiring women from **nearby communities** to reduce commute time and logistical barriers (e.g., Tech Mahindra's hyperlocal approach).
  - Offer **safe, dedicated transportation (**e.g., Universal Sports Limited's community-based transport services).
  - **Measurement and Tracking Systems**
    - Based on successful tracking systems at IBM and Walmart:
    - **Monthly dashboards** tracking **women's representation**
    - Quarterly **promotion rates** and **salary equity monitoring**
    - **Retention rate** tracking post major life events
    - Development program participation tracking
    - Quarterly employee **experience surveys**

Company Challenge: **Cultural and Societal Constraints**

Cultural factors, including marriage and family responsibilities, lead to high attrition rates, with post-maternity retention presenting a major challenge, as seen by Aditya Birla Capital. Traditional norms, housing discrimination against single women, and limited digital connectivity in rural areas further constrain women's employment opportunities in sectors like waste management and agriculture.

Actionable Solutions for Companies:

- **Family and Spousal Engagement:** Implement programs like ITC's "husband counseling" to encourage family buy-in and support for women's careers.
- **Robust Maternity and Caregiving Policies:** Provide extended leave, childcare options, and managerial sensitization (e.g., Aditya Birla Capital's "Accelerate Team").

- **Community Integration:** Partner with local NGOs/self-help groups to address cultural barriers (e.g., Upaya Social Ventures' community-driven models).
- **Retention and Career Development Systems**
  - IBM and Walmart's retention programs demonstrate success through:
    - **Formal sponsorship programs** pairing high-potential women with senior leaders, as practiced at IBM
    - Structured career paths with **defined progression metrics**, following Walmart's advancement framework
    - **Quarterly skill development workshops**, based on Dell's technical training model
    - **Dedicated training budgets** for women in technical roles, as implemented by IBM
    - **Return-to-work programs** with paid refresher training, following Flipkart's Vidyarthini program model
- **Flexible Work Policy Framework**
  - Dell and Aditya Birla Capital's successful flexible work implementations include:
    - **Hybrid work options** allowing 2-3 days of remote work per week, as practiced by Dell for technical roles
    - **Shift-sharing programs** for operational roles, based on Flipkart's warehouse operations model
    - Core working hours with **flexible start/end times**, following IBM's workplace flexibility program
    - **Job-sharing programs**, as implemented by Aditya Birla Capital for roles requiring constant presence
    - **Documented processes for transitioning** between work arrangements, based on Dell's flexibility framework
- **Maternity and Life Stage Support**
  - Dell and Aditya Birla Capital have reduced attrition by 60-70% through:
  - **Extended maternity leave** beyond statutory requirements
  - **Phase-back programs** with 50% work schedules post-return
  - **Menstrual leave policies** without medical documentation
  - **Emergency childcare support systems**
  - **Eldercare** support programs

Company Challenge: **Workplace Environment and Infrastructure**

Physical workplace conditions, such as high humidity and strenuous tasks, can deter women's participation by creating uncomfortable and potentially unsafe environments. While larger companies like Dell mitigate these challenges through comprehensive support systems, smaller MSMEs often lack the resources to implement similar policies.

Actionable Solutions for Companies:

- **Facility Upgrades and Safe Working Conditions**
    - Invest in **ergonomic solutions** (e.g., Modine Thermal Systems' cooling systems).
    - Provide **on-site amenities** (sanitary facilities, childcare) to reduce dropouts.
    - USI and Modine Thermal Systems have demonstrated success through specific physical and policy changes:
        - Install **CCTV monitoring system**s in all operational areas, following USI's manufacturing facility model
        - Contract with **dedicated transportation** vendors for door-to-door pickup and drop services, as implemented by Tech Mahindra for night shift workers
        - Establish **on-site childcare facilities** or partner with nearby centers, following Dell's model of providing subsidized childcare services
        - Install **industrial cooling systems** in manufacturing facilities, following USI's ₹70,000 monthly investment in temperature control
        - Create **dedicated rest areas and lactation rooms**, as implemented in IBM's office facilities
- **Resource Sharing and Partnerships**
    - Smaller companies (MSMEs) can **partner or pool resources** (e.g., shared childcare facilities, group insurance) with larger firms or government programs to offset costs.
    - **Manager Enablement and Accountability**
        - Walmart and Aditya Birla Capital's management practices include:
        - **Diversity metrics in manager evaluations**, as practiced by Walmart
        - Quarterly **manager training on inclusive leadership**, following IBM's model
        - Clear **escalation paths** for concerns, based on Dell's reporting framework
        - **Monthly skip-level meetings**, as implemented at Aditya Birla Capital
        - **Recognition programs** for managers developing women talent, following IBM's approach

Company Challenge: **Talent Pipeline and Recruitment Challenges**

Organizations struggle to build diverse talent pipelines, particularly in technical and specialized roles, as evidenced by Flipkart's difficulties recruiting women for operational supply chain positions. Persistent preconceptions about gig economy roles and limited recruitment incentives hamper female participation, while some smaller companies lack motivation for diversity initiatives, as reported by HerKey.

Actionable Solutions for Companies:

- **Intentional Outreach and Recruitment Partnerships**
  - Work with **specialized vendors or platforms (**e.g., HerKey, Vahan) that focus on women candidates.
  - Offer **structured career pathways and training** to attract more women to operations (e.g., Flipkart's Vidyarthini program).
- **Incentive Structures:** Provide **recruiting incentives** for hiring managers; build referral systems to encourage hiring women in gig/technical roles.
- **Recruitment and Hiring Processes**
  - HerKey and GetScale's successful recruitment modifications include:
    - 50% women candidates in interview shortlists, as practiced by Walmart
    - **Blind resume screening processes**, implemented by IBM to reduce bias
    - ITI partnerships for direct hiring pipelines, following Tech Mahindra's model
    - **Referral bonus programs** specifically for women candidates, as implemented by GetScale
    - **Partnerships** with specialized recruitment firms, following HerKey's approach

Company Challenge: **Safety and Risk Management**

Safety concerns limit women's hiring in operational and field roles, with employers wary of late-hour work and potential reputational risks. Companies that establish robust safety protocols, particularly in the gig economy and manufacturing sectors, report greater success in expanding women's participation in these positions.

Actionable Solutions for Companies:

- **Robust Safety Protocols**
  - Ensure **secure transportation**, female security personnel, and monitored routes (e.g., Walmart's distribution center measures).
  - Use **technology** (GPS tracking, mobile apps) to enhance safety for gig or field-based roles.
- **Policy Assurance:** Provide **clear legal and HR frameworks** that outline **sexual harassment policies, escalation paths, and guaranteed protections** for women working late hours.

Company Challenge: **Industry-Specific Training and Education**

The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) system struggles to connect trained graduates with relevant employers, reflecting a gap in effective job matching platforms. Women face additional barriers, including travel restrictions, limited capital, and inadequate networking opportunities, underscoring the need for both technical and soft skills training, as noted by Upaya Social Ventures.

Actionable Solutions for Companies:

- **Job Matching Platforms and Localized Skill-Building:** Develop **targeted platforms or tie-ups with ITIs** to match graduates' technical skills to industry needs (e.g., bridging programs for manufacturing roles).
- **Soft Skills and Entrepreneurial Training:** Combine technical education with leadership, financial literacy, and networking support (e.g., Upaya Social Ventures' focus on both vocational and business skills).
- **Travel and Capital Support:** Offer **stipends or subsidized travel** for rural women; microfinance options to facilitate additional training or self-employment.
- **Training and Development Implementation**
  - Tech Mahindra and IBM's successful training programs include:
    - **Technical training modules** for manufacturing roles, based on Tech Mahindra's ITI program
    - **Leadership development programs**, following IBM's advancement framework
    - **Online learning platform subscriptions**, as implemented by Dell
    - **Mentorship circles**, following Walmart's peer support model
    - **Rotation programs**, based on IBM's exposure initiative

Future of Work for Women Initiative

Overview

The Future of Work for Women Initiative is a global collaborative effort aimed at integrating 100 million women into the workforce by 2040, specifically in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This initiative seeks to address the significant gender gap in labor force participation by leveraging cross-sector expertise, including academia, private enterprises, civil society, philanthropic funders, and government agencies.

Given that India represents more than half of the out-of-workforce women in LMICs, the first phase of the initiative focuses on designing and implementing scalable employment solutions in India.

Key Strategies

To facilitate workforce entry and sustained employment for women, the initiative adopts a multi-pronged approach:
- **Remote jobs (35M women)** – Expanding work-from-home and female-friendly local office job opportunities to ensure workforce inclusion and retention.
- **Female entrepreneurship through SMEs (10M women)** – Enhancing access to financial resources and support structures to encourage women-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- **Bridgital workforce (3.4M women)** – Developing digitally enabled community-based employment models that bridge service gaps in healthcare, education, and skilled trades.
- **Hyper-localized job matching (1.9M women)** – Creating digital platforms to connect women with local employment opportunities that align with their personal and family constraints.

A foundational aspect of these strategies is reducing household burdens and shifting gender norms to enable more women to engage in paid work sustainably.

Cross-Sector Collaboration for Impact

The success of this initiative relies on coordinated efforts among key stakeholders:

- **Philanthropic funders** – Providing seed capital to pilot, implement, and scale effective employment solutions.
- **Private sector** – Encouraging businesses to adopt flexible work arrangements, establish local office spaces, and shift workplace policies to support female workforce participation.
- **Civil society organizations** – Identifying and preparing job seekers through training, mentorship, and advocacy.
- **Social entrepreneurs** – Facilitating business growth and job creation through local entrepreneurial networks.
- **Impact investors** – Funding women-led enterprises and workforce development initiatives.
- **Academia** – Conducting research to assess the efficacy of different workforce integration models and the influence of social norms on labor participation.
- **Government agencies** – Providing policy support, employment data, and easing regulatory barriers for female employment.

Key Programs and Initiatives

- **Cross-Sector convenings and policy dialogues:** Regular discussions between industry leaders, policymakers, funders, and researchers to address employment barriers and design actionable interventions.
- **Future of Work for Women Summit:** Planned in collaboration with the King Center at Stanford University, this summit will serve as a platform to share insights, announce commitments, and launch cross-sector partnerships.
- **White papers and research reports:** Leveraging evidence from randomized control trials (RCTs) and corporate case studies to formulate policy recommendations.
- **Localized employment solutions and pilots:** Rolling out targeted employment programs in collaboration with local governments and community organizations to test and refine scalable workforce models.

Expected impact

By implementing these strategies, the initiative aims to:
- Create over 50 million remote and flexible job opportunities for women.
- Support 10 million women-led SMEs through financing and operational assistance.
- Establish a Bridgital Workforce to address service gaps while generating employment.
- Connect 1.9 million women to local jobs through data-driven job-matching platforms.
- Influence policy to facilitate greater workforce inclusion by reducing societal barriers.

Conclusion

The Future of Work for Women Initiative is a transformative effort that seeks to reshape labor markets to be more inclusive of women, particularly in LMICs. Through strategic partnerships and data-driven interventions, this initiative aims to generate large-scale economic and social impact, ensuring that millions of women have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the global workforce.

Opportunities for Piloting

Manufacturing and Operations

Manufacturing sectors present significant opportunities for innovative pilot programs. Modine demonstrates this through their successful educational institution partnerships, exposing women to factory job opportunities. ITC HR is actively seeking partners for hiring and retaining pilots, particularly in backend teams supporting MSMEs. Tech Mahindra's collaboration with Udaiti specifically targets skilling women for manufacturing sectors, while their integration with GenAI tools through Kaam.com shows promise for effective job matching in operational roles.

Technology and Remote Work

Technology companies are pioneering several promising initiatives:
- IBM is piloting internal AI tools like LLAMA 3 for coaching services, reducing dependency on human coaches
- Dell is testing flexible work models focusing on remote and hybrid arrangements
- Flipkart is launching tech-specific remote jobs with database access for operational needs
- Walmart is expanding their technical talent pool through internal upskilling programs

These initiatives are supported by Dell's data showing improved retention and productivity through flexible arrangements, while IBM's experience since 1899 demonstrates that inclusive technology workplaces improve employee satisfaction and retention.

Gig Economy and Digital Opportunities

The gig economy presents unique scaling opportunities:
- GetScale is automating recruitment campaigns while maintaining personalization for female applicants
- Vahan is conducting A/B testing on factors influencing women's participation in delivery roles
- Partnerships with platforms like Swiggy and Zomato are expanding delivery roles for women
- GetScale's data shows that women in gig work demonstrate higher retention rates when safety and accessibility concerns are addressed, while digital gig work offers particularly strong opportunities in low- and middle-income countries due to lower entry barriers.

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Entrepreneurship and Social Impact

Women-led ventures show promising results in creating multiplicative employment effects:

- Upaya Social Ventures reports that women-led ventures are more likely to hire female employees
- Pollinate Group demonstrates success with zero-cost inventory models enabling sustainable micro-entrepreneurship
- Udaiti Foundation is piloting projects supporting women-led businesses with working capital

Upaya's experience shows that founders from privileged backgrounds often create significant social impact by addressing gender gaps in employment and leadership.

We invite you to contribute to the Future of Work for Women Initiative with your ideas, suggestions, and collaborations.

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