



## Press Release

# Indian women paving way for Superior Leadership Roles, finds KPMG WILL Forum Survey

**New Delhi, November 16, 2009:** Organizations are increasingly recognizing that women do bring substantive diversity to company boards in terms of their composition, skill sets and experiences. Women are also more risk-averse and focus on the long-term interests than do their male counterparts. With leadership today being more results-oriented than process-driven, organizations will see better results if the intrinsically diverse leadership qualities of their women executives are further nurtured. These findings were part of a survey conducted by “**Forum for Women in Leadership**” (WILL Forum) in partnership with **KPMG**, on ‘**Creating Women Business Leaders: Differentiating Styles of Women Executives**’.

While much research has been conducted on gender stereotypes, the survey specifically intends to bring to light the personality and motivational factors that serve as the core to underlying gender differences. Over a span of the last decade, leadership styles in corporate India have been revolutionized in terms of an increased level of forthrightness and a sustained emphasis on inclusive growth.

### **Key Findings- Macro Level**

The survey findings state that decision making and access to important data in any organization is at the disposal of both men and women leaders in accordance with their roles in the organization. 43 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the view that men and women actually have equal opportunities to grow in their careers and/or rise to positions of top leadership in the corporate sector. A meager 15 percent of respondents expressed concerns with regard to prevailing biases on the basis of gender, age, marital status and other related gender stereotypes either at the managerial level or across the organization.

**Poonam Barua, Founder Convener of the Forum for Women in Leadership** said, “The survey and its findings suggest that corporate India seems to be working on the traditional definition of hierarchical, conservative form of leadership, while Indian women professionals are definitely on the rise and are paving the way for re-defining leadership for future generations.” She further added, “Many aspiring contenders are especially reaping the benefits of inclusion programs with specific women-centric initiatives that many forward-looking organizations have launched. However, the challenging lifecycle stages that women invariably go through do make their journey in the professional world both unique and challenging.”

### **Management Capabilities**

A majority of the executives surveyed agreed that women executives were rather adept at managing teams and client relationships. The findings also indicate a higher degree of persuasiveness among women executives in their willingness to take risks. These characteristics augur well in accelerating the

pace of development of corporate strategies and provide organizations with a shield against unforeseen events.

In addition, women have time and again proved to be effective crisis management leaders. Women are more risk-averse and also focus on long-term interests than do their male counterparts. Furthermore, women are certainly more conservative over money matters.

**Sangeeta Singh, Executive Director Human Resource, KPMG in India** said, "Our research evidence reveals that women leaders are self-critical of their own strengths and weaknesses and tend to rebound gracefully from setbacks. They tend to be intuitive crisis managers enabling fair and sound judgment. Further, they drive a democratic and inclusive approach by building an ecosystem and nurturing talent."

### **Challenges**

The survey shows that a whopping 87 percent of respondents agree that striking a judicious balance between corporate life and family life is a predominant challenge that women management contenders are confronted with. Also another 82 percent stated that the existence of gender stereotypes was another barrier that women executives were to break through to reveal their true leadership potential.

In addition, about 91 percent of respondents felt that mentoring and training would play a prolific role in developing and fine-tuning leadership skills, while 63 percent contended that effective leadership did not depend on the number of years of work experience that a leader had.

The survey roped in 104 men and women who were under the ambit of 'top management' in both public and private sector enterprises across different disciplines and sectors ranging from domains like IT/ITeS, hospitality, financial services and advertising to unconventional fields of pharmaceuticals, oil and gas and manufacturing among others. The proportion of women respondents was higher (at 66.3 percent) than that of the men.

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### **About KPMG**

KPMG is the global network of professional services firms of KPMG International. KPMG member firms provide audit, tax and advisory services through industry focused, talented professionals, who deliver value for the benefit of their clients and communities.

KPMG in India has offices in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Pune and services over 5,000 international and national clients. The firms in India have access to more than 3500 Indian and expatriate professionals.

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### **About Will Forum**

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The "Forum for Women in Leadership " WILL Forum is a unique and independent forum that brings together senior women executives from across corporate India and multinational companies globally, for collective thinking and an open dialogue on their aspirations, opportunities, nurturing mind-sets, mentoring, and harnessing the rewards of experience-sharing for improving the workplace.

The WILL Forum was launched in November 2007 with a vision and mandate for re-defining corporate leadership for the new marketplace, and is deeply committed to leveraging the vast talent pool of women, sharing best practices for women in the workplace, and mentoring women for leadership positions.

Over 1000 senior women from across leading Indian and global companies have participated in the WILL Forum meetings and open roundtables, with research surveys and reports being published on "Sharing Best Practices for Women" , "Differentiating Styles of Women in Leadership", and "Re-defining Best

Employers for Sustainability and Diversity." The WILL Forum is also preparing a "Women Independent Director's Roster" and has a partnership with The Wharton School for advanced management training of women leaders.

KPMG is one of the Founding Members of the WILL Forum along with Infosys Technologies and Tata Consultancy Services. Members of the WILL Forum include Avantha Group, Bharti Airtel, Mahindra Group, ONGC, Dr. Reddys Labs, ICICI Bank, JSW Steel, Tata Tea, IBM, Citigroup, GE India, Deloitte, Pfizer India, Nokia, Shell India, Monsanto, and others.

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**For further information contact:**

Subir Moitra  
Senior Manager- Marketing & Communications  
KPMG  
Mobile : +91 98111 99613  
e-Mail :smoitra@kpmg.com