

Ignite

the fire within

The power to lead, to fight against all odds, and to make an impact comes easily to women, says **Ruzan Khambatta**



“A woman is better equipped to lead because she is intuitive, attentive, inclusive, has better listening skills and an interactive-collaborative leadership style.”

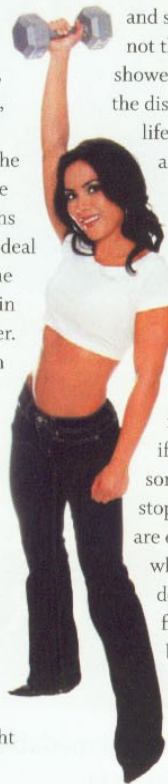
There is no doubt that a woman is a powerhouse of talent and ability. She can empower people around her and show her mettle when situations and circumstances present the opportunity. She knows she has the power to do her will and knows how to best to use it. That is, in the true sense of the term, woman power.

Being a woman calls for the ability to successfully balance the many roles and transitions we face on regular basis and deal with the challenges that come our way as we strive to remain true to our essential character.

There have been umpteen examples of the sort of courage and power that women are made of. Examples from history and even mythology, in one way or another, have given me power to be the woman I am today. Women like Draupadi, who remind me that we have the ability to endure trying, terrifying moments, when we are taking a stand for what is right

or what we deserve; Savitri, who demonstrated that emotional upheavals and the worst catastrophes can be endured and that we can learn to negotiate the ebbs and flows of changes; Rani Jhansibai who was remarkably courageous, determined and self-confident; and last but not the least, Mother Teresa, who showed us the path that leads to the discovery of the meaning of our life—they've inspired me to a very large extent.

Even today, it's common to see people holding on to age-old prejudices and limiting women to traditional fields like teaching, painting or fashion-designing. It's a general belief that these fields are less taxing and have no entry barrier. But then, if a woman sets her mind on something, there's little that can stop her from achieving it. There are endless examples of women who have gone ahead and done what was least expected from them. All she needs to be armed with is a belief in herself, her potential, her ability and her power, and she can conquer the world.



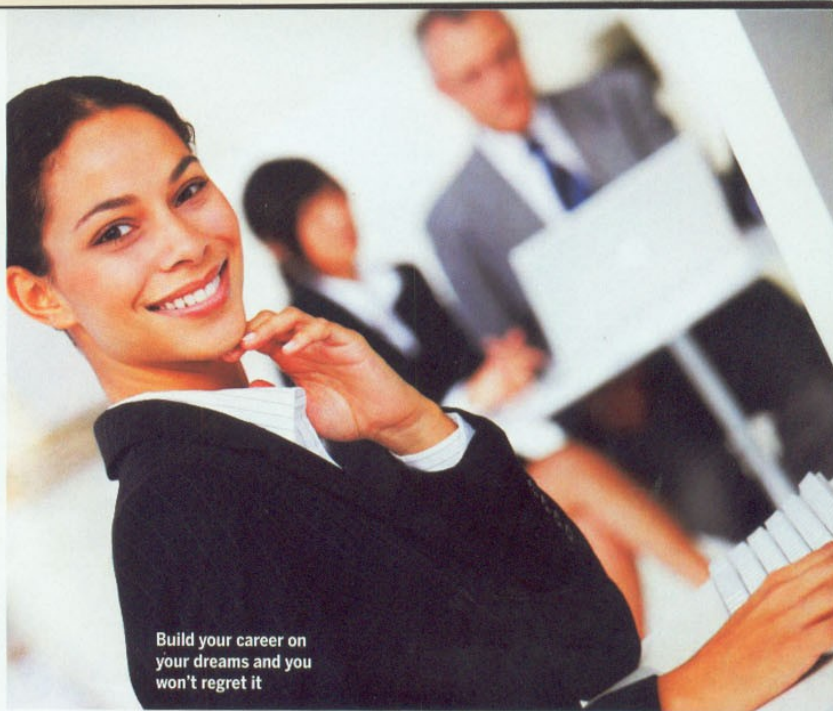
I still recollect the challenges I faced when I started out in my career in information technology. People hadn't seen women in this field before. Though it irritated me initially, I decided to fight ill-based prejudices by making sure that I was well-updated about technology know-how and could deliver results that were as good, or better than, my male counterparts. Yes, it required me to walk that extra mile to prove my potential, but it was worth it.

Age and the fact that I was an entrepreneur was another factor that didn't seem to help. Conventionally, a CEO of a company was supposed to be balding, overweight and over 40, while I was at the helm of things when I was just 23, and a woman to boot. With existing prejudices and a not-to-be-taken-seriously attitude from men, I had to fight for my very existence, with nothing more than self-belief on my side.

I took it up as a challenge to prove that a young woman could do wonders in information technology and in the Gen-Next IT revolution. It required unconventional ways of doing business, which I believed women possessed.

In fact, in the present scenario, a woman is much better equipped to lead because she has been blessed with some natural gifts—she is intuitive, comprehensive, attentive, inclusive, has a detailed communication style with better listening skills, an interactive-collaborative leadership style, is empathetic (which facilitates trust-building) and is people-oriented.

Like any challenge in life, it's not what actually happens that will determine the outcome, but it's what you decide to do about it. It is important to invite challenges in your life. Embrace them, as they make you stronger, which further builds the confidence to go out there and face the unknown. Here again,



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I can quote an incident from my life. Faced with certain technological challenges in my firm, we decided to go ahead and innovate, and come up with solutions that were path-breaking. The whole process of successfully innovating and leading a team of blue- and white-collared employees gave me a sense of power and success that was unmatched by anything else.

I always emphasise that women are very good at multi-tasking, but it is the belief in our inner strength and the "We can do it" attitude that gives us that added boost to achieve thumping success.

Being a woman, boss, colleague and a subordinate has helped me gain a 360-degree view of how things work in the corporate world at all levels. I have seen women who have had to try harder just to prove that they are equal, if not better than, their male colleagues.

Here are some simple rules, which have helped immensely in shaping the person I am today:

1. **Focus on being the best:** Never compare yourself with your colleagues, but compare yourself

with the best, and then compete with yourself. Don't ever give up.

2. **Value-add:** Deliver more than what is expected from you. That will help you stand out from the crowd.
3. **Voice your opinion/dissatisfaction:** Take charge and don't be afraid to call people out on unfair practices or inequality when you see it. However, make sure you voice that to people who are in charge and see to it that you explain it to them logically and not emotionally.
4. **Make time for yourself:** Never ever neglect yourself. Relax, enjoy life and be positive.

Last but not the least, it is highly essential that women should be well-educated. As a child, I was taught—knowledge is power, and it is with that that you can achieve your goals and dreams. It helps you attain a dignified and satisfying way of life through confidence and competence, with self-respect and self-reliance. And therein lies the true power of being a woman. •

The writer is an IT entrepreneur, businesswoman and columnist

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