

## **EMPLOYEE RETENTION MANAGEMENT: STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN BPO SECTORS IN NORTH INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT :** Human capital can make or break the Business and organization. Retention is even more important than hiring because hiring process takes time and money more than retention. Employees are the most worthy & valuable assets of organization especially female employees. Mostly Female employees quit their jobs rapidly because of Cultural and environmental problems in BPO sector. The significance to organizations calls for not only the need to attract the best female talents but also the necessity to retain them for a long term. This paper focuses on reviewing the findings of previous studies conducted by various researchers in female employee retention strategies and with the aim to identify determinants factors of female employee retention. Indian Constitution also supports retaining female employees through its many laws like social security laws and laws related to equality and empowerment of women. This research closely looked at the following wide factors: female development opportunities, compensation, work-life balance, management/leadership, work environment & culture, social support, training and development, honesty with females' staff. This study helps to understand the reasons behind why does BPOs Female professionals switch their jobs, to know why retention is needed & to understand the various strategies adopted by BPO sector for retaining their employees. This present research to study the Retaining female Employees in BPO sector with Special Reference to North India.

**Keywords:** (Female employee retention, retention strategies, BPO sector, Indian Constitution.)

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## **1 Introduction:**

BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) is a subset of outsourcing that involves the contracting of the operations and responsibilities of a specific business process to a third-party service provider. BPO is increasingly becoming the strategic choice of companies looking to achieve cost reductions while improving their service quality, increasing shareholder Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is the delegation of non-core activities i.e. IT intensive business to an outsider. BPO is one of the fastest growing segments of ITES industry(Pandit, 2014). Human resource is the crucial resource and assets on which BPOs depends. Employee retention refers to the ability of an organization to retain employees' especially female employees. Female Staff Resources are the life blood of any organization. In BPOs and ITES companies attrition rate is very high. It is very important to control this attrition rate. Andrew Carnegie, the famous industrialist of 19th century commented, "Take away my factories, my plants; take away my railroads, my ships, my transportation, take away my money; strip me of all of these but leave me my key employees, and in two or three years, I will have them all again"(Som, 2015), Even in today's evolution of technology, these words are very true. Retaining key employee is a vital source of competitive advantage for any organization. High percentage of retention process will definitely describe that FEMALE employees will remain in the organization for the maximum period of time. Loss of key employees means loss of one pillar of the organization (Snapdeal, 2017). This paper will formulate appropriate retention strategies that can be implemented to reduce turnover rates and enhance retention and engagement of employees.

Human Capital is an important asset to any organization growth and development on which the BPOs depends. It is essential to defend this vital resource as talented and motivated employees play a decisive role in overall growth and in the success of the organization, but attrition is the biggest problem faced by BPOs in modern era(Pandit, 2014). Attrition rate in BPO sector is more than the attrition rate in any other sector. Many retention schemes are applied in BPOs for retaining female employees. A single technique like training alone is not sufficient for employee retention, because some organizations only focused in training. They thought Training is vital and all in one strategy to retain employees whether male or female but now in this globalized era it's not true. The best results for employee retention can be achieved by applying different tools strategically (D.chordiya, 2013)because "Same size does not fit to everyone".

The most exacting and delicate situation is to withhold the best talent in the organization(Mohan, 2015). There are many competitor companies like Snapdeal, Flipkart, Paytm, Amazon, Myntra which consists more female employees in their BPOs work and attrition rate is very high in these companies. Snapdeal Company confirmed laid off close to 600 employees on 22 Feb 2017 with three months' severance pay.(Team, 2017) Many reputed employers in the industry have undergone this crunch of talent retention. The sector is contributing a lot to Indian economy and also creating employment opportunity especially to the youth and hence the perception of youth towards the sector is found to be positive (Mohan, 2015).Retention is even more important than hiring because hiring takes time and money more than retention. If a female employee is not satisfied by the job she's doing, she may switch over to some other or the competitor of the ex-company or any more suitable jobs(Mohan, 2015). In today's environment it becomes very important for employers to retain their present employees.

### **Objectives of Study:**

- To know the reason behind leaving female employees in BPO sectors in Northern side of India and to aware the strategies and techniques to retain female employees in BPO.
- To suggest the strategies which be useful to retain more female employees?

### **Research Methodology:**

This study is based on Secondary Data as well primary data, literatures available from various books, journals and websites. In Order to gain a deeper understanding about the phenomenon of female employee retention and attrition I visited in many companies and interviewed the employees as well employers of the organization and my personal observation also play a important role in this writing as a HR executive and Customer handling specialist in a BPO of Snapdeal.com, an e-commerce business.

### **2. Women Employees in BPO Sectors:**

The Indian women today have ventured beyond the traditional roles of wife and mother and havesought employment and career outside their homes, and are actively participating in the economic and social development of the nation (Liddle & Joshi, 1986). Economic, social andpolitical development during the recent decades has resulted in improvement in the position

of Women, especially in the area of education and labour force participation (Gupta, 2012). A question arises that when there are so many Favorable conditions, privileges coupled and wide scope inthe BPO industry, then why female employees quit or changes jobs in BPO (Zaid, 1999). Whether it's because of salaries or anything else??The following reasons for a BPO female professional to change her job in an industry like BPO, the work can frequently be boring and opportunities for career growth are nominal. So when opportunities are trifling, the high rate of reduction is not startling(Ashwathappa, 2003). However, there are some common reasons that especially cause female employees to switch the organization. First and the most reason is salary below expectation level, Second problem is pay equity, Company's policies and rules are not motivating. Sometimes company's policy is too rigid to survive in such atmosphere, Non-cordial relationships with superiors and seniors, Timing problem in BPO sectors. BPO works 24 hours and seven days a week, this is the foremost problem for women to leave the organization(Snapdeal, 2017). This is my personal experience as well I interviewed the women employees and the common problem I found out that was Timing and shift rotational problem, Cultural and environment problem. When I interviewed the female employees, I found out that married employees have different thinking& problems and unmarried has different and in some contingency they have similar problem. They respond that one reason behind leaving an organization is environmental and cultural issues. When a female employee does not feel comfort in office premises then it's very tough to work, and employer should insure that HR managers look after all these problems at the hiring time of female employees, because a comfort zone matters to female employees more than a male employees,otherwise mentally they will be not fit in the organization and its direct effect will be on work of the employees.

### **3. Challenges and Problems of Female Employees:**

**3.1 Mental Pressure and overstretch:**Stress has become a major concern to leave organization in the modern times as it can cause harm to female employee's health and performance (Pathak, 2011). This stress directly affects the personal and family life of the female employees. Scientifically it has been proved that the stress to women leads to reduce sex drive, irregular periods, acne breakouts, hair loss, beauty loss, insomnia and the most danger is depression (Gregoire, 2014).

**3.2 Transportation/Cabs Problem:** In recent time in India many rape cases has been increasing during the office timing. Not all companies in India providing Cabs and transportation facilities. Some high profile companies in BPOs and MNCs are only providing this facility. Women are not safe while going in companies' cabs also because the rape and kidnapping cases are not inevitable in any situation. This type of news is hindering female employees to join any BPO and existing employees leave the job because of her family pressure. One critical example of rape case in Capital Of India is, A woman raped at "**Dhaula Kuan**" in the **Capital of India** (Delhi), who was dropped off in the middle of the deserted Ring Road by the company's cab(TNN, 2014). There are many rape cases founding in such circumstances like; Delhi Call-Centrewoker abducted and gang-raped at gunpoint as she waited for a taxi home. A 24-year-old employee of Convergys BPO was abducted and gang-raped by two unidentified men in a moving car in Gurgaon on 7 March 2013(KUMAR, 2013). A 21-year-old BPO girl employee found murdered in Noida in UP State, who was missing since 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2013 night while returning from a Call-Centre where she worked, was found murdered near her house, police suspecting that she might have been raped(Jagron, 2013). A call center employee was allegedly raped by her colleague in Noida on November 14, 2013. The victim is employed with HCL in sector-60, Noida (TV, 2013). This type of cases are not stopping in India specially in North region like, UP, Delhi, Gurgaon, M.P there is no strict rules and regulations regarding this as in other countries like China, East countries.

**3.3 Lack of work-life balance:** If we compare the life balance of a married female employee to male employee, then a female employee has **Triple responsibilities** and **ACCOUNTABILITY** as I found out during my conversation to married female employees. Major three roles played by women employees are: Household activities, Born and brought of child and the Office work. All these liabilities are performed by women employee's simultaneously. There is No time for personal life left beforehand and this becomes the reason to leave the organization which is the contradiction between work life and family life.

The tradition and perception with which the Indian Girls and women are obliged that is, women mean only to look after families, if a girl gets higher studies after that also she plays a role of homemaker only. If Indian women are compared to developed countries women, it's visible that

Indian women are very less in working. After marriage a girl bound to obey her husband's and she cannot go beyond her husband boundary and limit because a limit already has been decided. It is the culture in India that only men are born to earn; because of such type of mentality Indian women lag behind and have no self-confidence and not independent. According to Amita Kabuki, Deloitte WIN leader for U.S. India offices, "Despite gaining higher education, historically, Indian women have faced a Stressful situation owing to issues of family support for working women, raising children, and home responsibilities. Also due to late working hours women face difficulties in managing balance between work and their personal lives (Pathak, 2011). A major point I have been observed that only a male member in a family earns and feeds his dependents family members. And because of such type of mentality Our Indian Economy is not increasing up to the mark and GDP also less.

**3.4 Gloomycareer prospect/Lack of promotion:** (*Sex discrimination in position and designation*) Women tend to be over-represented in the lower level jobs and under-represented in higher level jobs. Female employees listed the lack of Promotion opportunities-which is top reasons to leave organization. It is a known fact that retaining half of the women employee population is a necessity rather than a feel good need. Biz Divas corporate networking group hence would share the best practices of retention strategies & solutions across India Inc. via round table discussion with business, HR and D&I Practitioners. The aim is to explore solutions on "retaining women talent" focusing the 3 categories-junior & middle management women, women on maternity and senior women leaders(altavis).

This is my personal Observation and experience that Instead of sufficient knowledge and experience, a female employees are not get promoted and a non-deserving male candidate got promoted because management thinks that a man has more energy and suitable for the work. This thinking demotivates a women and lack future growth. As it seems that the higher positions are inherited for the men gender. So this type of mentality discourages women to step ahead.

**4. The provisions which should adopt and followed by all companies especially for night shift women:** A database of all employees, security personnel, cab drivers and of contractual workers should be maintained, for access by the police if required, Security and other contractual

personnel should be hired from licensed agencies, Antecedents of all employees to be verified, A verified security guard to be present in a cab carrying women at night, Women should not be the first to be picked up or last to be dropped, The cab must drop women at their houses and waits till she confirms her arrival through a phone call, If the house of a woman employee is located away from a motor-able road, the security guard should accompany her to her house and confirm her safe arrival, Exercise control on the vehicle's movement to check any unwarranted activities of drivers, such as picking up strangers & straying from the designated route and Install GPS sets in the cabs(Nevagi).

##### **5. Sexual Harassment and Women Safety at Work Place:**

Atrocities against women are common everywhere but in India, North Region it is most common behavior. It is unlawful to harass a person (a female employee) because of that person's sex. How much ever one try to protect, prohibit, prevent and give remedies such violation will always take place. When this intolerable practice in India got increased then Indian Government passed a law against this –“**The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressed) Act, 2013** (India, 2013).”Sexual Harassment is one of the biggest problems our women are facing today in **INDIA** in different sectors of life. It has also been observed that there are lots of sexual harassment incidents taking place in the workplace, but the victims fear to report the same to the higher officials or the concerned authorities. They fear to file a complaint against such offenders who does such heinous acts(Keval, 2016). The fear is due to the fear of boss, fear of guilt in the society that they might have to face, fear of being thrown out of the job or being demoted, fear that it will jeopardize their career as it will put a blot on their resume and would render them un-hirable.Every country is facing this problem daily. No female worker is safe and the sense of security is lacking in them. There are certain developments in laws of many countries to protect women workers from Sexual Harassment.Working at any hour of the day is the fundamental right of every women and all stakeholders should work together to create a conducive and secure (Women’s Safety - A Global Concern, 2008) for women (Deepthi).

## **6. Indian laws every working woman should know about:**

In recent technological times we have seen an increase in the number of women workers in organizations, both public and private, due to the immense opportunities available and with the booming of specific industries like BPO and start-ups. There are some important Laws for the Protection of the Working Woman in Indian constitution. Indian law also lays down maximum permissible hours of work as well overtime hours in a day/week. Some of the major laws are The Factories Act, 1948 (“Factories Act”), The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (“Maternity Benefit Act”), The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (“Equal Remuneration Act”), The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (“SHA”) and Shops and Establishments Acts (“SEA”) (Sen, 2015).

## **7. Strategies for Effectively Retaining Female Employees:**

Many companies like HCL, IBM and Wipro use various IQ and EQ tests to get female people who can work at night and can handle the monotony (D.chordiya, 2013). They also believe that giving career counseling and planning career paths to its employee help to control attrition. As per Snapdeal policy, recruitments are done in bulk considering the high attrition rate and recruitments are done regularly. Hiring in bulk reduces the supply factor of the equilibrium and it keeps the work of the organization going.

**7.1 Effective communication** with female employees can help to ensure those employees who want to stay with your company. Employees need to know—and be reminded on a regular basis—how the organization is doing and what they can do to help. Properly done, communication with your staff will provide you with the insights you need in order to know how your employees feel about working for your business. “When women are insufficiently represented in the workplace, we lose out on 50 percent of the talent pool (altavis).” There are many levels of participation like information participation, consultative, administrative and lastly and important is Decisive participation. Participation and involvement in decisions or in any major work of the organization gives belonging feelings to the employees (Sivakumar, 2017). Show respect to your female employees and help them to in their career growth. Help them financially if they are in needs. Understand the problems of the employees and provide solution

to them. Provide the leadership, resources, and training your female employees need to realize their potential.

### **7.2 Offer true flexibility in work timelines:**

Many Indian companies already offer flexible timelines to their employees, but most often they turn out to be only the liberty to choose their shifts. True flexibility means allowing your employees to adjust their work schedules to maintain a healthy work-life balance without being penalized. As long as they turn in their work on time and are producing results, their physical absence from office shouldn't be a concern. Having flexible schedules end up in happier, more satisfied and extremely productive employees(MAJEED, 2016). There is a direct relationship between employee engagement and employee motivation, productivity, satisfaction and retention. Having fun at work will increase team building, bring togetherness, relieve stress and make the employee emotionally attached to the work place and at the end of the day will reduce attrition (Raghavan, 2011).

**7.3 Meals and Cafeteria facility:** Meals arrangement should be available nearby the organization or there should be canteen facility within premise of the organization to make ease to the female employees. Food should be tested and hygienic. Often meals may be provided as a form of entertainment, or they may be provided in association with event. Providing meals to employees and reimbursing employees for business meals is a common practice in business today, but it is an issue that can be problematic if not handled properly (Works., 2015).

### **8. Discussion and Suggestions:**

If a female employees who is leaving the organization then what steps and measures should be taken by the employer to retain her? How can stop her? What are the ways to not let her go? The answer of these questions should be known to each employees then only an organization and employees both can grow and shine. An organization is nothing without its employees because “**Employees create Organization not Organization create employees**”. Understanding what engages employees can help during all phases of the employment cycle—from recruitment to training to performance assessment and beyond. It’s also much easier to retain employees who are engaged and committed to your company’s success. As there are many remedies to stop or

retain a female employee especially in BPO sectors as well in other also. A tweaking in Leave policies and weekend holidays to keep employees happy. Provide emergency leave, extra break to married women who has child to look after. Leave should be the right of employees not sympathy, these feelings should be created. Corporate should be more sensitive to women-related leave, which is a healthy sign. Maternity leave policy should be adopted by all employers, "The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961." Online retailer Flipkart announced maternity leave of 24 weeks plus four months of flexi-working hours with full pay. Snapdeal has extended maternity paternity as well as adoption leave. So others companies also should tweak its leave policies. When you hire skilled women, understand that they put in the same amount of hard work and time as the men and acknowledge that with equal pay. Offer them equal opportunities and trust them with responsibilities similar to what their male counterparts are given to care and increased confidence and professional growth. Pay structure should be evaluated annually to eliminate partiality and prejudices. Make it clear to all employees how they are going to be evaluated and about the requirements to be met to make career advancements. It is commonly seen that most organizations promote men on potential and women only on measurable and proven performance. Check your talent management systems and do away with such biases.

"Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness." - Ola Joseph. It helps in building a great name for the company. It increases opportunities and profitability. An organization known for its ethics, fair employment practices and appreciation for diverse talent is better able to attract a wider pool of qualified applicants. Other advantages include loyalty from customers who choose to do business only with companies whose business practices are socially responsible and ethical. India Inc. has been aggressively pushing Diversity hiring to close the gender gap and improve diversity ratio, not because it is the thing to do, but because having women across management levels makes business sense. Equal opportunity for female employees, no inclination between any one of employees whether men or women. Family tour and holidays should be provided, medical facilities for employee dependents, and educational allowances should be provided. Provide a safe working environment. Treat sexual harassment as misconduct and initiate action for this. Creating programs to cultivate women leaders and to improve professional skills. Accommodate and empower women and Inbuilt the feeling of loyalty and credentials. Women's leadership program, have more women leaders.

## **9. Conclusion:**

Female employees' Retention has become a key challenge for BPO firms and it changes organization. But in the competitive world firm should come with certain welfare program, induction policy and should target on respect, reward and recognition, in addition to this they have to concentrate on compensation, encouragement, Infrastructure, potential safe environment and job satisfaction. Good intentions, alone, are not enough to make women employees want to work for your company. Treat them well, provide them opportunities for professional development and create a culture that values their talents and respects them as individuals. HR must take steps to be aware of employee problems and try to solve them creatively. BPO companies must further refine their policies and processes to strongly influence the participation of women in key leading projects and must identify procedures that can be restructured to encourage participation of women in organizational decision making activities.

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