

Mfg sector goes all out to woo women

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Bangalore: The manufacturing industry is all set get an image makeover. The sector is desperately trying to remove its alleged 'women-unfriendly' tag.

While sectors like information technology (IT) and banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) are increasingly working towards inducting more women in senior positions, women remain under-represented in manufacturing companies mainly because of fewer numbers at the entry level. However, things are set to change with some manufacturing firms taking it upon

themselves to improve the gender scenario.

Firms like Honda, ABB, and Dynaflex are doing everything possible to make their office premises and environment friendlier for women. Progressive companies in this sector are striving to achieve a gender balance ratio of 40:60 in their offices.

"Though as a company we were always women-friendly, until a few years ago we never really focused on hiring female employees. Now, we make a point to visit women-only colleges or recruit a certain percentage of women as part of campus recruitment," says Radhika Muthukumar, diversity and inclu-

siveness manager, ABB India Limited. ABB which till 2010 hired only 2-5 per cent women directly from campuses has now increased this figure to 30 per cent.

"For long, manufacturing never really made any special efforts to recruit women. In fact, this was never even tried out as employers assumed that women will not be interested in joining the sector," says Kris Lakshmikanth, founder CEO and chairman, HeadHunters, an HR advisory firm.

Statistics show that till 2008-09, women in the manufacturing sector constituted a minuscule 10-15 per cent of overall employees. According to Gaurav Vora, director, Dy-

naflex, "A few years back, we consciously took the decision of inducting more women on board. Our target is to reach 50 per cent. We have reached 20 per cent in sales, 3 per cent in production and have a total 3 per cent of women working on the shop floor".

In fact, some companies like ABB are providing maternity leaves up to one year apart from the mandatory three months for its employees. In some cases, training is provided to make sure they do not feel disconnected once they return to work. There are companies which have started providing creche facilities for female employees in their factory shops.

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