

# Big companies look to buy from women entrepreneurs

## Strategic Move To Increase Diversity In Supply Chains, Build Inclusiveness

Shilpa Phadnis & Anshul Dhamija | TNN

Chetan Shivakumar

One of the biggest challenges that women entrepreneurs face is in getting a share of the procurement that big companies do.

On Tuesday, six companies - Accenture, Intel, Marriott, HP, Walmart and IBM - came together with some 100 women-owned-and-run businesses to understand each other better. This "speed-dating session" in Bangalore was part of a Think Big initiative organized by WEConnect International, a non-profit that connects women-owned businesses with multinational corporate purchasing organizations, and supported by the Times Foundation.

"Women make 70% of the purchasing decisions at home. Yet, women entrepreneurs get only 1% of the global procurement business. They are missing in the supply chain. They need to understand the needs of the market better, and compete for contracts. We are trying to facilitate that," said Elizabeth Vazquez, CEO of WEConnect International.

For the MNCs in India, it's part of a new strategic effort to increase diversity in their supply chains and build an inclusive supplier procurement programme.

Intel's diversity programme recognizes companies that are over 50% owned and operated by minority communities, women, service-disabled, lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender, and persons with disabilities. Retail giant Walmart's Global Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative is looking at sourcing \$20 billion from women-owned businesses in the US and double its sourcing from women suppliers in international countries where they do business.

Srikant J Rao, MD-procurement for Asia Pacific in Accenture, said the company wanted to make an impact through



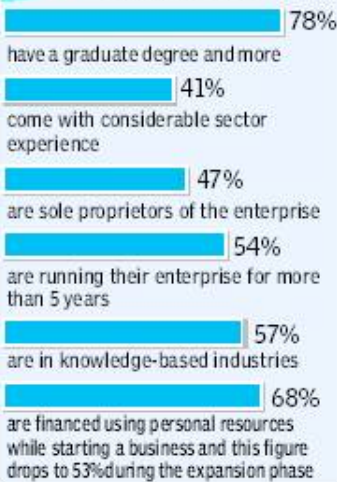
**THINKING BIG:** Sucharita Eashwar, executive director in WEConnect International India, with Elizabeth Vazquez, CEO and co-founder, WEConnect International, and Meg Jones of International Trade Centre, at the Think Big - Women in Business Forum workshop in Bangalore on Tuesday.

its Skills to Succeed initiative where it planned to equip 5 lakh people globally by 2015 with the skills to get a job or build a business. "The supplier diversity programme in India is a part of this. We have to step up the women supplier base to create more socio-economic impact and shared value," he said.

Sunil Uthappa, strategic procurement manager for global procurement in HP, said the company was increasingly looking at a diverse supply chain that brings fresh ideas and innovative processes. "Globally, we source 20% of our requirements from a diverse group of suppliers and women entrepreneurs constitute 8% of this. We want to replicate this success story in India too," he said.

### WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN BANGALORE

**61** Bangalore's score in a newly constructed Women Entrepreneurial Environment Index, higher than the national average of 42.6



Source: Giz, Athens Inforonics, WEConnect International and Quantum Leap



**“** We are a 3-year-old company, very passionate about reducing energy use. We help design HVAC systems that are more energy efficient and improve indoor air quality. We also help improve energy efficiency through LED lighting. We have done work for corporates, including Accenture and Hikal, hospitals and industrial establishments. WEConnect has enabled us to work with big corporates



Geethadevi | FOUNDER, GRADUS ENGINEERS, WHO RECEIVED THE TIMES FOUNDATION'S STAR ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

**“** We provide sales consulting and we have built a client base of 100 in two-and-a-half years. We are 8 consultants today, and we are adding 4 to 5 clients each month. Each business is



unique and we have different tools and processes for different kinds of businesses. The objective is to bring excellence to their sales process. This WEConnect event is very impressive, considering the scale and the nature of corporates that are present

Priya Sachdev | FOUNDER, BUSINESS SALT CONSULTING

**“** There is a gap in capacity building vis-a-vis the requirements of MNCs. With MNCs, you may need to scale up capacity significantly and that may not be feasible at one shot. It would be ideal



to have mid-sized businesses with a turnover of Rs 100 crore or so to procure supplies from women-owned businesses. That would help women enterprises to then scale up gradually. I started with an idea to make physical spaces come alive through art. Today, I employ 30 people

Hardika Shah | FOUNDER & CEO, KINARA CAPITAL

**“** Women should leverage the power of women-focused networks to make business connections rather than try to do it all by themselves. I am an artist and



there is no ready requirement for art; companies don't factor art into their budgets. But I have to make them realise that I exist. Government can also play a significant role in sourcing supplies from women entrepreneurs

Madhu Chandrika | FOUNDER, EARTHEN SYMPHONY