

GOING BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

Vidya Kamath

“If I don’t learn, I will be left behind. And you have to keep pace with what’s going on and to manage the industry, you have to keep your eyes and ears open.” - Mrs Vidya Kamath of Bola



India, as a country, is known for a lot of reasons ranging from mixed cultures to the trendy attires, spicy food and varied languages. In a land of such diversity, until a few decades back, it was an unspoken choice that most of the women chose to become home makers.

Despite this, we’ve had a number of Indian women in politics, businesses and education fields and their career orientation is worth appreciation. Adding on to the trend, it is commendable that over the years, women have realized they can go beyond the boundaries they’ve set for themselves and identify their skills to make a mark in the world.

Surprised by her success!

And one such woman is Mrs Vidya Kamath- the lady who along with the world, has surprised her own self with the amount of feathers that rest in her cap due to her hard work and zeal to extend the boundaries she had once set.

Brushing aside the idea of seeking a career

Like a lot of Indian women, when she got married, without any second thoughts she knew she’d be a home maker. Although she had a Business Management degree and stood second in the whole of her University, after tying the knot, she didn’t think much of it. Her husband and his family were famous for the Bola brand of cashew and the thought of joining him didn’t strike her.



It was only in the year 2005, when two partners walked out, that the company witnessed a rebirth. It felt like starting all over again, and in such a scenario, Mrs Vidya joined the firm with the only thought of lending a helping hand. Even at this point, she did not see herself as someone who'd play a critical role in the future.

Getting used to the workforce and facing challenges

Since this was a family business, there was division of work and every member involved had a department he looked into. She initially took care of managing, booking for containers, signing contracts and marketing.

Considering that this was a growing industry, there was no one tailor made format to get things done. There were day to day variations in almost every department ranging from financing to the machinery. Hence, due to rapid changes, it was a challenge to decide whether they were worth implementing in the company or not.

Thus, encountering such situations, an important lesson she learnt was that, one should be flexible and adopt changes while taking advantage of the situation they're forced in.

Crediting her life's events to The Almighty

Even to this day, she looks back to the time when she initially joined, and believes that it was God who put her in this situation. As a housewife in her initial years, she had no driving force or a role model to look up to. When she joined the company, she took baby steps and looking back, she is awed at how much of a success story she has become.

Learning all along

Speaking of some of the lessons she picked up along the way, she says eventually, there comes a time when you have no choice but to become tough. The world is not kind to you always and she has witnessed cases when due to a slight negative, the positives from over the years were ignored. Giving an example of this, she says, during one of their exports, it so happened that there was slight leakage. Although they were trading with the company for numerous years, this one mistake was highlighted, momentarily ignoring the commendable work over the years.

This taught her to become clear and specific with every minute detail, thereby giving no chance for complaints.

Always looking out for opportunities

"You have to be firm," she further adds, speaking of her job and day to day activities. Since she is the head while handling marketing, financing and logistics department, she says it is a challenge to understand bank offerings, given the innumerable schemes and policies. She believes that to survive such encounters, you have to be on the lookout for new opportunities but at the same time weigh all the pros and cons before taking the final call.

Her take on becoming successful

"Customer satisfaction is the most," she believes, and this probably is one of the key ingredients to her success. For those who are on the lookout for others' happiness eventually are bestowed with their own.

It hasn't been a cakewalk

Although this was a business run in the family, it isn't as simple as it looks. One would think she had her entire family to

lay the foundation to her path to success and it must have been a cakewalk. While it is true that she received immense family support, the credit for the empire she built out of the foundation given to her goes to her commitment and strength.

There were times when she had to take critical decisions all by herself, and despite what it may look like, when she joined, she had taken the position of a person who left the company to start a similar venture. And in a scenario like this, it was a humongous task to stay afloat, restart and maintain the expected standard. Also, due to a split in the business, it became a challenge to retain the old customers and convince them of no compromise in originality and quality. But the fact that she was able to overcome all the hurdles and help bring the company to where it is today, speaks for itself.

Taking the extra step

Being a wife and a mother, she did not compromise on her family life to support her career. While it is easier for she is involved in a business that runs in the family, she still takes the extra step to make sure she does not miss out on her daughter's activities. For this, she keeps her working time frame such that she is present at home when her daughter returns from school, for she believes in maintaining a work life balance.

With recognition comes responsibility

As we look back, it is incredible to witness her active participation and the manner in which she has carried herself. She had to start from the scratch which required immense work, take independent decisions, incorporate bank schemes, and live up to the standards set for her because she was recognized in the international market. Although it feels pleasurable to receive such recognition, it brings with it a responsibility which she is required to live up to.

As modest as she is, she believes that her family and her teammates have helped her reach this day. She is thankful to her father in law and her entire family for giving her the independence to take decisions and for trusting her to help take the company forward.

Setting an example

While talking about her clients, she says, she has been told, "You are very tough to handle". She laughs as she quotes them, wondering if they say this because women are expected to be soft. Dismissing it, she believes she is a straight forward person and considering her efficiency, it is not hard to digest that being a lady, she has managed to stand tall in an industry where the higher posts are mostly reserved for men.

Content with her achievements!

Talking about her journey from a housewife to representing her company in the international market, she says you have to be true to yourself. You must be willing to take the opinions of those working with you or under you and should build a good rapport with them, for you can't achieve your goals all by yourself. Her experience has been similar to that of a school, she says, for you learn something new every day.

She strongly believes that instead of only focusing on personal growth, you must focus on treading forward with those who work hard along with you. This, she feels, is a huge responsibility and ten years later, as she looks back, she is nothing but content with her achievements.

