



Indicol: Technological Integration widening Women's role in Logistics

"Women have the distinct advantage of bringing a holistic viewpoint to their work, keeping in mind the benefits of all stakeholders involved."

Niharika Jalan, Founder & Chief Growth Officer, Indicol

The roles for women have evolved significantly due to technological integration.

Traditionally, the male dominated logistics industry was associated with heavy lifting work, where people got an entry level job and worked their way up. With changing times and mindsets, this perception has changed. Today, multiple companies operate fully or predominantly woman-led factories in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Telangana. It is inevitable that this trend will extend to the logistics sector. The roles for women have evolved significantly. One reason for this shift is the growth facilitated by technological integration, such as Warehouse Management Systems (WMS) and the automation of Material Handling Equipment (MHE) like forklifts. This has greatly reduced dependence on manual labor for lifting and transporting items.

Women bring a unique perspective and skill set that can be highly beneficial in the logistics and warehousing sectors, including attention to detail, strong communication skills, and a talent for collaboration and problem-solving.

Another factor driving this change is the growing awareness of the need for diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Companies are recognizing that a diverse workforce

also leads to better business outcomes. By hiring and promoting more women in logistics and warehousing, companies can tap into a larger talent pool, leading to greater innovation, increased productivity, and improved employee morale.

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I think we must make work-life balance seamless and manage both on a need-based approach. I don't believe that women need to be extraordinary. I don't think there are gender-specific traits that would make a man or woman successful. In my opinion, we need to get away from stereotypes that feed the belief that a woman should be extraordinary to be on the same level as a man. What makes the difference to succeed, man or woman, are the hard skills and soft skills. Learn to see the differences as the main advantage. Different points of view make all the difference. It is also much more competitive and vital to trust yourself and stand your ground. Strive to work as one team and anything becomes possible.

I personally feel that the key to balance work and life is to enjoy what you love and

create an enabling ecosystem to be able to thrive. My family has been my biggest support in my journey and as a founder, I take the onus of creating a healthy work environment where my female colleagues can excel. Having a diversified workforce with all the necessary knowledge has become essential for the success of logistics companies in an era where improved output is the primary goal of all organizations.

To enable pay parity in the Indian logistics industry will require a multifaceted approach.

Transparency in pay scales, equal opportunities for advancement, fair and unbiased recruitment practices, and encouraging diversity at all levels of the organization, including leadership positions, can help create a more inclusive work environment where pay parity is prioritized. Providing negotiation training and support to women can help them effectively negotiate salaries and benefits, closing the pay gap over time. Overall, achieving pay parity in the Indian logistics industry requires a concerted effort from both companies and policymakers to address systemic inequalities and promote gender equality in the workplace.



Women encounter challenges related to gender bias, lack of representation in leadership roles, and balancing work and family responsibilities.

I have always approached challenges as learning experiences. Challenging stereotypes comes naturally to me, and by demonstrating competence, I have been able to change perceptions. I believe in embracing and learning new things and believing in oneself when opportunities come along.

In the early days, my biggest challenge was finding woman-friendly utilities. They were normally a good kilometer trek away and not well-maintained. Imagine working full days without being able to take a restroom break. But things have changed in the last few years. Now, having gender-specific washrooms is a basic requirement.

I remember that in the early days, the operator would see me from far and take a U-turn as he did not want to talk to a lady. The labourers would not know what to say or do when I spoke. But all this went through a sea change when, for our first institutional customer, I was working at the dock for a whole day until almost 10 pm. Now, they respect and listen to me as a part of the team.

Technology at Indicol serves as the backbone for optimizing warehouse operations and ensuring process efficiency.

We have aggregated cold stores across India onto our network, along with reefer vehicle owners providing both intra-city and inter-city services. Utilizing the Indicol solution, the customer can transport the product from the factory to the distributor through a single solution provider who is accountable for product quality and consistency. This helps create an uninterrupted chain of warehousing and transport, thereby significantly reducing food wastage.

Our technology is aimed at giving customers complete traceability and trackability of the product within the Indicol cold chain. Through MoolWMS, customers can track the product as it reaches an Indicol store and can receive status updates on unloading, sampling, etc.

Customers can also monitor the temperature of the product throughout the Indicol chain. This minimizes human errors, offers real-time updates and agility, thereby maximizing the potential for implementing green solutions. This enables a more proactive and sustainable

framework of warehouse management, eliminating dependency on human supervision and interventions.

The future of logistics in India holds immense potential for exciting developments and transformations.

With the exponential growth of e-commerce, there is an increasing demand for efficient and faster services. This trend is reshaping the logistics landscape, with a focus on building robust delivery networks. Covid-19 disruptions highlighted the importance of our resilient and agile supply chains. The industry is now focusing on mitigating risks and diversifying sourcing strategies by adopting flexible logistics solutions.

Overall, logistics is a critical enabler of economic growth and business success, and its effective management is essential for enhancing competitiveness, driving efficiency, and unlocking opportunities for businesses and the Indian economy as a whole.

The convergence of technological advancements, e-commerce growth, infrastructure development, supply chain resilience, and government support presents a promising future for the logistics sector in India. Additionally, the increasing number of women in the logistics sector is



a significant development. As these trends continue to unfold, the logistics industry is poised to play a pivotal role in driving economic growth, fostering trade, and meeting the evolving needs of businesses and consumers across the country.

My biggest learning was the importance of not shifting gears during peak season.

We started the dairy products CFA outside a plant location in 2018, encompassing multiple skus with a short shelf life. Products became unsellable within just 48 hours, as their total shelf life was 4 days. Inward operations occurred between 6 – 10 pm, with a target of completing dispatches by 2 am. This was truly a complex operation. Over 120 MT of products had to be in-warded and dispatched within a span of 4 – 6 hours, which included route planning, invoicing, product checks, and

more. We began with meticulous planning, multiple dry runs, carefully drafted SOPs, and several training sessions. Senior experienced leaders from both the client and our side were present at the facility. However, despite our efforts, we failed miserably. It was the peak season, demand was high, and dispatches were delayed with truckers being reluctant.

We took a step back, conducted a detailed Root Cause Analysis (RCA), and my biggest learning was the importance of not shifting gears during peak season. This lesson proved invaluable when a similar situation arose years later, prompting us to delay the launch by 3 months.

Today, after over 5 years of operation, we successfully serve chaach, dahi, paneer, and all fresh milk products to South Delhi and Gurgaon. Additionally, we operate the most complex ice cream piece-

picking operations, handling a product that can absorb warmth from human touch and requires quick, precise, and accurate handling. The team managing this operation consistently delivers the best metrics month after month, outperforming all similar warehouses in India.

The growth of women in the sector can only be triggered by valuing diversity and promoting its scope, which in turn can bring innovativeness and new perceptions to the business.

This involves establishing diversity and inclusion programs, offering mentorship and leadership development opportunities for women, and ensuring equal pay and advancement opportunities regardless of gender.

Collaboration between the government and industry associations can develop education and training programs specifically tailored to women interested in logistics careers. These programs can provide technical skills training in areas such as supply chain management, warehousing operations, and transportation logistics, as well as soft skills training in communication, leadership, and problem-solving.

Raising awareness on career opportunities for women in logistics can be achieved through targeted marketing campaigns, outreach events, and partnerships with educational institutions. It's important to highlight the diverse roles available in logistics, from truck drivers and warehouse workers to logistics managers and supply chain analysts, and showcase successful female professionals as role models.

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