

For moms on the comeback trail

More and more Indian companies are now organising what they call 'returnship' programmes to help their women employee get back to the 9-to-5 routine

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For anyone, the return to work after a break is seldom smooth. For new moms, it can be extremely difficult getting back to the 9to5 routine. The good news is that the situation is improving as more and more companies are putting in support systems in place for such women employees.

Last year, 33-year-old Nishita Kedia Agarwal made a comeback after a five-year break, which she had to take to raise her two children. She has a happy story to share about how her career resumed.

"Coming back to work was a wow experience," says Nishita, an insurance consultant, and explains that her job comes with the option of flexi working hours.

She is a business partner at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance's all-women branch and is a beneficiary of the programme launched by the company to help women restart their careers. Bajaj Allianz has opened around 30 branches across Indian where an all-women staff recruit, train and handhold women on the comeback trail.

In search of new talent and also to promote gender diversity, many companies organise 'returnship' programmes for such women.

In a few weeks from now, a new batch of women will be part of 'The 2016 Returnship Programme of Goldman



At Bajaj Allianz all-women branch, women are allowed to bring their children to office. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sachs'. Designed for women who have taken a career break for two or more years, the 10-week paid programme offers opportunities in many of the company's divisions. Some of these companies will even enable these women to take up a full-time career or help them sharpen the skills necessary to re-enter the workforce. A growing number of companies are offering an extremely supportive environment for these career women.

"We have women who have taken a break of five to seven years and then re-entered the workforce. We also have women who have never had a professional career," says Anamika Roy Rashtrawar, senior president, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance.

Apart from offering the options of work-from-home and

flexi timing and transport from work and back to home, these women are also allowed to bring their children to office, which includes offering crèche facilities.

Recently, HCL hired 80 women for its financial services, which will be entirely managed by women who are making a career comeback.

According to AVTAR, a diversity and inclusion consulting firm that helps execute career return programmes for corporates in India, many companies including Philips, Shell, Godrej, HUL, PayPal, Microsoft, Maersk, Credit Suisse and the Tata Group have exclusive programmes to help women on the verge of their second careers.

Recruitment agencies say today there are many networking platforms that wom-

en must be a part of. Even a volunteering assignment — undertaken for a short period — can add to the value of a resume. They have to find of way of learning the latest skills in their areas of expertise, during the break.

Umasanker K., chief recruiting officer and co-founder, AVTAR Group, says, "Women making a comeback after a career break should work on making their resume substantial and interesting. They should make a list of their learnings during their break. These learnings can be anything — ability to multitask, managing stress, stretching the working hours, collaborating with others, making/creating a supportive environment and knowledge about a new upcoming technology."