

Adgully

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The leading trailblazing women entrepreneurs in India today



November 19 is celebrated as Women's Entrepreneurship Day globally to celebrate, empower and support women in business. It is a day to recognise the business acumen of women and the difference they are making in the society, as well as their contribution to the economy.

To mark the special day this year, Adgully spoke to a cross-section of successful women entrepreneurs, who share their success stories, the entrepreneurial landscape in the country, the challenges faced and how they overcame them, and more.

Parul Mittal, Director, Greenlam Industries:

"The market ecosystem has grown gradually over the last decades. Today's women believe in breaking the glass ceiling and scaling new frontiers in business and industry, bringing fresh ideas into the commercial landscape of India. With the escalation of industry, the new age women are engaging and putting out a call to bring up an equal number of women in the

workforce. With the shift and evolution in the entrepreneurial landscape in India, it is a perfect time for women leaders to take the mantle into their hands and contribute to women's empowerment and economic growth."

Shivani Poddar, CEO and Co-founder, FabAlley & Indya:

"The entrepreneurial landscape in India is at the moment booming and exciting and there isn't a better time than now for women to take up entrepreneurship. While we are still underrepresented, women entrepreneurs are being recognized as an untapped source for economic growth. The government has introduced various policies and funding schemes to foster growth and several women-focussed VC funds have also emerged over the past few years.

Mentorship is key in the journey of an entrepreneur, and now more than ever, there is great guidance and mentoring available, not only by industry specialists, but also by women for women."

Vineeta Singh, Co-founder and CEO, SUGAR Cosmetics:

"While India has always seen strong women leaders, I definitely think that their number has seen an upward trajectory decade on decade. The outlook for business in India is undoubtedly changing, women across the spectrum are now introducing innovative business models, which I think is fantastic, as this echoes a rise in women entrepreneurship. Today, there is a lot more awareness around how women can be role models and entrepreneurs. Women are now taking their companies public, they're creating companies that are more than a billion dollars in valuation, and the assumption that women are not capable of doing these things, has stopped coming up in mainstream conversations. More than providing skills and training programmes, what women need to see is more women succeeding and their success being celebrated to inspire others."

Shaily Mehrotra, CEO and Cofounder, Fixderma:

"The current market ecosystem is very dynamic and involved. But the pleasant part about it is that it is also very experimental and the entry for new players has become easier and hence there is an array of trendsetters. Earlier the industry was segmented and restricted, the avenues and scope of offering innovation were lesser. It was restricted to IT, Medical, beauty etc. But now the acceptability of customers towards new offerings and services has expanded. And this has given rise to development of passion into business.

The start-up landscape has given space to more women entrepreneurs. The government's initiatives like Startup India Programme, are leaving no stones unturned to remove any sort of hurdles for budding entrepreneurs. With the kind of schemes by the Government like the Mudra scheme, Udyogini, Cent Kalyani Scheme, women entrepreneurs are getting financial help to start their venture. By 2025, we are expecting more than 150 unicorns. Here is to hoping the rise of more women lead unicorns in the coming years."

Jyoti Dabas, Co-founder, Fittr & CEO, INFS:

"The presence of women entrepreneurs in the start-up ecosystem is increasing steadily, driven by the confidence the women derive from their workforce participation. Most women have a natural ability to excel administratively and are now making their mark at leadership levels in start-ups, thriving in new-age industries. With time and opportunities, their temperament towards flexing this skill in the business environment is also evolving. They now form an integral part of the modern workforce.

At Fittr, almost 50% of our workforce is women, and we have also seen the demand for females as fitness coaches outgrow the supply. Women are great empathizers, problem solvers and master multi-taskers. When a woman transforms into a healthier version, she feels empowered to spread the message to those around her. Along with financial freedom and flexibility to work from anywhere, the fitness industry is now welcoming women in droves. I have witnessed women juggling professional and personal commitments while successfully overcoming challenges. The economic independence of earning good money in their own time allows a woman to express herself more freely in other arenas of her life. Being an enabler for more women to stretch their wings is quite endearing and is something we are incredibly proud of at Fittr."

Krutika Lal, Co-Founder & CMO, Aretto:

"We live in exciting times today, which is a culmination of many factors – timing, education, support system, and a will to want to make it big in life. What used to be a boys' club is now evolving into a meritocracy. The untapped potential here is that women in business, despite all the support from the ecosystem, have to put in extra effort to prove their mantle. I wouldn't say it is a balancing act; it's about putting your skin in the game and being excited about the unknown challenges that come along the way.

Every woman that I have worked with, for, and around has inspired me in her way. The beauty is in their unmatched dedication, drive, compassion, and will to succeed. I guess we have to keep at it, right? So we can inspire every aspiring woman in business to stand their ground, make mistakes, learn, grow and succeed in whatever they do!

The unexpected growth of female entrepreneurs in India has been seen in a generation where they support and motivate one another to put their best foot forward. Steering this progress every day is encouraging and motivating. Here's wishing all the womenpreneurs a very happy Women's Entrepreneurship Day."

Dr Rupali Sharma, Chairperson, Okinawa Autotech:

"Women today have broken the glass ceiling and scaled new frontiers in business and industry, bringing fresh ideas across all landscapes of India. I have been fortunate enough to get the right support from my family and peers to step into an industry generally perceived as 'not fit for women'. However, there's still a long way to go for a genuinely welcoming environment for women entrepreneurs.

As women comprise over 48% of the country's population, it is impossible to think of economic growth without women as the fundamental drivers of change. India has witnessed steady progress in women's entrepreneurship in various sectors over the past few years. We have a very diverse workforce at Okinawa Autotech and have constantly worked on promoting diversity, inclusion and equity. We believe in giving equal opportunities to all, and it has been our constant endeavor to foster an engaged and productive workforce and recognize and reward good performances. It is an attempt to get one step closer to creating an ecosystem where women train, support, and uplift each other."

Zaiba Sarang, Co-founder, IThink Logistics:

"Ever since the 'Start-up India' initiative, the start-up ecosystem in the country has evolved dynamically, making India the second largest start-up ecosystem in the world and expected to grow at 10-12% year on year. With women comprising over 48% of the population, it is impossible to think of

renowned. Many consider her to be one of the first pioneers of India's co-operative movement. Jyoti's example has taught us that where there is a will, there's a way. Her life has been full of challenges, but she took that as an opportunity to not only make her life better but also for the women around her as well. Her contributions impart a sense of equality and justice. It serves to equip Indian women with dignity, self-reliance, and self-respect. Years and years of experience have shown that when women do better, countries as well as society as a whole do better. Another well-known name in today's market is Falguni Nayar, founder and CEO of Nykaa, who is now India's richest self-made woman. Falguni's story has taught women coming of age, that age is just a number when it comes to fulfilling their dreams. These are just a few of the superwomen that we've talked about, and the list goes on. Equal yet different is exactly how women want to be treated, and need to be treated at home and in the workplace."

Madhumita Agrawal, Co-founder & CEO, Oben Electric:

"The post-pandemic world is a whole new era. There are more women entrepreneurs at present, than ever. While women entrepreneurship has been blossoming gently, what has changed today is not just the market scenario but also the period we live in, societal customs, support systems, and time itself. Women were, have been and continue to challenge norms and industries that were once termed as a man's area of expertise.

We are witnessing a paradigm shift from a handful to three out of every five women being entrepreneurs, whether big or small. The strongest pillar for everything else to work is Family. Family is the first support system and that is changing. Women are being supported more and at a faster pace through progressive families. Next are social platforms that continue to help bring this entrepreneurship to a whole new level with ease and at a faster pace. Financial literacy and financial support from investors, banks, and lending companies have helped in furthering the confidence and enthusiasm to start small but with great zeal. There are several courses currently that provide insights into entrepreneurship and renowned forums that recognise, connect, and reward successful women entrepreneurs.

I am glad to see women entrepreneurship being applauded and encouraged across sectors in the country."

Sandhya Sakuja, Director, Vedic Cosmeceuticals:

"Nowadays entrepreneurship has become a way of life for women, it has not only given them freedom from 10 to 6 jobs, but also helped them create a niche for themselves in the corporate world. There is a recent trend for women taking entrepreneurship in many sectors like banking, manufacturing, IT, Medical, etc. We have seen so many women business leaders emerging in the last few years, who have made India proud of their achievements at a very high level. And due to so many avenues open in up, they are also getting good support from the government through different policies. Families, too, are collaborative and supporting women to come out of their shells and experiment with their own ideas, aspirations and innovations."

Anurita Chopra, Head of Marketing, India Subcontinent, Haleon:

"For most of history, before the advent of organisations, everyone was an entrepreneur. In fact, that's how organisations started, and are still starting. With an idea that would help humanity in some way or the other, and help people lead simpler, easier, healthier, more enjoyable lives. Today, when there is a tremendous disruption in every sphere, those who can think differently, and can take chances, have an edge. Women have always experimented in some way or the other, whichever hemisphere they have operated in. Be it their kitchen or the way they have run their homes or be it the way they have balanced work and home. They've been flexible, adaptable, innovative, and experimental all at the same time. They have always known how to build an ecosystem and leverage it for the larger good of their family or their chosen circle. This innate strength is coming of use in today's disruptive world that many fail to make sense of.

Women, known for their multi-tasking ability, and their ability to deal with ambiguity, combined with a high EQ, are using these skills very seamlessly. Add to this women's newfound confidence in the workplace, and you know why more and more women are striking out as entrepreneurs. It also gives them the right opportunity to work at their pace, with the flexibility that they desire. This trend will only rise in times to come!"

Payal Thaker, Co-founder, YBP Skincare:

"The entrepreneurial landscape in the country is currently very exciting. Clearly, there isn't a better time than now to be a female entrepreneur in India. Women's entrepreneurship contributes not only to women's empowerment, but also to economic growth. To foster inclusive growth, we must work and empower women entrepreneurs to be creative, grow the workforce, and drive holistic growth in any organisation. As professional entrepreneurs, women are truly realising their dreams and transforming market ecosystems. These days, more women entrepreneurs need to get much-needed help."

Rachna Baruah, Founder, Madchatter Brand Solutions:

"Technology and entrepreneurship go hand-in-hand. In the evolving digital landscape, technology is the gateway for women entrepreneurs to overcome significant barriers, especially in the Tier 2/3 markets. Easily accessible tech advancements are enabling women to find their entrepreneurial streak and explore opportunities without needing to even step out of their respective homes. For instance, ease in the accessibility of free learning resources coupled with the penetration of internet services has enabled tons of ladies to join e-commerce platforms as sellers, while others have created their digital marketplaces. Hence, we can see a spike in the number of women entrepreneurs across the spectrum and the numbers will only multiply going forward."

Krutika Lal, Co-Founder & CMO, Aretto:

"Scaling back years ago who would have thought that women today would be ruling globally and inspiring us all? Whether it is Coco Chanel who learned the art of a seamstress as a child or Aditi Gupta who launched Menstrupedia to break myths and misconceptions relating to menstruation, women view the world from a different lens and perceive things differently. Today more than 1/3rd of the entrepreneurs in the world are women entrepreneurs taking up challenging roles and executing them beautifully, but is this enough? Several women across the globe today are still held back from realising their true potential and bridging the economies and a society in which women are unable to realize their true potential is a society that loses out on the significant potential for innovation, growth, and job creation. Coming from a semi-developed country myself, while a lot of women are taking charge there are still women tied and bondage by the norms of society, unable to escape the patriarchy and unable to speak up.

A woman starting with Rs 3,000 and now turning it into a Rs 150 crore business empire is a journey that inspires and empowers us all. The resilience and determination of these women leading us into the future is something everyone looks up to and aspires to be. But frequently repeated stereotypes enforce the notion that "business is not a woman's world," and the belief that men are more competent when it comes to financial matters. As such, attitudes reflect in communication, women entrepreneurs are often treated with less respect and they sense doubt when interacting with business partners. Overcoming these barriers is a matter of grit and passion of individual women themselves, as well as tackling structural factors in the external environment, which they alone have limited control over. One of the foremost and main things that women entrepreneurs today need is social acceptance to help combine their entrepreneurial pursuits alongside family responsibilities."

Deepsikha Deshmukh, Producer, Pooja Entertainment:

"It gives me immense joy to see that women who are leading from the front, breaking stereotypes are being commemorated on Women's Entrepreneurship Day. These are women who have gone and believed in themselves and pursued their belief. I, as an entrepreneur, am extremely proud of my baby – 'Love Organically', a range of organic Ayurvedic skincare products, which was launched five years ago to fulfil a gap in the market. In both my businesses, whether it be production or skincare, I believe my greatest strength has always been my trust in my instincts. Consistency, hard work and giving whatever I do a 100%.

My message to all the aspiring women entrepreneurs would be there is no right time or age to start. If you have the belief and vision, just start your journey and keep working at it – don't let any failure bog you down."