

"Women need the right training, exposure"

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—**Nidhi Saxena**, Founder & CEO, Karmic Life Sciences, Mumbai

Nidhi Saxena has been involved in pre-clinical/clinical strategy development and execution of over 50 global and local trials across multiple therapeutic areas. On the clinical data management side, Nidhi initiated and developed KarmaData 2.0, a Karmic proprietary CDM software, used for several large phase IV studies

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Q What are the hurdles you have faced as a woman entrepreneur?

The fact that I am not a doctor was a bigger hurdle than being a woman entrepreneur. People would not take me seriously because I was not a doctor. The second challenge was getting the know-how of the industry, and identifying the needs of customers. It took me around two-to-three years to understand the dynamics of the industry. Self-learning and networking with many doctors helped me get a grip of the industry. Now my technical knowledge is strong.

I am motivated by working in this industry. I employ people and create a platform to train and help them grow as entrepreneurs; this motivates me.

Q Looking back, what do you think has been your formula for success?

Besides hard work, one should have an urge to learn and excel in their chosen career path. All successful women in any sector exude the same qualities — they are hardworking, well disciplined and organized; they are well-informed not just about their industry, but about other related aspects as well. Time management is very important. Being an entrepreneur demands a lot of planning and I plan much ahead of time.

Having a mentor is also important because he makes you see the bigger picture. Today, I would like to mentor many youngsters in the organization. Also, I pursue my hobbies. I unwind by dedicating some time to other interests like art and literature, music and adventure sports. Else, your thinking gets stunted.

Q In the coming years, to what extent will women contribute to the life sciences industry?

Women will contribute a great deal to the life sciences industry in the coming years. About 50 to 60 percent of the work force will be women. In the life sciences sector, women are far more disciplined, focused and stable. In my organization, I find that women employees strictly adhere to office timings, and the amount of work they put in, is tremendous. We are very clear that within the organization, we will encourage women.

There is no gender bias as such. At the senior level, what matters is the track record and commitment of the employee to the organization. I am an entrepreneur first, and a woman later; and I evaluate everything on a business basis. We will see many women enter the industry, but the challenge will be pulling women in, from small towns. For women to reach senior level management, the right amount of training and business exposure should be given, because after a certain level, she is not just a scientist but also a manager. That is where mentoring plays a huge role.