

## **Host**

You are listening to Mrigashira –a podcasts for PR and communication folks. A couple of years ago, Forbes ran a story with the headline ‘Public relations agencies are dominated by women so why are all their leaders men’?

The story further sees PR is an industry that is inclusive of women at every level, except for the very top. Why this disparity, what needs to be done and can be done. I spoke to Kavita Lakhani, National President, Public Relations and Digital Marketing Council, Women's India Chamber of Commerce and Industry that is WICCI and Executive Director, Lintas Life. A bit about WICCI – it is an institutionalized business chamber in India that works closely with the government, other chambers, universities and other stakeholders, as also governments and institutions, likewise in various countries to improve bilateral trade relations and facilitate ease of doing business and competitiveness for women, women owned businesses. It has a massive network of two lakh 50,000 women connected across 120 countries. We keep recently constituted the PR and digital marketing council with Kavita Lakhani as the national president. Listen in to what Kavita has to say

Let me start by asking you that, you know, what prompted you to do this? And what prompted you to sort of think of, you know, having a PR on a digital council under wiki? And where did it all start?

## **Kavita**

So WICCI actually stands for women's Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It is it is a very unique body. It's it's a for the women by the women, and really the only body which actually focus on when focuses on women empowerment, and women enablement. I feel that, you know, within this council, I mean, there are 150 plus sectors represented. And the communications industry was not really represented and the nature of the communications industry, the importance and the way it is growing today, it's gotten double digit growth, it made logical sense for this sector to be represented within this Chamber of Commerce, it was absolutely, I thought was important. Also, this sector of the communication sector has a very, very large representation of women. And, yes, however, that representation of women is only at the entry level as you go to the top most levels, the representation of women in leadership positions is very, very miniscule. So at the entry levels, it's around 38%, or 34% and it drops to 3% in boardrooms. And that was really what prompted me to think about what is it that we can do to give back to our industry? Now, given the context that, you know, the communications industry speaks such an important role in the economy?

## **Host**

And, you know, there are this is this also an industry that has a lot of youngsters, right? Many people are under probably 30-35. And they are the people who come with a lot of enthusiasm, energy drive, and property ideas and ability to sort of experiment, think outside the box and experiment outside the box. So how do you get them to contribute in this? How do you make this whole, you know, effort into an inclusive one.

## **Kavita**

So I think the most important thing that people, you know, at the entry levels or I would say, the mid management levels, the way they contribute is essentially, by spreading the word by participating in

events that the council is actually going to be going to be, you know, creating, to ensure that, you know, we mentor the right kind of the aspiring leaders, we show them the thoughts and also, you know, up skilling them because I think, for them to participate and become leaders, they need to be part of that of any activities that the council does, and also basically actively set their sights of, you know, set their sights on leadership positions. I don't think anyone should feel for a minute that they can't reach the top.

### **Host**

So, is that going to be the primary charter of the council? What is what are some of the basic themes that you would probably be, you know, going up.

### **Kavita**

So I would think that there are four main activities or main mandates for the council. One is really ensure that there are the maximum there are networking events or the law, because what happens is that typically, networking events have paid for events, I think what we want to do is ensure that there are a networking events where there are women leaders, or leaders from any space really coming in talking about their experiences to reach the top. But secondly, I think, you know, one of the areas where aspiring leaders don't really have access, or need help, is in mentorship. So having mentee programs or mentoring programs is very, very important, you know, so that's going to be an important area for the council to look at. The third area, I would say, is upskilling. And I think we'd be actively going in that direction, especially to equip and enable women who are coming back after the break. So for example, a maternity break or child of a senior Calibri, you know, or maybe a women who are stagnating in their careers and who still want to have the desire to move up, but just don't know how to do it. So upskilling them with the right kind of, you know, how the right kind of the right kind of skills. The fourth area is really a client roundtables, you know, to talk about best practices within this industry. And I think the more inspiration you spread, the more we talk about, you know, how women can reach the top, why aren't they reached, you know, and how, what is, what are the few things that they need to do to really go and stay within their careers and more importantly, rise within their careers. I think these four areas we will focus on.

### **Host**

That's very interesting, Kavita, because, you know, one of the things that I strongly feel that we don't have probably today is a proper mentoring program. Because I like what you rightly said, right? And mentoring, I think most people look at it as something that you need to do at an entry level, or probably somebody who has done five years, six years of experience or career life, I will people usually forget that there are people who are like, you know, with 20 years of experience, 25 years of experience, still wanting to contribute, learn and grow, you know, contribute to make the place and the sector more, you know, efficient, and excellent. And also in the process, you know, learn more knowledge, more skills, and be more, you know, useful. I think that is something this sector has, I mean, personally, from what I've seen, I don't think, you know, it is sort of picked up, and I find that very, very, you know, interesting in that sense. That brings me also to this question, saying that there are a lot of these, you know, programs, initiatives that everybody tries to do around women, including in our sector, for example, through their own, you know, bodies and associations and all that stuff. So how do you see WICCI differentiating itself as it progresses?

**Kavita**

So I just feel that the amount of you know, the kind of leaders that you get on a certain platform to really run a mentoring program, or do a networking event, which has certain stature of yours, I think that's what differentiates one from another one body from another and one event from another. Also for is who, who can you who can access those programs, you know, so I think these three things, you know, are very important, you know, and I just feel that there is a lot of space for all the bodies to do whatever they are doing right now. There isn't, there is a lot of talent over there that's looking for guidance, looking for direction looking to move up. And the very fact that all these bodies which have existed so far, and yet the numbers are so dismal of women, right at leadership positions very clearly indicates that there is room for doing a lot more. So I feel that the big differentiator will come in terms of the quality of women leaders, the quality of events that we do, and the access to those events or talent across the industries.

**Host**

That's interesting. And I hope that, you know, we are able to do some, you know, very good work. I hope that we make this almost like the gold standard in, you know, in the way or some of these because these are serious initiatives. And these are serious necessities at this point in time. Right. So let's hope that, you know, we all come together, the 20 of us come together and do some, you know, some magical work. I also look forward to contributing to this. No, no in a big way.

**Kavita**

Absolutely, absolutely Radha.

**Host**

Pleasure talking to you. Thanks for your time.