

“In the Middle of Difficulty Lies Opportunity”

Career women often face dilemma in balancing their family life and professional life. However, with the dynamism, a large number of them are excelling in different walks of life simultaneously. Ms. V. Annapoorna, who topped the CA Final examination in May 2000, and won more than 20 prizes and medals, a unique and rare feat, is one of them. In the following article, she gives learning tips about streamlining the workplace, building self-confidence and people management.



CA.V. Annapoorna

Girl students normally face a dilemma while pursuing the Chartered Accountancy course: Is it exacting? Once I qualify, should I choose a time-demanding professional work life? What if the job involves frequent travel? How do I obtain success? Should career come before anything else, even one's personal life?

Career women feel incredibly stressed about their daily activities, striking work-life balance and whether they are neglecting their family. Many of us possess the same skill sets as our successful male counterparts, however we hesitate to pursue a successful career, fearing criticism from the family and the larger community.

It is a fact that with changing times, a vast majority of women are managing exciting professions, are wonderful parents and spouses, run a household and still have time for other interests. Most leading global corporations have realised that they can benefit from a lasting competitive advantage by adopting a proactive approach to diversity and inclusion, and encourage women's participation in the workforce.

Building Blocks for a Successful Career

The banking and financial services sector has built solid growth platforms for the sustained growth of the Indian economy. The industry acquires and retains requisite human capital to capitalise on the growth opportunities

and generate momentum for the agrarian, manufacturing and services sector on an ongoing basis. The Indian banking fraternity is witnessing increasing participation of women, across all managerial levels. Needless to say, I felt privileged to join a bank soon after qualifying as a CA. My six years in banking has exposed me to a dynamic professional environment, where change is paramount, particularly in view of (1) extensive job rotation through Corporate Banking, Planning & Strategy Support, and Treasury Services, (2) opportunity to work in multiple locations, (3) confidence to assume and achieve stretch targets, (4) advanced class room learning and On-the-Job training tools and (5) highly sophisticated technology platforms.

Whether you are in practice or in service, the current working environment is characterised by the culture of long working hours, frequent travel and time-bound jobs. However, with intelligent use of technology and adaptability from family, it is a lot easier to work flexibly. A few learning aspects at workplace, which I gathered during the last few years, might be of relevance to young members and aspiring CAs:

- “The Right Start”: Grow and maintain your comfort levels with your colleagues and seniors, which can make a bigger difference in your work and life.
- Request a senior experienced official in

(The author can be reached at annapoorna.venkat@in.standardchartered.com)

the organisation to volunteer as a mentor. More often than not, newcomers in an organisation need support and advice on group policies, people, workplace and systems. Seek and hear their feedback and insights and understand their experiences and perspectives.

- Learning beyond our immediate job requirements enables us to understand the work requirements better, enhance capability to structure and deliver innovative solutions to complex problems from a strategic as well as transactional perspective. Participate in personal excellence training programmes and fine tune presentation and communication skills.
- Peer competition, relative performance and personal attitude influence your move up the corporate ladder. If your job profile does not suit you, explain the consequences and suggest alternatives, rather than meekly agree or refuse point blank which could be detrimental to your career growth.
- Share credit for your achievements with your team, which would reveal a sense of confidence and sharing, typical of a person in the senior role.
- Solicit regular performance feedback: When your boss recalls your positive traits,

it will help him/her appreciate what you do; similarly, by listening to his/her suggestions for improvement, it will show that you are keen to learn.

- If you are de-motivated by a seemingly impossible job, over-ride the frustration by adopting a Can-Do attitude and devotional faith in the Almighty. You are most likely to feel your energy levels recharged with renewed enthusiasm for work.
- Maintain a positive attitude and self-confidence—thereby, you are unlikely to succumb or be depressed by other people's actions and behaviour.
- Address difficult situations of misunderstanding between colleagues face-to-face, rather than shy away in silence. If there is bitterness within a team, choose to focus on the positive traits of the team member to ease the tension.
- In long-term career planning, one could leverage by gaining multi-year work experience in one career and industry—try to carve a niche for yourself, by assuming different job profiles in the same organisation. It is suggested not to switch jobs, without compelling reasons of either job discontent or unpleasant work culture.



Mr. Arun Jaitley the then hon'ble Union Minister of Law conferring Medal on Ms. V. Annapoorna. A Postgraduate in Commerce from Madras University, Ms. V. Annapoorna secured 13th rank in Foundation course in May 1997 and 22nd rank in Intermediate course in Nov 1998 before securing first rank in the CA Final Examination of May 2000. She joined a leading private sector bank soon after becoming a CA and worked in Corporate Banking and Planning & Strategy departments in Chennai and Bombay. She Joined a reputed foreign bank in 2004 and is presently employed in their Global Markets Group (Treasury) in Bangalore.

- Record and preserve project/goal completion certificates, evidence of community related activities undertaken, specialised training programmes attended, e-mails or notes of praises you receive, have immense value during performance reviews, applying for new projects, assignments etc.
- Challenge your failures and seek to extract "do" and "don't" lessons. As Sir Henry Ford said "Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently". People who learn from mistakes and make positive changes are able to overcome gloom and distress and initiate new ideas, even in the face of fear of the unknown.
- A missed opportunity is often lost forever. Be it an easy or a difficult task, it is effective to complete one's job by the planned schedule. The task becomes more difficult to undertake with each successive postponement.

To make the next big leap forward, we could ask ourselves the following questions:

- Am I celebrating my past achievements? Periodic relaxation and de-stress exercise go a long way to temper our body and mind burnout levels.
- How realistic are my job expectations



and furthermore, how do I exceed my expectations?

- Am I doing my level best in my job? Can I pro-actively seek and excel beyond the allocated job description or function.

To conclude, in the words of Dr. Albert Einstein "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity"—women should not be discouraged by what they sometimes imagine as an unfair playing field. The robust CA curriculum generates the ability in bright young pass-outs to promote their favourite professional ambition and develop the requisite confidence to assume challenging roles. With sincerity and passion, we can all be leaders in our chosen field, effectively manage our careers and wherever possible, help others meet their goals.

INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE FOR 'WOMEN IN ACCOUNTANCY' FEATURE

The women have made a mark in all walks of life. The world of Chartered Accountants is no exception. Today, the female Chartered Accountants are walking shoulder to shoulder with their male peers, discharging their duties towards profession and society with professional panache. Taking on multidimensional challenges of globalisation, they are occupying leading positions in every sphere of trade, commerce, industry and finance.

The Chartered Accountant journal seeks to highlight the struggles and challenges faced by female professionals in moving up the life. A new feature titled 'Women in Accountancy' has been

introduced for the purpose wherein they can share their experiences, views, achievements or any interesting piece of information with the entire professional fraternity.

As such, female members are invited to contribute for this feature. They can send in their write-ups of about 2,000 words along with their colour photographs by email at eboard@icai.org/journal@icai.org or by post to: The Editor, The Chartered Accountant, Journal Section, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, C-1, Sector 1, Noida (UP)- 201301

— Editor