



# How Vedanta is rewriting the rules for working mothers

Madhu Srivastava, CHRO of Vedanta Limited, shares the company's approach to dismantling systemic barriers and fostering a workplace where women can excel both in their careers and as caregivers.



The persistent image of the **working mother** juggling career aspirations with the disproportionate load of unpaid care work is a familiar one. It's a reality that often leads to burnout, stalled career progression, and a subtle yet pervasive drain on workplace gender equity. But what if organisations actively dismantled these systemic barriers, not just as a matter of fairness, but as a core business strategy?

Madhu Srivastava, CHRO of Vedanta Limited, believes this shift isn't just idealistic—it's imperative. At Vedanta, they're moving beyond surface-level policies to embed a deep understanding of the challenges working mothers face into the very fabric of their organisational culture.

## **Recognising the Uneven Load: A Foundation for Change**

“At Vedanta, we acknowledge that unpaid care work—predominantly carried by working mothers—is a systemic barrier to gender equity in the workplace,” Srivastava states firmly. Addressing this requires more than just good intentions; it demands tangible, structural changes.

Flexibility at Vedanta is seen as the norm, not the exception: Recognising that rigid schedules often penalise caregivers, they have embraced hybrid and flexible work arrangements as standard practice. “This isn't a perk granted on a case-by-case basis but a fundamental design principle for sustainable careers,” says Srivastava.

## **Equitable Leave: Sharing the Responsibility**

The company has benchmarked and strengthened its parental and caregiving leave policies to ensure that the burden doesn't fall solely on women. This encourages shared responsibility within families and supports career continuity for mothers.

## **Leveling the Playing Field in Career Progression**

Srivastava says that Vedanta is implementing gender-neutral performance evaluations to combat unconscious bias. “This aims to ensure that women are evaluated based on their contributions, not on assumptions related to their caregiving responsibilities, allowing them to advance at the same pace as their peers.”

## **Building a Supportive Ecosystem**

They understand that supporting **working mothers** extends beyond policy. They are investing in tangible infrastructure, such as on-site childcare at key locations, alongside wellness programs and mentorship opportunities that acknowledge their employees' holistic needs.

## **Leadership's Role: Modeling the Shift from the Top**

For these policies to truly take root, Srivastava emphasises the crucial role of corporate leadership in challenging traditional gender roles and fostering a culture of shared responsibility.

“At Vedanta, we believe leadership has a critical role in reshaping societal norms—starting from the top,” she asserts. This involves:

**Leading by Example:** When senior leaders, both men and women, openly discuss their caregiving roles and establish clear boundaries, it normalises the concept of work-life balance and signals that caregiving is not solely a “women's issue.”

**Redefining Success Metrics:** Vedanta is actively challenging the outdated notion that “face time” equates to productivity. Instead, they are focusing on outcomes, recognising that flexibility doesn't diminish commitment or results.

**Driving Universal Policy Adoption:** Encouraging male employees to take full parental leave and utilize flexible work options is a key strategy in dismantling the stigma associated with men as primary or even secondary caregivers.

**Cultivating a Culture of Allyship:** Leaders at Vedanta are being trained to identify and address unconscious biases, champion inclusive practices, and mentor individuals across various dimensions, including gender and caregiving status.

### **A Business Imperative, Not Just an Inclusion Initiative**

Srivastava underscores the strategic business advantage: "Ultimately, this isn't just a matter of inclusion—it's a business imperative. Retaining and advancing women leaders is central to Vedanta's growth strategy." By creating an environment where women can thrive, Vedanta is not only fostering a more equitable workplace but also strengthening its talent pool and leadership pipeline.

The journey towards true equity is an ongoing process, a "rebalancing of systems," as Srivastava aptly puts it. Vedanta's approach offers a compelling blueprint for how organizations can move beyond rhetoric and implement meaningful change, ultimately creating workplaces where both careers and caregiving responsibilities can flourish.