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India Inc bats for more women to play long game

By Prachi Verma, ET Bureau | Last Updated: Mar 08, 2026, 05:30:00 AM IST

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Synopsis

Companies such as RPG, Vedanta, Flipkart and DBS Bank are providing more flexibility to women employees, including making it easier for them to return to work after a career break, along with organising leadership training and mentorship, and artificial intelligence (AI) skilling.



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New Delhi: Various companies are planning to hire more women in 2026 than they did last year and are also as stepping up efforts to retain female employees, as they seek to enhance gender diversity at the workplace through targeted initiatives, according to industry executives.

Not just a hiring ramp-up, companies are devising targeted strategy for better retention.

Companies such as RPG, **Vedanta**, Flipkart and DBS Bank are providing more flexibility to women employees, including making it easier for them to return to work after a career break, along with organising leadership training and mentorship, and artificial intelligence (AI) skilling.

Global mining, metals and energy company Vedanta is looking to hire around 2,500 women in the coming years, its group chief human resources officer Neha Sharma told ET. Currently, women comprise 3,150, or about 23%, of the group's 13,500 employees.

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Key initiatives aimed at increasing women's ratio at Vedanta include transparent career growth paths, partnerships with women-centric colleges and supportive policies such as flexible hours, childcare sabbaticals and spouse hiring support, according to Sharma.

Strengthening Mid-to-Senior Pipeline

“With automation creating new opportunities, we're focused on upskilling and leadership development to boost women’s participation at different life stages and at all levels,” she said.

Diversified conglomerate RPG is planning to offer enhanced caregiver support and more inclusive family policies, said Pushpall Kapadia, chairperson of its DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) council.



RPG recently made a key structural intervention to ensure returning mothers are evaluated only for the months they were actively working. Currently, its gender diversity ratio is about 17.6% at the group level, with a total of about 6,000 women. “We are consciously working towards improving the share of women in our annual hiring mix, particularly in roles and sectors where representation has traditionally been lower. Our women talent hiring has improved by 10% in the current year over previous year,” Kapadia said.

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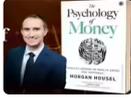


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Zensar, RPG’s technology company, is focusing on building talent and boosting women’s participation across AI, digital engineering, data and cloud at middle management and senior level roles.

Strengthening the mid-to-senior pipeline is critical for building future women leaders within the group, Kapadia said.

Ecommerce firm Flipkart is considering launching a dedicated initiative for returning women professionals, aimed at reintegrating them into the workforce. It is also looking at enhancing its ‘Girls Wanna Code 7.0’ programme for young women engineers to focus on AI-integrated skills.

“Career breaks remain a common inflection point, and our Reimagine returnship programme is built to support women as they re-enter the workforce with confidence, relevance and purpose,” said Trisha Singh, senior vice president and head—HR business partner, DBS Bank India.

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