

'Gender Diversity and Digitalization are new catalysts for Pharma'

20 September 2016 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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At the Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India's (OPPI) annual HR summit on 'Sales Force Management', the role of diversity and digitalization in transforming the industry was actively discussed.

In his inaugural address, Dr Shailesh Ayyangar, President, OPPI and Managing Director, India & Vice President, South Asia, Sanofi, said, "Pharmaceutical companies are quietly metamorphosing from being male-dominated, to developing a more inclusive culture with appreciation for better gender balance. The other important catalyst for change is this era of digitalization, which has changed the way our customers (physicians) and patients source information. Today, ipads are much more than mere e-detail aids. Multiple digital channels, including virtual reality, that can allow viewers to walk a mile in the shoes of someone living with dementia, for instance, are increasing the relevance of our contribution beyond our medicines and vaccines."

"Marketing teams and sales forces are increasingly deploying advanced analytics to understand prescribing behavior and potential patient profiles; reflecting the transformation from bags and brochures to digitalization. Pharmaceutical companies are valuing non-traditional skill sets. Young professionals from industries, such as retail, telecom and other emerging sectors are more drawn to work in an industry that is transforming and hence, is a great place to build careers while also contributing to humanity." continued Dr Ayyangar.

There was a cross-fertilisation of thoughts at the summit, amongst the distinguished speakers from various industries, who shared their experiences on skill development and building capability.

Dr N.S Rajan, Group Chief Human Resources Officer, Tata Group in his key note address, highlighted, "The business of sales calls for stoicism. More attention and focus on formalized self development of sales personnel is critical. In today's changing world we need to redefine processes and as HR professionals, we aim to reorient thinking, policies and structures."

TK Srirang, Group Head - Human Resources, ICICI Bank, in his address said, "The world is nebulous and changing. With the young nation of India becoming one of the fastest growing economies in the world, we are setting foot into a digital world. Automation is now a critical part of business models across sectors. There is an urgent need to invest in capacity and up skilling for the workforce to adapt to the changes of tomorrow."

Highlighting the special session on diversity and inclusion, Kanchana TK, Director General, OPPI, said, "Any new HR intervention requires a clear strategic direction and strong focus from senior leadership. We see this happening right now in our industry. Leaders have begun to consciously look at inclusions, be it gender or ability and are constantly scouting for building assets in their respective teams. Today, building an inclusive HR capital is the success mantra for organisations to remain competitive."