



The secret - Always striving for **success**

Oorjita Lath,
National Head - Corporate Specialty at ABIBL

If you entered, Oorjita Lath's home, on a weekend, you are likely to get some freshly made pizzas and pastas. Seven years since Oorjita has joined ABIBL, her passion and dedication to the job continues. But what is even more appealing is the fact that, she still looks to face challenges head-on. Keep going we say!

Tell us about your yourself.

I have been a part of ABIBL for 7 years with nearly 20 years of experience in the insurance industry. As far as my educational background is concerned, I have done my MBA in Finance and Graduation in Math. With regards to my personal background, I belong to a family of educationalists. My father was an English professor at Allahabad University and my mother was a teacher. Being educationalists, right from my **childhood**, a sense of **learning and discipline was instilled among us** (her brother and sister).

How do you spend most of your days?

I like my profile which lets me meet new people and learn about their businesses and operations. I am also fond of travelling. On most weekends what I truly enjoy is having friends around. But cooking is my stress-buster and so during the weekends, I like to prepare a dish for the family, like pasta or pizza. My kids, truly enjoy it.

That's very interesting. How was your childhood?

We lived at Allahabad for a while, but with the passing of my father (at the age of 6), we shifted to Lucknow. In the new city, my **mother** took a job as a teacher and **put in a**



lot of hard work to raise my two siblings and myself.

What were some of the 'early inspirations', 'moments' in your life that propelled you further?

I think every challenge we face in our life can be an inspiration for us to propel further. **Whenever I was faced with challenges, I worked with double the determination.** I have seen quite a lot of struggle in my early life and that has led me to work harder. Definitely, my mother has been a source of inspiration and we owe it to her to become successful in our lives and careers.

How did you set about pursuing your dreams, achieving your goal?

Back in 1999, after working with a central government organisation, I was offered an underwriting position at a top multinational company. I found the profile very interesting. Thus, it was a matter of chance and luck that I became an underwriter and I got my underwriting training in fact from Underwriters at Chicago. From there on the journey has been interesting. I definitely enjoyed this line of business and liability insurance is a specialised domain.

Very often we hear people say that 'behind every successful man there is a woman', can the same be said for you in reverse 'behind every successful your success is your husband.

Yeah, I would definitely agree with this. We are working parents and definitely support each other's career. There is a lot of travel, a lot of requirements of the job and unless you get support from your spouse, you cannot be successful. **As I have supported him in his career, so he has supported in mine.**

At work do you recall any instances which motivated you to persevere more, made you more determined than ever to succeed?

Recently I shifted to Delhi. As a team we all sat together to brainstorm, as to why we were not doing well in the region. We all worked together and I am proud to say the region has completely turned around. The region has shown a more than 100% year-on-year growth and two people from my team received the Pride Award. Definitely the motivation of the team is outstanding and now we are looking at even bigger markers.

Is anyone within ABFSG, an inspiration to you and why?

I am inspired by **Ms. Pinky Mehta, CFO of ABNL**, I really admire her **attention to detail and the comfort she gives** to everyone around and brings out the best in us, there is a lot to learn from her.

Today as more women are entering the workforce what are changes you would like to see at the workplace, which you think can inspire women achieve more?

I think, at ABFSG these kinds of changes are already taking place. Very recently, flexi timings have been introduced. Such changes help women in work-life management. I have seen a lot of women that have shied away from taking a

"I think every challenge we face in our life can be an inspiration for us to propel further."

challenging role, now taking up these responsibilities.

What 'career mantra' you believe, young women joining ABFSG should follow?

Women should not take a back seat. Till the time they are working in the corporate environment, they should give their 200% and never shy away from taking any challenges or bigger roles. I have often seen women shying away from bigger challenges, thinking they might not be able to balance their work and personal life. I have seen that, when women are given more responsibility, they have done extremely well, although they might have been shying away from the same. **So I think, as seniors we should also be mentoring them and helping them take on bigger responsibilities.**

"My mother has been a source of inspiration and we owe it to her to become successful in our life and careers."



KNOWING your priorities is the root to **SUCCESS**

Aparna Samant,
Head – Product Management, Actuarial, BSLI

Aparna Samant, admits she has three main passions – reading (not a day when she doesn't have a book in a hand), watching movies (every weekend you can catch her watching latest movies) and travelling (well, whenever she can). However, her latest hobby seems to be cooking with her daughter.

With more than 11 years of experience with Birla Sunlife, she is showing working-mothers how it can be done. Starting out in Sales, now as the Head of Product Management, her funda remains "Get Your Priorities Right".

Tell us about your early childhood

Born and brought up in Mumbai, I grew up with two elder brothers. so it suffices to say, I was a **Tomboy** in my early days. My mother, a strong influence in my life, was my most ardent supporter till the day she passed away. In my family **academics was and is of high priority** with the belief that **education provides a strong foundation** to face the challenges of life.



After graduating in life sciences, how did you come about joining the financial world?

Career options at that time meant research work and I knew it would not have suited me, rather it would have only stifled me. I always knew **I wanted to be working with people** and thus, began my journey to achieve Masters in Marketing.

What are some of your early inspirations, moments in your life that propelled you further?

During campus placements, I got selected to work with a realty firm. Straight out of college with no prior experience, my first stint in the company was in sales with team members who had 15 to 20 years of experience. It was a huge challenge and **to make it tougher, I was the only girl.** But I persevered and gradually won their confidence by investing longer hours on reading up, spending time on the sites with the engineers to understand the process and the various technical matters. Eventually, **this groundwork helped me strengthen my knowledge** which led me to develop confidence, getting respect from my peers and being treated as an equal.

Were you always sure of your goals and where you wanted to reach or was it a process of discovery for you?

From my childhood, I have always been more of a people's person. So I knew that, I wanted to work in a field where I could interact with people, which was one of my core strengths. Hence marketing was my major and I did very well in those subjects. Ironically, today I head the product management team and that too in a life insurance company. So this has been a process of discovery.

Did you encounter 'glass ceilings' or is it a myth?

I don't think it's a myth, but **how to handle it also depends on individuals.** I can focus on that aspect and become negative or think there is a silver lining in every cloud and focus on the positive. It's very important to have self conviction and self belief. Most importantly, it's critical to know when to let go of a situation instead of letting it fester and create a negative aura. That impacts not just your professional life but somewhere also your personal life, which is just not worth.

They say that a woman has to juggle multiple roles in life – how have these roles shaped you, how do you manage to keep your work-life balance intact and achieve success at work.

I think it's very important to **be clear about your priorities** – whether it's your family, work or something else. These priorities do change at different stages of life – for instance, when I started working my focus was very clear – work as I had no other responsibilities. When I had my daughter, my focus changed to the well-being of my child and building a bond in the initial months. Hence, I took a nine-month sabbatical after I delivered my first child. I have always been fortunate to have a good work-life balance. The only clear definition I try and maintain is – **weekdays are dedicated to the office and weekends are family time.** However, there are times when there are work pressures. But I can only face these challenges, because of the **tremendous support of my family**, which is not just limited to my husband or parents, but my siblings their spouses, kids and my daughter.

At work do you recall any instances which motivate you to persevere more, made you more determined than ever, to succeed?

Over my career span, I have worked in Sales (briefly), Marketing and Branding (mostly) and Product Management (current role). **Different roles and experiences have exposed me to the various aspects in the field.** Thus, helping me to shape my thinking to reason holistically and grow as an individual.

How did the group or ABFSG support you in your career journey?

More than the formal training in BSLI, it has been the different individuals across levels and functions who taught me, enabled me and helped me achieve my goals. I believe most individual can provide some value addition, provided there is a willingness to learn.

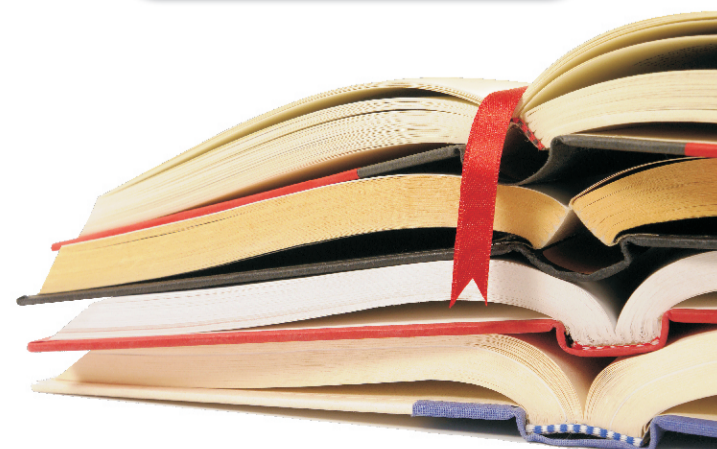
Today as more women are entering the workforce, what are some of the changes you would like to see at the workplace, which you think can inspire them to do better and achieve more.

I have seen many women who come in that are extremely ambitious and really grow fast. It can be done, there are no two ways about it. But you can only achieve that, if you have a **clarity of thought and are willing to put in hard work and focus.**

What is the advice you would like to share with colleagues across ABFSG, which will help them propel further in their careers?

If you are true to your values, prepared to work hard in a smart manner without compromising on ethics or taking shortcuts, eventually, you will succeed and be rewarded for it. Guaranteed you'll sleep peacefully every night and lead a stress-free life.

"You can look at it, be affected by it and turn negative or you can think there is a silver lining in every situation and focus on the positive."





Take **AIM** and you will find your **DESTINATION**

Ananya Maitra,
Head Syndication
Aditya Birla Infrastructure Finance

For Ananya Maitra, work is an adventure to learn something new and a chance to discover the wonders of her work.

Tell us some details of your personal background

I come from a nuclear family in Kolkata comprising of my parents and sister. At home, we were groomed to believe that we could achieve anything as long as we worked hard and remained helpful to others. I completed my graduation with Honours in Physics from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata and decided to take up management. During my Masters, I chose to specialise in Financial Management.



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What were some of your early inspirations that propelled you further?

My earliest inspiration was my mother, who gave up a thriving career as a school teacher to give her entire attention to raise us.

Were you always sure of your goals or was it a process of discovery?

For a long time, I had a completely different idea of who I wanted to be. Gradually, I discovered that the financial sector appealed the most to me. Despite the suggestions of my teachers, I took up Finance as a specialisation in Management. I was extremely lucky to have found a mentor in my first workplace. He showed me the ropes and modalities of arranging bank finance. Gradually, whenever I got a more challenging role, I took it up, sometimes as an adventure. I knew that I was on a learning journey that would help me specialise in this field.

As a woman did you ever encounter 'glass ceilings' or is it a myth?

The "glass ceiling" is surely not a myth. I've always felt that a woman had to prove herself twice over in order to be counted. Along this journey, I have been lucky to have the support of my managers in various organisations to help me challenge such stereotypes. In fact, I rejoined ABFSG (after spending more than 5 years at Hindalco, winning the Chairman's Award for Young Professional in 2006 and at other organisations) as the Group placed the highest value on merit and was actively engaged in increasing diversity at the work place.

It is said that a woman has to juggle multiple roles – how have these roles shaped you and how do you manage to keep your work-life balance intact?

Personally I don't see work and life as two different aspects in a person's life. When one loves what one is doing, whether at home or work or anywhere else, one always finds the time to do it, while prioritising different activities. Having a balanced life is an iterative process which gets better with experience. We need to set our own life goals and consciously manage our time while setting forth to achieve them.

How did the group or ABFSG support you in your career journey?

The Group gave a big fillip to my career, by giving me the opportunity to gain experience in different aspects of fund raising at Hindalco. At ABFSG, I could finally land my dream role of heading the syndication business with immense support from our CEO, Mr. Tushar Shah, who has placed his entire faith in me and has given me freedom to build the team and scale up the business.

Anyone within the group, who inspires you?

For his truly inspiring nature, his special connect with each employee across the board, for his vision for a better future, I am continuously inspired by Ajay (Srinivasan), CEO, ABFSG. I feel proud to be part of a Business Group headed by Ajay, who inspires us all to scale the insurmountable everyday with empathy.

As more women get empowered and enter the workforce, what are some of the changes you would like to see at the workplace?

The most important change that is needed in today's workplaces for women to perform better, is a change in mindset. Workshops highlighting diversity in the

workplace can serve as inspirational examples for all to emulate. ABFSG has already introduced several women friendly measures such as flexi timings, increased maternity leave, work from home, etc. Having a crèche for children close to the work place is a great way to help women join back to work soon after maternity leave.

Any special 'career mantra' for the young women within ABFSG?

My career mantra to all young women would be, that when you are faced with challenges at work, that's when you are learning as well as getting the opportunity to create an impact at work. Dedication and hard work are as relevant as working smart and thinking out of the box in everyday scenarios. Keep going where your heart desires and you shall achieve it.

"We need to set our own life goals and consciously manage our time while setting forth to achieve them."



A fine balance of **INTEGRITY** and **SKILL**

Delshad Damle,
Associate Vice President – Customer service.
Aditya Birla Finance Ltd.

For Delshad Damle, the best way to succeed is to respect and love the work that you do and enjoy every experience, to help you propel further.



"To me it's about managing people, nurturing and mentoring them. It is the part of the role I enjoy the most."

Do share some details of your personal background with us.

I have been working in the financial service industry since 1995 and ever since I have been servicing customer needs, while working a bit in operations. Since being a part of this field, I have seen a lot of changes. At home, I am a mum to a 7-year-old daughter. I enjoy reading fiction and sci-fi novels and traveling.

What were some of the 'early inspirations' in your life that propelled you further?

My school principal and my social studies teacher, Shirin Darasha, was an amazing lady. She was an unapologetic feminist. She hated labels, be it bright student, average student, she would not want to label anybody. She thought us to be better human beings. She used to always say be impartial to bold beginnings. I think a lot of my classmates and me, are where we are because of her inspiration.

Were you always sure of your goals and where you wanted to reach or was it a process of discovery for you?

I was very clear I wanted to work in the corporate world. I had working parents. So, I never dreamt of a situation where I wasn't working, but financial service kind of happened to me. I got a job at Standard Chartered Service Team and the field appealed to me.

What has been the most fulfilling role at work?

It will be very difficult for me to define a particular role. To me it's about managing people, nurturing and mentoring them. It is the part of the role I enjoy the most. Coaching the team and helping them achieve their targets.

How do you enjoy weekends?

I try to spend my entire time with my daughter. So she does rhythmic gymnastics, where she competes for the district level and I drop her off for practice. She is also very fond of arts, so if there are any art related events I take her to see them. Even when we were in London, I made sure she visited all the art galleries there. We chat, her little conversations are so profound at times.

Is she your personal motivation?

Yeah! I want her to look back and say that's my mother. She is the reason I push myself further.

Very often we hear people say that 'behind every successful man there is a woman', can the same be said for you in reverse 'behind every successful woman there is a man'?

My husband is a huge support for me. Again I have been fortunate to have a very supportive family. They pitch in. I don't think there are any roles defined. My husband, being a lawyer, pitches in with my daughter as he has flexible working hours. There is definitely a lot of comfort in knowing that when you have to work late, there is somebody going to be home to take care of your daughter.

At work do you recall any instances which motivated you to persevere more, made you more determined than ever to succeed? Do share them with us

I have learnt a lot from every team I have been in. Each challenge, when you get down to it, is basically something which is difficult to achieve or where the timelines are too tight. Thus, you stretch yourself and manage to push yourself further to achieve that goal. So it's not a particular individual, rather each experience that has been fulfilling.

What makes you give your best at ABFSG?

It's the culture, I think. The culture is very different from the places I have worked. It is result oriented. There is a flexibility, there is leadership. You are allowed to make mistakes. You are allowed breathing space and the overall quality of the people at the helm, make a difference in the way you perceive the organisation. You feel proud to be a part of the organisation.

Any special 'career mantra' for the young women within ABFSG?

It's a very different culture for the younger generation. It is important for them to know that they should not magnify every minute setback and think of it as the end of the world, rather just keep on pursuing. There are some days when you feel you have to just put one foot ahead of the other and keep moving. But that's okay. If you really have a goal or dream, then you should pursue it, no matter what.

"The culture is very different from the places I have worked. It is result oriented. There is a flexibility, there is leadership."

