

On the Job, On Their Terms: Why Flexi-Staffing Is Emerging as the Key to Women's Economic Inclusion

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The Government of India has identified women as one of the four central pillars essential to realizing the vision of *ViksitBharat@2047*. The rise in Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR), from 23.3% (2017-18) to 41.7% (2023-24) signals a positive

While these initiatives address the supply side of formal employment, the demand side needs attention. Despite rising employability, women's transition into the workforce remains leaky due to the dual burden of care responsibilities, safety concerns, and mobility barriers. As a result, many women are pushed toward self-employment, often as a form of economic compulsion rather than choice. So the emerging question is—Can we create more jobs and match the growing aspirations of women?

What is Flexi Staffing and Why it works for Women

Flexi staffing i.e., hiring of semi-skilled frontline employees on a project basis, meet the fluctuating needs of the industry. Once seen as a stop-gap solution, it has evolved into a robust employment engine that supports formalization and skilling. It offers a low barrier route to enter/re-enter diverse sectors with ease.

The Indian Staffing Federation (ISF), representing over 100 leading staffing companies, reported a [18.5%](#) YoY growth in FY 2024-25, adding 2.2 lakh new jobs and expanding the flexi workforce to 1.7 million in sectors like, FMCG, E-commerce, Manufacturing, Healthcare, Retail, Logistics, Banking, Energy etc . While women comprise only 23-25% of this workforce, the segment shows promise in high-growth industries like IT, where women make up 35-37% of the flexi talent pool, reaching up to 45% in Delhi-NCR.

Flexi staffing also bridges the gap between government skilling schemes like DDUGKY, PMKVY, ITI programs and real-time job demand. It operates across sectors providing access to diverse opportunities. For many women, who earlier left the workforce, it offers a soft re-entry into the formal workforce with contracts, regular pay, and financial benefits like ESIC, EPFO, and health insurance. Take Prachi Verma (name changed), an associate placed by Qess Corp at Star Health Insurance in Lucknow District. *"I joined Star Health after 2 years of maternity break. It was an entry-level position—but it gave me a foot in the door. That first step made all the difference."* she recalled.



Skilling on the Job

While flexi staffing helps bring women into the workforce, retention remains a challenge. A case study by Udaiti Foundation found that women in flexi roles have the average job tenure of six months, with the highest attrition in the first 90 days. A key driver to mitigate this and ensure upward mobility is upskilling, a key feature of flexi staffing. *“Women don’t have the luxury of pursuing extra courses outside their jobs because of caregiving duties. Companies must bring learning opportunities into the workplace,”* shared Aarti Deshmukh (name changed), HR representative at Vodafone Idea placed by Quess Corp in Kanpur district. While highlighting the critical role of mentorship, she shared that *“On the job mentorship and training can be a lifeline to grow their careers.”*

The Missing Link: Building Institutional Pathways

Employment fairs by government departments helps place first time jobseekers. Such drives are valuable, however with the right institutional support, they have the potential to go beyond that and enable women’s re-entry, career shift and upward mobility after career breaks. By creating an institutional layer, flexi staffing agencies can connect the supply of skilled women to actual sectoral demand.

What’s needed is a robust matchmaking ecosystem that aligns skilling with the real-time demand, reduce placement frictions, and build data systems that track outcomes like retention, career progression, and attrition by gender. The government and private sector must come together to co-create platforms, provide targeted incentives, and activate local-level enablers such as dormitory housing and advancing mobility in high-demand clusters.

Few organizations are already demonstrating what such partnerships can look like. Qness Corp, a leading staffing firm, has placed over 85,000 women in the past three years. Women make up 55% of its IT flexi workforce—proof that sector-specific strategies work. The Udaiti Foundation has partnered with Qness Corp and Directorate of Employment in Uttar Pradesh, to pilot a gender focused flexi-staffing model that links training with real-time jobs, integrates job APIs into government platforms, and delivers financial literacy modules to improve retention.



What's Next: Unlocking 1.8 Million Jobs

According to FSG's report on '*Growing Livelihood Opportunities for Women*', the flexi staffing sector could generate 1.8 million jobs for women by 2026. Realization of this potential requires systemic support from both the government and private sector employers. While incentivizing gender-inclusive hiring, strengthening localised enablers and improving gender-disaggregated labour market data systems can help in achieving this target.

The very first step is creation of a seamless channel that links the government's vast skilling and training ecosystem with the wide spectrum of sectoral job opportunities which are uniquely positioned and offered under one stop platform. Flexi staffing is no longer just a short-term employment fix, it is a gateway to formalization, skill development, and long-term economic opportunity leading to empowerment. For millions of Indian women

standing at the edge of the labour market, it may be the bridge they need to cross over into safe, stable, and dignified work.

Women are not just the beneficiaries of development but they are its architects and as India advances towards the vision of *Vikist Bharat@2047*, our growth story must be

powered by inclusive models that don't just focus on creating jobs but also expand, enable and invest in women's economic potential.