



If you can dream it, you can do it!

B. K. Menik Buddhini

With team work, big issues become tiny entities to solve. With co-ordination, the unmanageable becomes organized. With education, one is equipped with the tools to tackle problems. And with small but steady steps, one can reach their destination.



Working as the Director of the company Board and Director of Admin and Marketing, 37 year old Mrs.B.K.Menik Buddhini has achieved great heights in the cashew industry. The Sri Lankan has over a decade worth of experience in this field and holds an Advance Diploma in Entrepreneurial Business Management and National Diploma in Teaching English Language.

Daddy's little girl

Born in a poor household, she grew up admiring her father who invented practical machinery solutions for problems existing in food processing industries. As a child, she was fascinated by this and used to help him out in his works. She obtained patents for his inventions & did some documentation works at his proprietorship organization, Buddhi Industries. She even painted and cut iron for the machinery.



Building a formal organization

Such a family back ground made her quit her government job as a school teacher and inspired her to build Buddhi Industries Private Ltd. And Buddhi International Engineering Private Ltd. Essentially, her primary role was to convert the informal set up to a formal organization.

Although she did not have any prior experience or education in the cashew field as such, seeing her mother struggle to extend a helping hand to her father and undertake all chores within her reach taught Mrs Menik to never underestimate the power of a woman.

Attracted by the sector's unique product offering

Thus, although their initial goal was to manufacture machineries, through their research and findings, they found out about processing techniques as well and decided to explore it. Mrs Menik was especially attracted towards the cashew market due to its unique product offering. In order to acquire the skills for the job, she attended some short term training courses conducted by various government and non-government based organizations along with doing her bit of research on the internet to educate herself on the formal procedures including International Marketing, Production, HR and Accounts among others.

Passionate to learn everyday

Following this, she applied for higher studies in University of Sri Jaywardenepura, Sri Lanka and enrolled for a Diploma and Advance Diploma in Entrepreneurial Business Management which is equivalent to a B.Sc Entrepreneurship degree. Currently she is pursuing her Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship from the same University.

The academic aspect aside, to top it all, she is of the opinion that her experience and self-studies have made her skilled to handle such an important post.



It's a planned routine

Giving an insight of her everyday schedule, Mrs Menik states that her day starts early in the morning which involves doing her household chores followed by dropping her children to their school. She begins her office work around 8 a.m. by checking and responding to her e-mails, conducting short meetings with the staff of all departments to help them with their daily works, clear any doubts they may have and also provide assistance in decision making.

She makes sure to engage in meetings with the MD to get his consultancies or clearance on any of the decisions that she may have taken. They also go on to discuss the various long term plan progress of the company. While this keeps her busy in the morning, she takes a break from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. before resuming with the office work. In this segment, she spends time leading the corporate planning process which involves conducting annual meetings, annual planning of all departments, monthly planning of all departments, progress review meetings; scheduling & holding Director Board meetings, monthly management progress meetings, general meetings and scheduling various events.

She also takes care of coordinating with the top management in critical decision making, welcoming visitors, undertaking marketing related works as the Management Representative of Company, initiating market research and making the rest of the employees aware of the top trends in management. Apart from all this, she interacts with banks and other stake holders to strike the best deal along with intermediating issues of the staff and the workers by simply assisting all departments.

While that is a long list of her activities, she tries to do justice to every field of her work, never compromising on the



standards. She says that every day comes with new challenges and although sometimes it's hard to find a fixed pattern of it, she is extremely satisfied with her current position.

Standing out and taking the lead

In her enterprise of about 100 employees, only six of them are women and the fact that she plays such



an important role in the industry is commendable. She also says the company offers benefits to the women staff by providing maternity leave and flexible working hours.

Speaking of their products in specific, she guarantees they are unique because they are always updated with innovation from the field of Research and Development. She takes pride when she informs us of the high value their brand name holds in the market.

Going by their vision, they hope to enrich people’s lives through invention & innovation. That is their uniqueness, she smiles.

A fair policy and promoting equality

When asked about the labor activity in the region, she admits it gets difficult to find skilled labor. Most of the workers in the company are recruited from vocational training centers and they are annually given trainings directed towards receiving the next NVQ level. All facilities for the trainings and Practical exam are provided by the company. They also adopt a fair policy and have an equal salary pay scheme for both men and women workers.

Respect is the first lesson

Elaborating on the situation when it comes to dealing with the male staff, Mrs Menik lets us know that during the initial stages of the work, it was a rocky ride but as she spent more time with them and gathered experience, she could feel things getting easier. At this note, she stresses on the importance of respecting all humans for who they are and not for the position they hold.

The voice of the organization

Speaking of some of the challenges she encounters, Mrs Menik points out that the main hurdle is to acquire the management knowledge to make it a well-established and smooth flowing organization. She confesses that when she entered in to international marketing in 2009, she was unaware of the basics, let alone mastering the bigger objectives.



Thus, acquiring knowledge related to the field and gathering authentic information along with taking care of the export was another task, she recalls. Right from the beginning, she has been the voice of the organization and while she does not complain about this, it has earned her both stones and flowers on behalf of the company.

Thank God for technology!

Speaking of her family and how she strikes a balance with personal life, she credits technology for easing many issues and when she is required to stay outdoors for long hours or work from a distance, she is glad to be able to communicate with her family through her phone. She also takes a break from work every day to spend time with her three children and manage her household chores.

She admits that juggling between her work, study and personal life sometimes poses to be a challenge and she is still struggling to manage it all. However, she gives credit to the flexible working hours and the invention of smartphones that ease the affairs a great deal. Besides, considering that she chose to correlate the assignments of the higher studies she did based on her organization ensured the parallel fulfillment of her objectives towards the company.

Working alongside family – boon or bane?

While she is glad to have her husband, parents, her siblings and their spouses work alongside her in the same field, she does not deny the interference of the family ties in the business which can sometimes become a matter of concern. However, for the most part of it, they are able to coordinate well. It was when the enterprise was still forming when she felt it a task because as she recalls, although the family ties were very strong, they did not have a very positive effect in converting the organization into a formal setup. This was the case because the relationships were brought into the professional setting and business decisions were influenced by them. Due to this, she found change management a demanding affair.

To overcome such a hurdle, she says, having a good coordination among all family members and making them feel as part of change initiators comes in handy.



While that is just a glimpse of it, she acknowledges her husband and the family as a whole for their love and support throughout her life.

The advantage of a solid educational platform

Speaking of her ambitions and bigger dreams, Mrs Menik dedicatedly says that her profession constitutes half her life. She reminisces the time in 2010 when she was working hard and struggling to achieve the goals of the organization without management skills of theoretical knowledge. This was followed by her receiving the dual diplomas in the years to come which helped her be thorough with the root courses behind work success and failures. This enabled her to lead the process of building the company's quality management system while complying with the ISO and made her more competent in management practices.

As for her current stance, her urge to pursue a Master's in Entrepreneurship has equipped her to lead the process in incorporating Buddhi International Engineering Private Ltd. which is approved under the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka.

A successful woman, a recognized personality

Since her father is the MD who introduced her to the international market, she credits her success to him, along with all the hard work that she has put in. This also makes her confidently state despite men outweighing the women in number, she is recognized in the cashew sector.

As for the obstacles that prevent women from emerging as leaders in this industry, she is of the opinion that many a times women tend to be within their comfort zone. She sites her own example where she used to live such a life but a strong belief and enough courage helped her to strive for more, and inspired her to not drown in the stream but to swim with her head high. Thus, if a woman wishes to, there's nothing that can stop her!

Another reason she sights is that women usually immerse themselves in household chores which includes raising children all by themselves and this in turn prevents them from seeing beyond. If they can manage their priorities and time, Mrs Menik is sure they'd be surprised by their brilliance.

Advice inspired by her experience

Education of women, she says, helps them build a good and positive attitude and inspires them to take up tasks outside the household. Also, finding ways to stay connected with the world, updating their knowledge on cashew processing trends and trying to better the traditional methods and the said thinking pattern, following role models, making use of every opportunity for moving with the giants in the cashew sector, are some of the many suggestions she generously provides to help women dream bigger.

The most prominent of all this, she reinforces, is in helping them build their mindset and inspire them to become successful Entrepreneurs in the industry.

Focusing on dual growth

Mrs Menik, we can thus see, is a woman of vision who believes that if she can dream it, she can do it! Her vast knowledge and her quench to still learn has helped her imbibe a number of great values that has not only helped the industry grow, but has contributed to personal growth as well. Her active participation in the organization innovated by her father and her desire to take it to greater heights is worth appreciation. We hope she continues to be the strong woman she is, and with her positive outlook and confidence, she is definitely a woman to watch out for in the cashew industry!

