Cognizant Unveils Shakti to Advance Women Leadership in Technology

Achieves nearly 40% women workforce in India;partners with nasscom to drive best diversity and inclusion practices industrywide

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Cognizant (NASDAQ: CTSH), one of the world's leading professional services companies, today unveiled - *Shakti* - a unified framework of women-centric programs and policies to accelerate careers and boost women leadership in technology. Additionally, Cognizant has partnered with nasscom to establish and prioritize best practices with a shared goal of making diversity and inclusion (D&I) a key differentiator of India's tech sector.

"In keeping with our priority to become an employer of choice in our industry, Cognizant is committed to weaving diversity and inclusion into everything we do—how we recruit and hire, develop, promote, engage and retain our talent," said Ravi Kumar S, CEO, Cognizant. "Shakti will catalyze our efforts to enable more women to advance their careers and reach their full potential. Growth, innovation, and client-centricity all require a diverse and inclusive workforce, doubly so as generative AI permeates the workplace. We will see the most essential human skill shift from problem-solving to problem-finding, putting a premium on cognitive diversity."

In India, nearly 40% of Cognizant's associates are women as compared to the IT industry gender diversity average of 36%. More than half of 13 Cognizant centers in the country have crossed over 40% in their women workforce, with two of the largest centers being currently led by women leaders.

Speaking at the launch, Debjani Ghosh, President, nasscom said: "The technology industry in India today has on average 36% of women representation in its workforce. Partnerships are key towards our shared goal as an industry of creating a more empathetic, inclusive, and diverse tech industry. At nasscom, we believe prioritizing best practices and measuring consistently is a critical component to ensure organizations can accelerate their diversity, equity and inclusion journeys. We continue to drive exchange of insights, share best practices and policies, raise awareness to help organizations intentionally embed inclusion efforts into their culture and values, drive innovation, foster stronger customer and stakeholder relationships, and ultimately achieve long-term success."

Through Shakti, Cognizant aims to reframe current programs and policies and bring all women-centric initiatives under one umbrella for greater impact. Shakti will include the recently introduced - *RISE* - a leadership development program for mid-level women associates in India; 'Propel' a global leadership development program focused on empowering women at senior levels to accelerate their careers through coaching and mentoring; 'Returnship' a 12-week paid program focused on upskilling to return to work after a career break; and 'Be Gritty' that trains fresh campus hires to develop a growth mindset.

Additionally, Cognizant has launched a company-wide allyship program. By understanding the challenges women face at work and helping address the biases they encounter, male allies make a significant difference in creating a more inclusive workplace. The company is also empowering its associates with inclusive leadership training and promoting a sense of belonging through dedicated affinity groups. The Women Empowered Affinity Group, with around 50,000 members and allies based in India, aims to improve the work experience for women and create impact for the business.

Cognizant also unveiled a year-long campaign to highlight the company's global, long-term dedication to fostering an inclusive workplace for women by spotlighting their contributions and real-life stories. The inspirational stories attest to the effectiveness of empowering initiatives in assisting women to reach their full potential, develop personally and professionally at every stage of their careers, and turn their passion into leadership. The campaign launch video can be viewed here.

Cognizant believes diversity and inclusion behaviors really take hold when there is leadership engagement and accountability to drive policies and initiatives across each leader's organization. As an ongoing practice, the company engages the leadership to not only implement policies but also assess its impact.

About Cognizant
Cognizant (Nasdaq: CTSH) engineers modern businesses. We help our clients modernize technology, reimagine processes and transform experiences so they can stay ahead in our fast-changing world. Together, we're improving everyday life. See how at www.cognizant.com or @cognizant.

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