

## STORIES

## These 3 successful entrepreneurs recall their first day at their first jobs

By Sharika Nair | August 7, 2017



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*Experience speaks. Three amazing women share learnings that will help you make the best of your new job.*

The first day at one's first job is a huge milestone, an experience that stays with us all our lives. After all, starting one's career marks a transition, the point at which one starts feeling like and getting treated as an adult. So, young people who have finally finished with their education and have newly walked into their workplaces are sure to be excited, but with butterflies in their stomach.

As the years pass by, though, the stress and fears are forgotten and only the wealth of experience remains. Three [successful entrepreneurs](#) reminisce their first day at work and



*From left: Swati Bhargava of CashKaro, Rekha Babu of Soothika and Daisy Tanwani of Pinklay.*

**Daisy Tanwani, [the founder of toys and home décor startup Pinklay](#)**, recalls, "I had just finished a degree in journalism from one of Mumbai's best colleges. My plan was to stay on in Mumbai and work with a leading newsroom, but rarely does life go as we plan. I had to return to my hometown Jaipur, and not being one to sit idle I looked for a job immediately. I was fortunate to find my first job soon enough in a publishing house that published diamond and jewellery trade magazines. My superiors were very kind and supportive. However, it was a family-run business, much different from a corporate setup."

"My first day at work, I was given a work desk in a room which could well be a garage convert, a desert cooler for my comfort, and an ancient desktop computer for me to work on, a far cry from swanky offices in the metros. But, somehow, the opportunity seemed bigger than the adversity. I quickly realised I had an advantage here, I could do more, my ideas would be considered, and I wouldn't be a newbie moving files from one table to another. I could work with the top man directly and learn so much more in a shorter time. And I was right; I soon moved into a much nicer office, I got a laptop, and most importantly, was able to learn a lot at work. Within a year, the management trusted me enough to choose me to cover the ICA conference in Dubai. I was the only one from India and at 21, I was the youngest too. After that, I have worked with several MNCs and

**Rekha Babu, [the founder of Cochin-based Ayurvedic startup Soothika](#)** who is also on the board of two schools in Kerala, says, "I started my career at Tata Motors. After a few days' training in Mumbai, I joined the regional office in Cochin. My first day was honestly very scary as I felt I was a total misfit. But looking back, I think the nervousness was a good thing since it kept me on my toes. I was completely unprepared for the dynamics of a fairly big-sized team with a good amount of office politics. However, whatever I have achieved in my entrepreneurial journey has been built on the foundation laid during the one and a half years at my first job. In fact, I think an entrepreneur should ideally work in the corporate world to gain an understanding of the processes and discipline that a bigger organisation demands before venturing into his or her startup."

**Swati Bhargava, [co-founder of leading cashback site CashKaro](#)**, says, "I remember my first day at Goldman Sachs's London office clearly. I joined the structured credit desk within investment banking. I had heard that Goldman only hires toppers of universities so on my first day, I was admittedly feeling intimidated but I had put on a very confident face! Also, there were so few women that the men-women ratio really struck me. I learnt that gender diversity in the investment banking division was worse compared to other divisions. I had clearly walked into a man's world without knowing it!"

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**However, everyone was really supportive and I got used to being the only girl around in meetings, in my team, and our socials.**

"In the first half of my first day at work, everyone who joined in my class attended an induction session in the auditorium where we were introduced to all the divisions within Goldman Sachs. In the second half, I joined my team at our desk and my associate gave me a term sheet to read, which he wanted by the end of that day. I needed to summarise the document and suggest what points could be changed/may not work in our favour. I felt lost as I didn't even know what some of those terms meant! He actually made me do that exercise for five straight days and with every day, my comments got better and better. Today, those days have become a fond memory."

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**Also read: [Swati Bhargava says she lives by the dictum 'Karm karo, phal ki chinta mat karo'](#)**

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Daisy says,

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**My advice is based on my experience — opportunity is bigger than adversity, always! Things never come served on a platter — if they do, be worried! Shed every bit of entitlement and earn your way up!**

Rekha says, "My tips to youngsters who are joining the workforce (for the first time or could be a change of organisation) are:

- Listen
- Observe
- Speak

"Be humble; your attitude and cultural fit in the organisation matters a lot. Sell your personal story and your intention of being a team player. Remember, your basic job is expected of you; what more can you contribute to your organisation is the question."

Swati says, "I think whether it's a new experience, transfer, or promotion, there's always a challenge of fitting into the new culture. To young people joining the workforce, I would say use the first few weeks to learn about your job and know as many people as you can. Say hello and introduce yourself to colleagues around the office and at other meeting points such as in the lift, cafeteria, or lunch breaks."

"Try not to form a group immediately because you may be finding rapport with some people, but you're alienating everyone else; so, stick to positive interactions and avoid polarising discussions that may pit you against your potential new pal. It's always good to know everybody because part of enrichment and education is to learn from a lot of different people."

"One last tip — your work should speak for itself and at that point, it doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman. We may sometimes have to deal with stereotypes that question a woman's ability to work in tech or finance or simply her stability at work."

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