



# Effect of Upskilling on Improving Women's Workforce Participation in India

An Impact Study by Google and Avtar





Upskilling for Indian Women

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# Foreword 1

## Mr. Arijit Sarker

*Vice President, gTech Customer Experience, Google India*

Google's mission to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful is as relevant today as it was when we were founded in 1998. We are now focused on building an even more helpful Google for everyone. We aspire to give billions of people the tools they need to increase their knowledge, health, happiness, and success. Operating at this scale brings an elevated level of responsibility to everything we do. As Google continues to grow, we have a responsibility to scale our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and increase pathways to careers in the cities, sites, and countries Google calls home.

As expert practitioners and leaders in the digital advertising and marketing space, in 2020 Google introduced DigiPivot in India. DigiPivot is a skilling program designed for women who are looking to return to their corporate careers after a break or simply planning to make mid-career shifts to digital marketing. Developed jointly in association with Avtar, The Power of Diversity and the prestigious Center of Executive Education at the Indian School of Business, the program aims to influence the overall gender representation in the digital marketing landscape in India and will provide an opportunity for about 200 women professionals to re-skill themselves and become India's next set of Digital Marketing Leaders.

With increased digitisation in India, there is immense potential for growth in the Digital Marketing and Advertising industry. With over 20 lakh<sup>1</sup> jobs added in the industry every year when it comes to women's representation, we are yet to attain equity. While we have made some progress, women represent less than 30%<sup>2</sup> of the digital marketing industry's workforce in India. 45%<sup>3</sup> of Indian women under the age of 30 quit work before they turn 30, and one-fifth aren't able to return to work. In total, 77%<sup>4</sup> Indian women drop out of the workforce at least once during their career. That was a problem in the pre-COVID-19 times. In the present times, this is a much bigger problem as we confront the most complex economic environment we've ever experienced.



Finally, DigiPivot doesn't exist in a vacuum. It's part of a bigger commitment Google India and its partners have made to advancing equity for underrepresented groups through programs like "Internet Saathi" and "I Am Remarkable" to extend support to communities across all social and economic stratas of the society.

And, it fits into a longer term plan. From here, we hope to take the lessons from the first DigiPivot cohort and scale the program to reach more women and other underrepresented communities across the country through a wider industry consortium. I, Arijit Sarker, Vice President, gTech Customer Experience make a call for action to digital media leaders in India to partner with us in this vision. I also encourage leaders from other industries who want to make a positive difference in our country's gender representation, to leverage this whitepaper as a case study to initiate more programs like these, that are a collaboration of our country's of academia and industry to enable and empower the historically under-privileged communities in India.

<sup>1</sup> LinkedIn Primary Research

<sup>2</sup> LinkedIn Primary Research

<sup>3</sup> World Economic Forum

<sup>4</sup> Avtar in-house research



## Foreword 2

### Dr. Saundarya Rajesh

*Founder – President, Avtar Group*

In the last two decades since the inception of Avtar, we have had the opportunity to study the careers of thousands of women and as a consequence, produced a large body of work – papers, articles and journal reports on the career behaviour of the Indian Woman Professional. The insights from such research have been most remarkable, but more importantly, in the process, Avtar also enabled over 50,000<sup>5</sup> women to create a successful career re-entry. During the same timeframe, the absolute number of women in the organized Indian workforce grew, but, this is not a cause for celebration, since the participation rate of women (the ratio of employable women versus those actually employed) dipped. This pattern of Indian women dropping off, despite having been selected for the job under competitive conditions became a rather prominent phenomenon. The breaks coincided with critical life stages like childbearing and rearing and most often, occurred around their transition to mid-managerial roles. Even as India's population increased, the labor force presence of women is at a meagre 26%<sup>6</sup>, with Covid delivering a whopping setback. With this background, it is not surprising that the representation of women in corporate leadership roles is a mere 5%<sup>7</sup>. What are the indispensable elements that must be part of an Indian Woman Professional's armoury towards pursuing her aspirations?

Research from the World Economic Forum categorically states that targeted reskilling has the potency to accelerate gender diversity. It has also been established that skilling oneself is a critical part of bracing for both disruptions and opportunities. McKinsey's study asserts that between 40 million and 160 million women globally may need to transition between occupations by 2030<sup>8</sup>, often into higher-skilled roles. And that is a substantial proportion of the global women's workforce. It may therefore be inferred that for women professionals in pursuit of purposeful careers, the role that up-skilling plays in terms of staying market relevant and career Intentional, is enormous. While Career Intentionality is an amalgamation of responsive strategies to chart one's career path, skilling (a critical pillar of intentionality) is not only a definitive means to build a sustainable career, but also helps a professional accelerate her pace to leadership.



Avtar is proud to have partnered with Google in understanding the impact that targeted upskilling programs can have on women professionals, women who are keen to pivot their careers towards leadership. We examined the skilling journeys of 40 women professionals from India, through the course of DigiPivot – an up-skilling program in digital marketing designed and delivered by Google in association with Avtar and Indian School of Business. The results are promising. 48%<sup>9</sup> of the cohort expressed intent to make career pivots, 42% made successful career pivots of which 35% pivoted to digital media marketing careers. And we must remember that these pivots happened amidst one of the most turbulent times we have lived through, further establishing the ability of up-skilling to enable constructive pivots.

To every woman desirous of taking charge of her career and making a leader out of herself – this is a call to action. Amidst the complexities and demands of everyday life, investing efforts towards gaining new skills is non-negotiable. It is important to ensure that your career is VUCA proof and future relevant, as you absorb the proficiencies that the market seeks. Most importantly, remember that skilling is also a journey towards unveiling your innate strengths. It allows you to play to them as you chase your dreams – to lead, to inspire, and to win!

<sup>5</sup> Avtar's recruitment engagement with women on career breaks (from 2006)

<sup>6</sup> Deductions from NSSO PLFS, 2018-19

<sup>7</sup> Egon Zehnder Global Diversity Report, 2020

<sup>8</sup> McKinsey, "The future of women at work: Transitions in the Age of Automation," 2019.

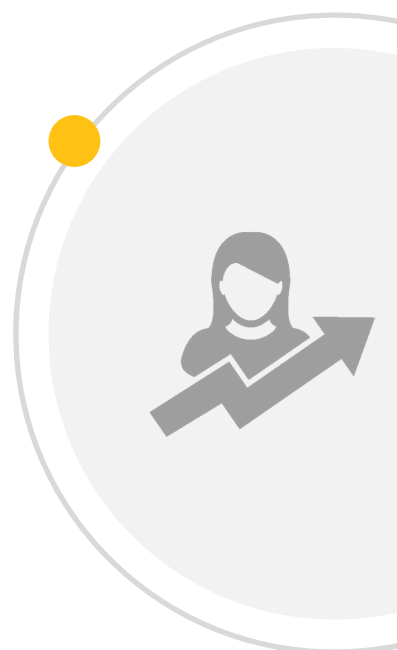
<sup>9</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

# Executive Summary



A research study, jointly undertaken by Google and Avtar, this study looks at the impact of upskilling in increasing the talent pool of women who are industry ready and are capable of pivoting their careers into new domains and consequently growing into leadership. Against the backdrop of the case for up-skilling women professionals, the study examines the impact markers namely, Career Intentionality, Confidence in Career Transition, Employability, and Growth Potential. The research also proposes a portable up-skilling framework to industry leaders in India who are invested in the vision of improving women's workforce participation rate in the country.

The primary research activity was carried out as a controlled sample study, the sample consisting of women professionals who graduated from the first batch of DigiPivot in 2020 – a longitudinal skilling program hosted by Google in association with Avtar and Indian School of Business. The program was aimed at building a digital marketing skill set for women professionals in India. The findings from the research indicate a positive correlation between up-skilling and career intentionality, with pillars of intentionality (including ability to seek mentors, technical competence, polarity management, executive presence, leadership skills and collaboration) growing at an average rate of 65%<sup>10</sup> in the cohort. It is technical competence that has shown the maximum growth rate in the cohort with a growth rate of 95%. The strategic soft skill that registered most substantial growth is ability to seek mentors (85%). Confidence in pivoting their careers into mainstream digital marketing careers surged collectively by 46%, the manifestations of increase in confidence including proactively seeking out digital marketing opportunities in the market and greater clarity on transitioning their careers. Mentorship and technical know-how were rated as the most impactful aspects of DigiPivot, which resulted in a confidence surge. 80% cohort members expressed their vision in growing as digital marketing leaders, establishing a positive correlation between up-skilling and employability. The study established parallel growth in technical and leadership skills with aspects like mentorship and peer to peer coaching, enabling this growth. This evidence establishes the model replication efficacy, indicating that an up-skilling intervention designed to deliver domain skills and leadership skills, facilitated by an industry-academia partnership, can be replicated across industries. When emulated to scale and scope, this holds the promise of enhancing employability and creating career opportunities for over 11 million women professionals in India.



<sup>10</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

# Introduction

One of the biggest challenges India faces in bridging the gender gap in the workforce is reducing the number of women who are neither seeking jobs nor engaged in economically productive careers. World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020 states that India ranks 145 out of 153 countries in terms of gender gap<sup>11</sup>. This is against the backdrop of 49% of enrolled undergraduates in India being women (As per AISHE reports 2019<sup>12</sup>), but skewed representation of women along the various corporate levels (across industry sectors), as per national level statistics. Moreover, the labor force participation rate of women (the proportion of women who are part of the workforce) in India is 21%, one amongst the lowest in the world, as per data from World Bank<sup>13</sup>.

The reasons for the dwindling participation of women in the workforce are quite complex and multifaceted. One of the biggest threats for women being unable to pursue sustainable careers is the lack of market relevant skill sets. In a study conducted by the National Sample Survey, more than half of the women who were not working admitted that they did not have the right skills sets to take up jobs. According to 'The Future of Women at Work: Transitions in the Age of Automation' report, published by McKinsey Global Institute in 2019, nearly 12 million Indian women could face job losses in the face of automation by 2030<sup>14</sup>. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's (CMIE) Consumer Pyramids Household Survey 2018, the median monthly income of Indian women is 43% lower compared to that of Indian men<sup>15</sup>. These are indications that the women's workforce in India is concentrated in lower order skills rendering their careers more susceptible to disruption and disparity. Therefore, it is crucial to work towards creating an ecosystem that is conducive for skilling women to enhance their employability, if India were to leverage the economic dividend of having more women in the workforce. In a world driven by business complexities and VUCA (the COVID-19 pandemic times we are living through, is a case to point), it is imperative that these skills are a smart concoction of domain skills and leadership skills, absorbed from a process of continual learning.

What are some of the associated challenges women face in terms of pursuing sustainable careers? The challenges on the path to career transition include the confidence gap (especially for women on career breaks), tendency to stay in one's comfort zone, the lack of a supportive ecosystem both at home and at work, lack of time (especially for women in mid-career stage with childcare/eldercare duties), and the lack of resources to pursue skilling courses as many of them require significant. Virtual skilling courses with experiential, bite-sized, learning content enable women to imbibe key skill sets and pursue their careers purposefully. Along with training courses, networking and seeking guidance from mentors and industry experts assist the career transition process significantly.

Against this backdrop, this paper presents a successful up-skilling framework piloted by Google in association with Avtar and Center for Executive Education ISB, called DigiPivot. The success of the up-skilling model is established through the results emerging from a longitudinal research study undertaken on members of the first cohort of DigiPivot in 2020.

<sup>11</sup> World Economic Forum, "Gender Gap Report 2020," 2020.

<sup>12</sup> All India Survey on Higher Education 2018-19

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

<sup>14</sup> McKinsey, "The future of women at work: Transitions in the Age of Automation," 2019.

<sup>15</sup> CMIE, 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://consumerpyramidsdx.cmie.com/>.



# The Case for Skilling Women

Studies show that 120 million workers around the world need to be retrained or reskilled to match the demands of a highly growing digital, automated workplace<sup>16</sup>. As per International Labour Organization (ILO) research, the skill deficit in India is growing, likely to get to 29 million skill-deficit by 2030<sup>17</sup>. However, it may be noted that as per India Skills Report 2021, the employability of women stands at 46.8% as compared to 45.91%<sup>18</sup> of men, a +0.9% excess. From a corporate perspective, a talented employee base is the mainstay for business success. Hiring, rewarding, and retaining talented employees help organizations to succeed, grow, and prosper. Reskilling and upskilling women (a talent pool established to have higher employability) presents the right opportunity for corporates to bring in meaningful change towards gender parity as also contributing towards more positive business outcomes.

A skilling revolution can help organizations to generate a more gender-balanced leadership pipeline. With virtual skilling being the order of the day, such focused efforts have the twin benefits of helping organizations take full advantages of the distance economy and enabling women to take advantage of flexi time and remote work, and thus continue to remain in the workforce even during major life-stage transitions such as maternity, childcare, and eldercare. Today, millennials are seeking employers who not just support career enablement factors, but also invest their time and energy in causes that are purposeful and are the 'right thing to do'. Hence, such skilling programs also boost the employer branding, enhance employee engagement and in turn, contribute towards better topline and bottom line.

As per World Economic Forum-BCG Research<sup>19</sup>,

*"The half-life of a job skill today is about five years - and falling. For organizations around the world to thrive throughout and beyond the 2020s, they will have to invest in comprehensive training programs in digital and data and analytics for millions of workers, continually developing generations of agile learners with the latest skills."*

This points towards the need for organizations to constantly invest in re-skilling in areas like cloud computing, digital security, artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain, internet of things and emerging areas such as 5G and quantum computing. For discerning organizations also keenly pursuing gender diversity, this will include digital skill development would present a double win - a market ready workforce that is also gender diverse.

It is important to also explore the potential economic impact of up-skilling for women. Studies have shown that skilling can positively impact the earning potential, employability and confidence levels of women improving their prospects of acquiring jobs and becoming part of India's active labor force. The full potential impact of women in employment is an added 27% to India's GDP - the largest for any geography surveyed, according to McKinsey Research<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> IBM, "Institute for Business Value (IBV)," 2019

<sup>17</sup> ILO, "Skill Gap in India," 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ncsde.in/skill-gap-in-india/>

<sup>18</sup> "India Skills Report," 2021.

<sup>19</sup> World Economic. Forum and BCG, "The reskilling revolution can transform the future of work for women,"

<sup>20</sup> McKinsey, The power of parity: Advancing women's equality in India, 2018

# DigiPivot

A curated program to develop  
industry ready women leaders:  
A case study





## About the Program

DigiPivot is an up-skilling program designed and delivered by Google in association with Avtar and Center for Executive Education – Indian School of Business (ISB)<sup>21</sup>. It is an up-skilling platform to build a digital marketing skill set for women professionals in India, which was launched in 2020 to create a future-ready workforce of women leaders in digital marketing. The platform is open to women on career breaks, women currently working as also self-employed women. 40 women professionals from across India were chosen for the first edition of the program, through a very rigorous selection process; 26 of them were employed in the corporate sector, 9 of them were on career breaks and 5 of them were self-employed. The selection process assessed their skill background, intent, and confidence towards transitioning into digital marketing careers.

The cohort went through an intensive 18 week-long virtual program that began in May 2020, culminating at a virtual graduation ceremony in September 2020. Through the course of the program, the participants absorbed key technical and leadership skills that equipped them for a career pivot. The sessions were facilitated by senior faculty from ISB, leader mentors from Google and Avtar's thought leaders, in a virtual delivery model.

## Technical Skill Delivery Model

Faculty from ISB and leader mentors from Google undertook technical skill delivery. The spectrum of key digital marketing areas was covered through the course duration, in a virtual format. 75% of the sessions were live, the rest were offered as e-learning modules. To ensure cohort participation and skill absorption, Q&A forums were organized from time to time and the course culminated with a case study challenge that the cohort undertook in groups. A customized LMS solution was deployed to organize assignments, conduct assessments, and gather feedback.

## Leadership Skill Delivery Model

Aligned with the domain/technical skills delivered by the program, a basket of key leadership skills including executive presence and ambiguity navigation were chosen to be key program segments. Delivered as participatory, virtual workshops these sessions saw cohort members share, connect, and collaborate. The one-to-many format of delivery also was leveraged to facilitate Group Mentoring. Speed mentoring sessions were also hosted for the cohort members to gain access to a panel of experts. Key notes by industry stalwarts and panel discussions by subject matter experts were other vehicles of leadership skill delivery.

At the culmination of the program, a longitudinal research study was initiated to understand the impact of the up-skilling program towards preparing the cohort for careers in digital marketing.

<sup>21</sup> "ISB," [Online]. Available: <https://www.isb.edu/en.html>

# Research Study



## About the Research

The objective of this research was to establish the impact of up-skilling on key factors and impact markers that determine the course of careers of women professionals. It was carried out via structured questionnaires administered online to the 40 cohort members of DigiPivot 2020. The research was administered in two parts, with part 1 focusing on the following impact markers – Career Intentionality, Employability, and Confidence in career transition. This was carried out between September, October, and December 2020. The second part of the research outreach examined the impact of up-skilling along the dimension of growth potential. This outreach happened in the months of January and February 2021. This was carried out starting January 2021, to allow for a three-month window frame between completion of the program and initiation of career transitions.

## Impact Markers

Impact markers in the context of this research are measurable metrics that signify impact of up-skilling. The impact markers used in the research are:

### **CAREER INTENTIONALITY**

This is the extent to which a professional deploys intent to chart his/her career trajectory

### **EMPLOYABILITY**

Employability refers to an individual's ability to gain initial employment, maintain and grow in employment, and transition to new employment opportunities, at critical junctures

### **CONFIDENCE IN CAREER TRANSITION**

Confidence in the context of careers marks a strong demonstration of being ready for growth. It involves demonstration of passion, articulation of purpose and activation of career progression plan

### **GROWTH POTENTIAL**

This refers to the ability of a professional to find jobs that propel career growth and are proportional to their skill proficiency

### **MODEL REPLICATION EFFICACY**

This refers to the efficacy in upskilling program structure in terms of being replicated across domains and beneficiary segments. Collective impact of the first four markers apart from participant feedback on type/duration and quality of intervention will help arrive at this

## Research Hypotheses

The five hypotheses tested in this research study are:

**Hypothesis 1:** Upskilling positively impacts the Career Intentionality of women professionals

**Hypothesis 2:** Upskilling positively impacts the potential Employability of women professionals

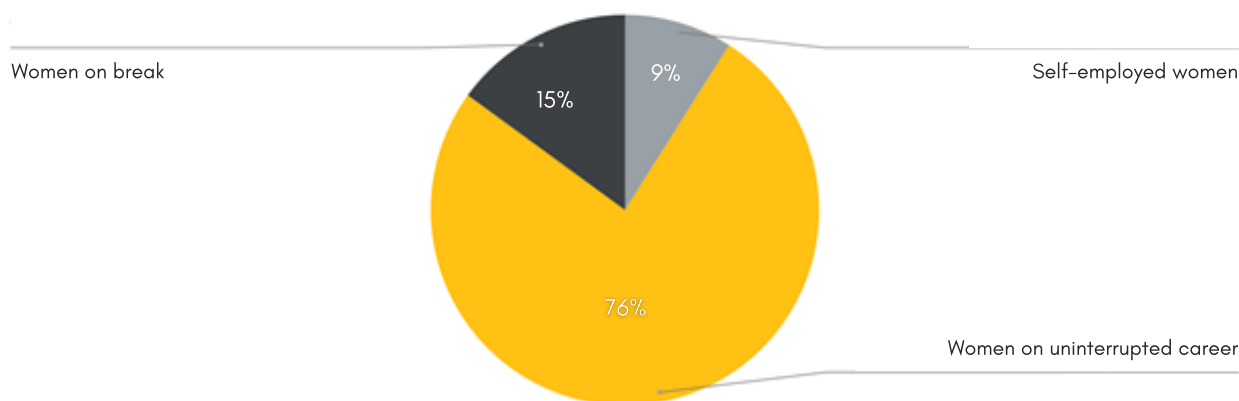
**Hypothesis 3:** Upskilling positively impacts the Confidence Levels of women professionals

**Hypothesis 4:** Upskilling positively impacts the Growth Potential of women professionals

**Hypothesis 5:** A portable upskilling framework (that can be adapted across functional domains) that can deliver positive impact in **Career Intentionality, Employability, Confidence Levels, and Growth Potential** of women professionals can be created

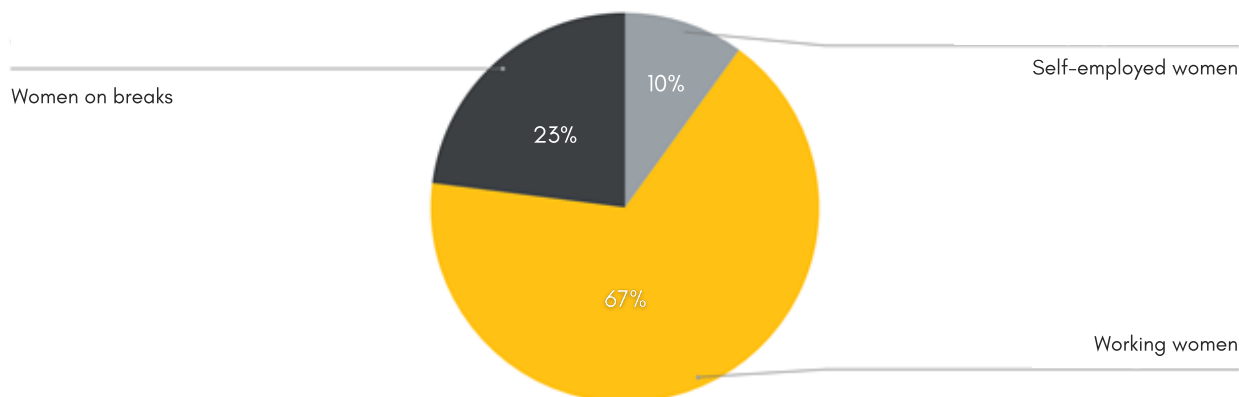
## About the Respondent Sample

There was an 84%<sup>22</sup> response rate to the part 1 of research – 34 cohort members responded. The sample demographics are as shown in Fig.1.



**Figure 1:** Respondent Sample Distribution for Part 1 of the research

The second part of the research outreach had a response rate of 75% – 30 cohort members responded. The sample demographics are as shown in Fig. 2.



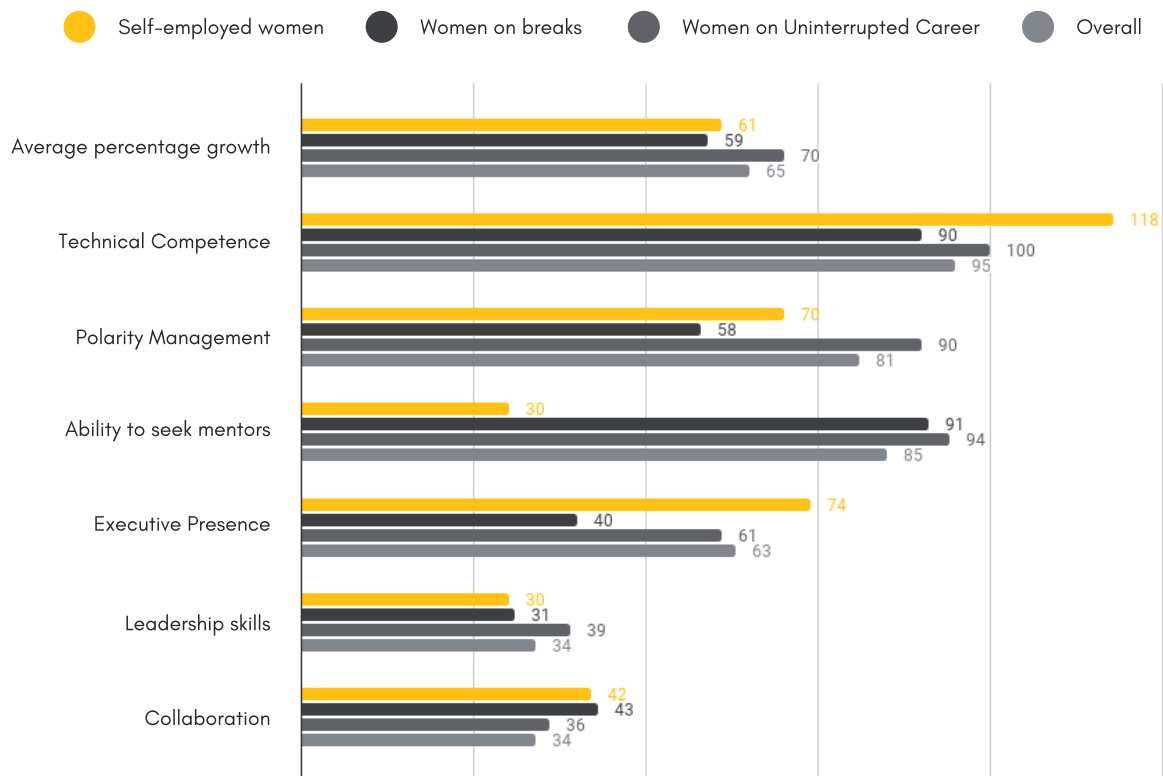
**Figure 2:** Respondent Sample Distribution for Part 2 of the research

<sup>22</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

## Key Findings

### **Testing Hypothesis 1:** Upskilling positively impacts the Career Intentionality of women professionals

Career Intentionality, the extent to which a professional deploys intent to chart his/her career path, is a function of several intentionality pillars. The key pillars examined by this research included ability to seek mentors, technical competence, executive presence, collaborative skills, leadership skills and polarity management. Cohort members were required to share their skill rating, on each of these pillars, on a scale of 5 at two junctures – before the program and after the program. The percentage growth rate in intentionality pillars is as shown in Fig.3.



**Figure 3:** Growth rate of Career Intentionality pillars

As may be inferred from Fig.3, the average growth rate of skills representative of intentionality is sharpest for women on uninterrupted careers (at a 70%<sup>23</sup> growth rate), followed by self-employed women (at a 61% growth rate) and women on breaks (at a 59% growth rate).

It is technical competence that has shown the maximum growth rate, in all segments of the cohorts, with a growth rate of 95%<sup>24</sup>. While the average rating doubled for women on uninterrupted career paths, this grew by 91% for women on breaks.

The strategic soft skill that has registered most substantial growth is ability to seek mentors (85%). While women on uninterrupted careers showed a growth rate of 94% on this pillar, women on breaks showed a growth rate of 91%.

<sup>23</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

<sup>24</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

It may be noted that self-employed women showed a low growth rate on this pillar, at 30% (even though the sample size is small with 3 women in this category). Polarity management was another strategic skill that showed substantial growth at 81%, overall.

The rate at which this pillar grew for women on uninterrupted careers was higher at 90%, for women on breaks, this grew at 58%.

While leadership and collaboration are skills that registered growth, the growth rates were significantly lower (less than 35% growth rate). Cohort members rated themselves highest on these two skills, in the pre-DigiPivot scenario, which explains the slower growth rate.

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**All Career Intentionality pillars have registered an increase in rating post DigiPivot, with an average growth rate of 65%. Hence this hypothesis is validated.**

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**Testing Hypothesis 2:** Upskilling positively impacts the potential Employability of women professionals

The growth in employability was assessed through a descriptive question that elicited the cohort members' vision for career future. In Figure 4, is presented the frequency analyzes of the responses received.



**\*Indicated in brackets are the frequencies of occurrences, as inferred through qualitative analyzes**

**Figure 4:** Vision for one's career future

80%<sup>25</sup> of cohort members expressed their vision to seek careers towards becoming digital marketing leaders now that they are equipped with digital marketing skills. This establishes a collective increase in employability. This validates hypotheses 2. It may be noted that 5% of cohort members expressed apprehension on the course's ability to help transition into digital marketing domains.

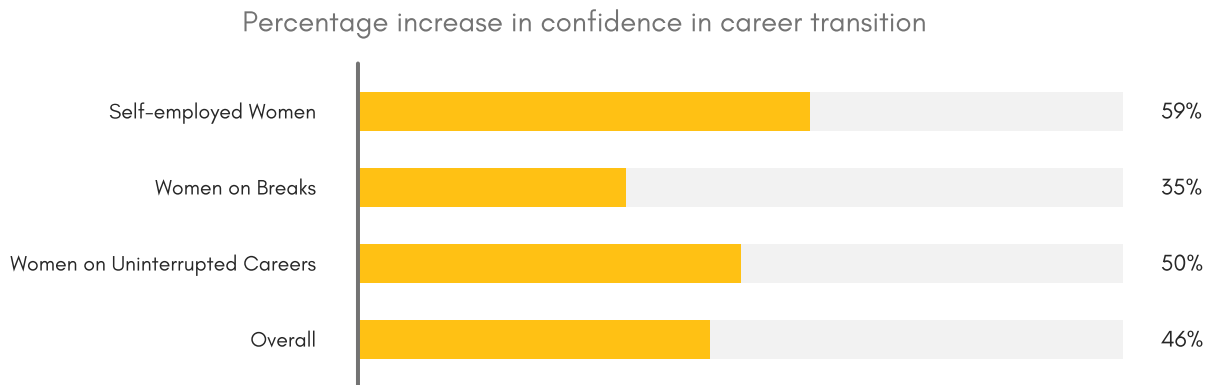
<sup>25</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar



**Testing Hypothesis 3: Upskilling positively impacts the Confidence Levels of women professionals**

The impact of the program on confidence in career transition was assessed in a three-pronged manner:

1. Growth rate in confidence to pivot careers: Respondents were asked to rate their confidence in career transition at two junctures, before and after the program



**Figure 5: Percentage increase in confidence in career transition**

From Fig.5, it may be inferred that the overall confidence surge amongst cohort members is at 46%<sup>26</sup>. The confidence surge (in terms of the differential growth rate) is more prominent amongst women on uninterrupted careers (50% growth) vs. a 35% surge in confidence amongst women on career breaks (Though in terms of confidence rating, women on career breaks rated themselves higher)

2. Manifestations of increase in confidence: Respondents were asked to describe their experience of increase in confidence.



**\*Indicated in brackets are the frequencies of occurrences, as inferred through qualitative analyzes**

**Figure 6: Manifestations of increase in confidence**

<sup>26</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

What Fig.6 depicts is that the surge in confidence amongst cohort members manifested in terms of greater clarity in terms of planning for the career ahead, proactively seeking other opportunities and volunteering for digital marketing related tasks, internally. These are clear indicators of ability to pivot their careers towards the goal of becoming digital marketing leaders, in the process.

3. Identification of program specifics that led to the increase in confidence: Respondents were asked to identify and describe the aspects of DigiPivot that led to an increase in confidence.



***\*Indicated in brackets are the frequencies of occurrences, as inferred through qualitative analyzes***

**Figure 7:** Aspects of DigiPivot that led to increase in confidence in career transition

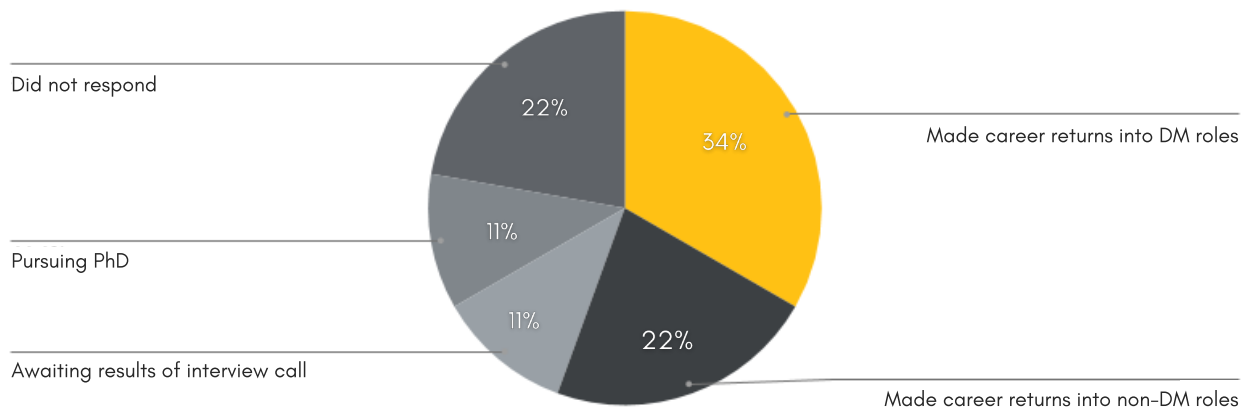
While mentorship was the most important aspect described by cohort members and survey respondents, as the factor that led to increased confidence, technical and leadership skills sessions and those that led to greater self-discovery, were amongst other prominent factors.

The three-dimensional approach to analysing increase in confidence validates this hypothesis. Confidence levels of cohort members to make a career transition grew by 46%<sup>27</sup>, collectively. This is further substantiated by anecdotal evidence towards manifestation of increased confidence.

<sup>27</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

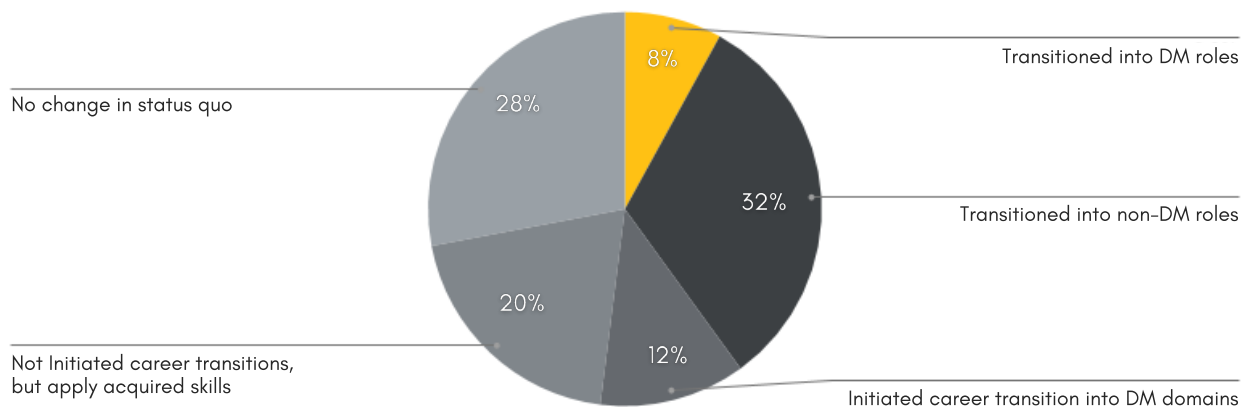
**Testing Hypothesis 4:** Upskilling positively impacts the Growth Potential of women professionals

Segmented analyses were done to test this hypothesis. Fig. 8 illustrates the career transition journeys of 7 women on career breaks (of the 9 cohort members who were on breaks before start of the program), whose career pivot status was recorded as on, 10 April 2021. Given the various stages of career transitions these women are at, it is likely that they continue to pursue deeper digital marketing opportunities in their onward journey. 56% of these women have made career returns, 34% in the digital marketing domain.



**Figure 8:** Career Transition – Women on career breaks (Please note: \*DM – Digital Marketing)

What is shown in Fig.9 are the career transition journeys of women on uninterrupted career paths. 40%<sup>28</sup> of these women (of 25 women who were on uninterrupted career paths before the commencement of the program) have made career transitions, 8% pivoted into Digital Marketing (DM roles)



**Figure 9:** Career Transition journeys – Women on uninterrupted career paths (Please note: \*DM – Digital Marketing)

Fig.8 and Fig. 9 needs to be also interpreted in the context of the COVID-19 induced disruptions of 2020. As per ILO research dated April 2020 indicates that approximately 50% of the world's workforce was at risk of job loss<sup>29</sup>.

From amongst 3 self-employed women, 2 reported using their newly acquired digital marketing skills in their current role, 1 reported transition.

<sup>28</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

<sup>29</sup> ILO, "ILO," April 2020. [Online].[https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_743036/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_743036/lang-en/index.htm).

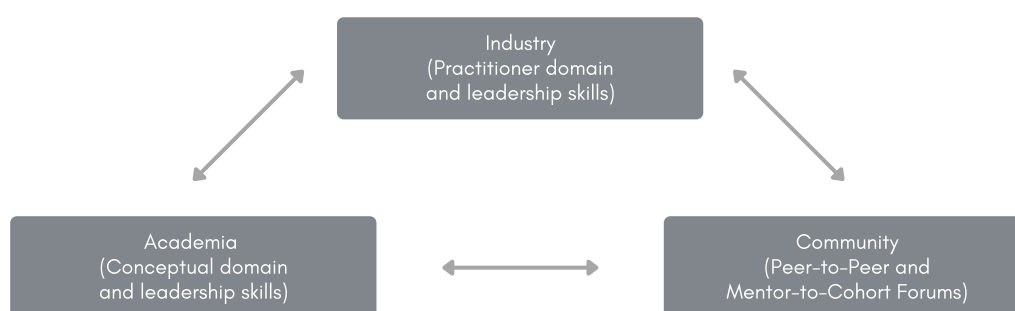
## Upskilling for Indian Women

The segmented analyzes show that 48%<sup>30</sup> of the cohort expressed intent to make career pivots, 42% made successful career pivots of which 35% pivoted to digital media marketing careers. Hence Hypothesis 4 is validated.

**Testing Hypothesis 5:** *A portable upskilling framework (that can be adapted across functional domains) that can deliver a positive impact on Career Intentionality, Employability, Confidence Levels, and Growth Potential of women professionals can be created*

The research establishes the impact of up-skilling on women in terms of skill enrichment, up by an average of 65%. It also establishes growth in Employability, Confidence in career transition and Growth Potential. The parallel growth of domain and leadership skills also in tandem with holistic growth in impact markers/employment parameters establishes the replication efficacy of this up-skilling model. This validates Hypothesis 5.

The up-skilling model established involves the triage of Domain skills, Leadership skills, and Mentorship. When implemented through an implementation triage of academia, industry and capability building forums, this holds the potential to scale and grow in scope.



**Figure 10:** Proposed Up-skilling Model

<sup>30</sup> DigiPivot 2020 Longitudinal Study, Avtar

# Cohort Testimonials

*"First and most importantly, the opportunity to have a mentor and to have access to sessions with senior professionals while learning from their experiences is priceless. (Also,) networking with like-minded and equally motivated women. I must congratulate the team at Google and Avtar for hand picking the best for this special cohort. There was immense learning and knowledge sharing, which made the experience very enriching and memorable. "I am Remarkable session" – this program was the turning point. Such a beautiful program reminding you to feel your superpower and get back in the game."*

**- Tanya Mehan, DigiPivot Cohort 2020**

*"The pandemic had probably let us all down a lot. The course was held at a crucial time, especially for me, helping me become more confident in myself. Each day when I see a challenge, all I tell myself is that I can overcome it. I see this as a major change after DigiPivot."*

**- Steffi Monteiro, DigiPivot Cohort 2020**

*"Three factors that worked really well in the DigiPivot program were content, delivery of that content, and access to facilitators to clarify doubts. Also, the entire team was extremely supportive and cognizant of the fact that we do not come from a Digital marketing background and made sure we feel comfortable to ask doubts."*

**- Mekhala Lele, DigiPivot Cohort 2020**

*"The DigiPivot course has helped me gain a deep understanding of various products. With the skills acquired from the program, I am confident of applying them to new roles, and taking on new responsibilities."*

**- Shreya Borkar, DigiPivot Cohort 2020**

*"As I was returning from a career break of 2 years, I was on the lookout for a program that would help me update myself on the latest industry trends and skills. I feel very fortunate to have been selected for the DigiPivot program because it helped me bridge this gap and brought me up to speed in a short span of 4 months. The program clearly emphasized peer to peer mentoring which I found to be the most productive element of the curriculum. It reinforced the importance of interacting, collaborating, and learning from colleagues of diverse backgrounds and has convinced me that communicating is an indispensable part of being a leader. I also believe that the program organizers deserve a lot of credit for adapting the content and teaching methodology to a remote format without affecting the efficacy of the program, assigning us experienced industry leaders as mentors. The advice and referrals that came about as a result of these interactions helped me get back into the workforce in a leadership capacity."*

**- Trusha Parekh, DigiPivot Cohort 2020**

*"I had set the goal to return to corporate work by early 2021. As a result of this program, I am now much more confident about my digital skills so much so that I am upskilling myself on the tech side of things in the digital marketing space. I learned to be assertive and not undermine what I bring to the table. The digital upskilling was of course a huge value addition. And from the lovely Googlers, I learnt the value and joy of high-quality teamwork! Getting to learn something that is so current from the best company in the world and meeting such a lovely group of people all round was the best experience of the program."*

**- Shivani Goel, DigiPivot Cohort 2020**

*"I was determined to add more meaning to my existing role. I wanted to expand the marketing budget for digital channels within my organization and move from an agency dependent campaign model to a self-driven campaign model. As a result of this program, I could proactively pitch digital campaigns that were better aligned with our business requirements. I became more confident and open to undertake extensive projects which required integration of various channels. My dependency on agency support has decreased. I have tried and tested more ad platforms in the last 6 months than what I did in the last 2 years. The program was a great balance of academic and professional growth. I not only learnt about digital marketing but also a lot about myself with the "I am remarkable workshop" and workshops conducted by ISB professors on different corporate problems. All the topics, assignments, and case studies were very well explained by the mentors. I learnt a great deal about time management, self-pacing, and teamwork."*

**- Ayushi Atray, DigiPivot Cohort 2020**



*"My life and my career have changed significantly post DigiPivot. The best experience of the program is the exposure one gets from revered institutions like Avtar, ISB, and Google. Whilst my primary goal during the program was to imbibe all the knowledge and use it to make a career shift, what also pleasantly surprised me is that as I went along, I set new goals for myself – To overcome Imposter Syndrome and believe in myself by not doubting my capabilities.*

*Soon after the program, I had the opportunity to work as a marketer in a digital-first FinTech company and the knowledge I acquired from DigiPivot helped me navigate this job greatly. If it weren't for the program, I would have never gotten the opportunity to interact with the faculty and mentors from Google. They were instrumental in encouraging all of us cohort members to apply for open positions at Google."*

**– Ambika Roy, DigiPivot Cohort 2020**

## Recommendations

In this segment, we present certain recommendations towards developing a robust up-skilling framework for women, based on our learnings and observations. Organizations need to create targeted upskilling opportunities in futuristic functions and business roles with a lot of upcoming opportunities. Involving women leaders while designing upskilling programs for women professionals will help in developing a holistic program that covers all aspects of career development and progression, including the unique challenges faced by women. Role model stories of women leaders are an important part of such upskilling programs. Mentoring by leaders is another critical pillar of successful upskilling programs. Offering such programs in flexible formats so that employees with busy schedules can manage the workload is very important. A combination of self-paced learning modules, combined with live, instructor-led classroom sessions with assignments and projects are ideal.

Reskilling programs should be specifically targeted at women who are enthusiastic to re-enter the workforce post career break and their requirements should be kept in mind while designing and developing the training curriculum. New mothers who plan to return to the workforce should have the flexibility to leverage internet-enabled technologies and tools. Offering skilling programs in flexible formats so that women with busy schedules can complete the learning course is important. A combination of self-paced learning modules, combined with live, instructor-led classroom sessions with assignments and projects are ideal.

# Call to Action – How and Why Corporate India should invest in up-skilling women

Data from the Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) shows that women have disproportionately lost jobs because of the COVID-19 induced disruption, as on April 2021, only 61% of women were holding jobs as against the same time-frame last year, for men this was 71%<sup>31</sup>. This means a bigger talent pool of employable women in the market, up-skilling can serve as a critical bridge to bring them back to mainstream careers. Data emerging from India's largest diversity analytics exercise, Working Mother and Avtar 100 Best Companies for Women in India, shows that IT/ITES, Consulting and BFSI are the most invested industrial sectors in women's employment; while in consulting women's representation rose from 33% to 40% between 2016 and 2020, in IT/ITES, this rose from 31% to 33%, BFSI sector also marked a surge in women's representation from 24% to 31%<sup>32</sup>. Observations from World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report<sup>33</sup> suggest that these are also industries that show high skill instability, indicating a clear need for these industries to invest in up-skilling women professionals. Further recommendations from the World Economic Forum suggest that organizations operating in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) sector are set to gain from investing in up-skilling women, target re-skilling can accelerate gender diversity<sup>34</sup>. As per data from 2020 BCWI, FMCG, Pharma, and Manufacturing are other sectors where women's representation is growing and there is greater intent on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. These sectors are set to gain from investing in skilling women, due to the associated robust business case and talent case. Healthcare, Hospitality, and Retail are sectors that are fast evolving sectors, specifically given the changes of the COVID era. Hence pursuing the case for gender diversity through up-skilling is recommended across industrial sectors, given the changes in the operational landscape. This market analyzes exercise on industry wise approach to women's employment helps us arrive at the list of Top 10 industries set to gain from investing in women talent, the industries being –

- a) Professional Services/Consulting
- b) Information Technology
- c) BFSI
- d) Science and Engineering
- e) FMCG
- f) Pharmaceuticals
- g) Manufacturing
- h) Healthcare
- i) Hospitality; and
- j) Retail.

DigiPivot, through its inaugural run, has established an up-skilling model that can be adapted by a cross-section of industries. Built on the foundation of industry – academia partnership, this up-skilling framework is constituted by the triage of domain skills, leadership skills and mentorship. If industry leaders can adapt the framework to suit the industry dynamics and invest in skilling this potent talent pool, this can not only change the narrative of women's workforce participation in the country, but also accelerate the pace of inclusive economic recovery.

<sup>31</sup> CMIE, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://www.cmie.com/>.

<sup>32</sup> Working Mother and Avtar Best Companies for Women in Indian, [Online]. Available: <https://www.avtarinc.com/best-companies/best-companies-for-women-2020>.

<sup>33</sup> World Economic Forum, "Future of Jobs," 2016.

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# Acknowledgments

The report is a collaborative outcome by Google India Pvt. Ltd. and Avatar. It is our pleasure to thank the Google India leadership team for their vision for the DigiPivot program and their subsequent contribution to the design of this research.

For their thought leadership and counsel, we sincerely thank the following contributors:

- Arijit Sarker, VP, gTech Customer Experience, Google India
- Madhuri Duggirala, Senior Director, gTech Customer Experience, Google India
- Rahul Jindal, Director, gTech Customer Experience, Google India
- Jo (Keiko) Terasawa, Head of Inclusion, APAC, Google India
- Bani Kaur, India Lead, Staffing Operations, Google India
- Gauri Juneja, Communications and Public Affairs Manager, Google India
- Dr. Saundarya Rajesh, Founder-President, Avatar
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We also place on record our sincere thanks to the research outreach team comprising Athira Premarajan, Research Associate, Avatar, Manasa Sai, Senior Consultant, Avatar and Sridevi Bhardwaj, Sr. Manager – myAvatar.com, Avatar. For their creative inputs and design, we are also thankful to Rashmi Ravindran, AVP – Marketing Communications & User Experience, Avatar and Mohammed Imran, Senior Consultant – Marketing Communications, Avatar.

We are immensely grateful to our academic partner, Centre for Executive Education at Indian School of Business and their faculty, for enabling the technical skill delivery for the DigiPivot 2020 program. A note of appreciation for CAB Experiences, our events and platforms partner for ensuring that DigiPivot 2020 cohort had a great virtual course experience.

Finally, we want to express our deepest gratitude to the 40 women professionals who were part of DigiPivot 2020 Cohort for sharing details of learning/skilling journeys, candidly. Their stories gave us deep insights into the impact that upskilling can have towards the growth of women into leadership.

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