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Arti Kochhar

A Woman Leader Who Inspires, Empowers, and Creates Positive Change

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IN 2025

THE
ADVANTAGE
OF BEING A
**WOMAN IN
BUSINESS**

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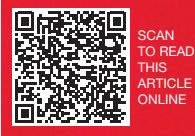
Arti Kochhar

Executive Director

BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad

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A Woman Leader Who
Inspires, Empowers, and Creates
Positive Change

Shweta Singh | The CEO Magazine

Women, one of God's most extraordinary creations. They balance a hundred roles effortlessly, caring for their family while chasing their dreams, building careers for themselves while keeping their homes together. Strong yet compassionate, fierce yet gentle, women carry the weight of expectations and still find the courage to rise. However, their journey is never easy. Success often comes to them at the cost of challenges. Apart from balancing responsibilities and breaking stereotypes, they also must prove their worth in spaces that weren't always built for them. And yet, women are achieving heights like never before.

Among these remarkable women, one name stands out—Arti Kochhar. A leader, a mentor and an inspiration for many, she is the Executive Director of BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad. She has created a community where people thrive through trust, collaboration, and the simple belief that helping others is the key to success.

A Journey of Self-Discovery

Arti Kochhar's journey as a businesswoman is shaped by a series of life-changing experiences. Growing up in the tea plantations of Assam, she had an adventurous childhood. The majority of her early years were spent outdoors—camping, fishing and learning the love of nature and wildlife in the jungles of Assam. This unique upbringing taught her to be self-sufficient and ready to handle whatever came her way.

She did her schooling at Welham Girls High School in Dehra Dun, an institution known to teach the values of independent thinking and self-belief. She then went on to pursue her graduation in psychology from Lady Shri Ram College in Delhi. After marriage, she moved to Dubai, where her first son was born, and later to Jamshedpur, where her younger son arrived.

“It was a fulfilling time raising my children and engaging in social work. But I had to face a hard truth. One day, my elder son asked me, ‘What will you do when we go off to college?’ That question stuck with me. It made me realise I needed to discover my own purpose, something just for me,” Arti shares.

However, life had other plans. In 2004, her husband fell critically ill, and she spent the next few years in hospitals in India and the USA for his treatment. “I believe there is a purpose behind everything you go through, and from every circumstance you face, there is a learning that you can take away and work with. You just have to be open to it,” she reflects. During this challenging period, she met a wonderful lady from Bangalore who gave her an opportunity to get into organisational behaviour consulting. Arti had to re-educate herself, studying and earning certifications while also taking care of her family's needs.

“Looking back now, I am amazed at how far I have come. I am grateful for the wonderful mentors who guided me,” reflects Arti. It was during these tough times that she discovered how willing people are to help when you need it. Her husband, Rakesh, has been her rock, always supporting her throughout this journey. Her real turning point came when she found her purpose. “Sometimes all you need is a purpose and focus to keep from falling apart. I found mine, and now my mission is to feed it forward and help others discover theirs,” she says.

Arti's professional journey officially began in 2011 when she joined BNI as a member. BNI's philosophy of “Givers Gain” resonated deeply with her, and she has never looked back. Over the years, she rose through the ranks to become the Executive Director of BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad. She focused on creating a community of entrepreneurs and professionals where both women and men can proudly represent their businesses with integrity and authenticity while having each other's backs. Today, BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad has grown to over 1600 members, with more than 350 women entrepreneurs, and Arti is proud of the community they've built. Her mission remains the same: to be a catalyst in creating positive impact and change in people's lives.

And amidst all this, Arti has received her best designation yet—“that of being a proud grandmother to the most adorable granddaughter!” she says with a warm smile, her voice filled with pride.

BNI: The Power of Referral Marketing

BNI is a global organisation spanning across 79 countries with more than 3,00,000 members, helping businesses grow. Founded by Dr. Ivan Misner in 1985, BNI has grown to become the world's largest networking organisation, with 40 years of continuous growth. Over the years, hundreds of thousands of business owners have unlocked exponential business growth through BNI® and the power of referral marketing.

BNI India recently celebrated its 20th anniversary and is now active in 130 cities across the country. Closer to home, BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad marked its 14th anniversary in January 2025.

“We are a community of over 1,600 business owners who are supporting each other through referrals and collaboration,” says Arti.



“At BNI, we are changing the way the world does business through word-of-mouth marketing focusing on finding referral opportunities for each other. We speak the language of business and empower diverse businesses and people to come together to explore opportunities for collaboration and growth,” Arti shares. The impact of BNI is undeniable. In 2024 alone, BNI members across the globe generated over USD \$25 billion in business by passing 16.8 million referrals.

BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad isn't just about business growth. “We don't just help members grow their businesses but also help them develop themselves personally and professionally. Through specialised training and workshops, we help businesspersons fine-tune their marketing and sales skills, so they can use the network strategically,” Arti explains. BNI creates leaders. It helps businesses build their unique selling propositions (USPs) to differentiate them in the marketplace. Over the years, we have directly impacted several thousand entrepreneurs who have experienced the power of collaboration, growth and learning from their peers & the community that they belong to. It has enabled people to follow their dreams, start new businesses and grow exponentially.

Navigating the Business World as a Woman

Being a woman in business has its own set of challenges. “A woman is often conflicted in trying to maintain a balance between home and work,” Arti shares. “Sometimes,

there is still gender bias, even today. It takes time for acceptance as a leader and often leads to self-doubt. However, I discovered that through thought leadership and consistent action, it could be overcome.”

One of her biggest realisations has been that instead of finding balance, creating harmony in life allows for better long-term happiness. “Sometimes your family might feel ignored because you're not always available when they need you. I worked through this with more open communication and setting time for family activities,” she explains. A key driver in her success has been lifelong learning. Every year, she identifies and engages in at least two courses on professional or personal development. This mindset of continuous learning is something she values deeply and encourages within BNI, where the organisation also invests in new skill-building courses every year to help its members grow and succeed.

Building a Caring Community

Arti believes that leadership is about how much you genuinely care. “Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care,” she says. This has been her mantra, and it is at the core of everything they do.

BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad is a growth organisation that helps people not only grow their businesses but also



develop leadership skills and achieve personal and professional growth. “Our differentiators have been providing the right support and learning opportunities,” she explains.

“We have positively changed people’s lives, this in turn has had tremendous social impact as every entrepreneur supports a minimum of five other families.”

“We have a team of volunteers who are ready to step up when any kind of medical need or emergency arises, from blood donation, to connecting to the right medical resource, these volunteers will come forward no matter what time of day or night! We have built a caring and supportive community that gives back through diverse CSR activities, impacting the environment, supporting the aged, educating the young. Last year we donated 40,000 books through NGOs & schools. We believe in ‘feeding forward’ our knowledge and skills to the next generation through programs in schools and colleges, like our Business Voices & Future Leaders program,” Arti adds.

Core Values That Drive BNI

BNI is built on a set of guiding principles that form the foundation of how members interact, conduct themselves, and achieve their goals. These values guide everything they do:

- Givers Gain® – This is the core philosophy of BNI. Be willing to give first before expecting to gain. Giving unconditionally creates a better world for everyone and builds strong, lasting relationships and better opportunities.
- Our core values include Recognition, Lifelong Learning, Traditions & Innovation, Positive attitude, Building relationships & Accountability.

“Every member takes an oath, promising to uphold these values,” Arti shares.

BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad strongly supports women entrepreneurs, giving them every opportunity for personal development and business growth. We have collaborated with institutions like IIM Bangalore, encouraging women to partake in initiatives like the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women Entrepreneurship Program, among others. We want to build a future generation of women who have the choice to follow their dreams and do it with pride.

Diversity and inclusion are also at the heart of BNI Gurgaon & Faridabad, with over 350 women entrepreneurs in the community, many of whom have taken on leadership positions. *“Here, roles and recognition are purely merit-based. Leadership is about contribution, not gender,”* says Arti.

Recognised Leadership and Achievements

Success in Arti’s journey has been defined by both personal growth and the impact she has had on others.

- CEO Givers Gain Award 2019, awarded by BNI Global CEO Graham Weihmiller
- Inspiring Woman Leader Award 2022 by ET
- President, Franchise Advisory Council, BNI India
- Convener, Best Practices Team, BNI India
- Member of several innovation and strategic global leadership teams over the years

Supporting the Next Generation of Leaders

Arti is currently focused on developing initiatives for young entrepreneurs to provide them the support they need to pursue and achieve their dreams. “We’re creating opportunities for co-creation rather than competition, as we move forward in the ever-changing world,” she explains.

As for the future, Arti believes that entrepreneurship is the backbone of a successful society, and more people are now ready to take risks to follow their dreams. “Entrepreneurship allows a person to explore and find themselves,” she says. “We want people to know that they have a community that can help and support them to make it possible.”

“What If You Fly?”

Arti finds inspiration in every woman around her. “Each one has a unique story and an inner strength that keeps them going no matter what happens,” she reflects. Many of these women have overcome a lot to get where they are today. Despite the lack of support or help, they continue pushing forward and never give up.

Upon asking for advice for aspiring women entrepreneurs, Arti shares, “Always be ready to give someone a chance if they really want and keep yourself open to the opportunities that are available. Don’t be scared; someone will reach

out with a helping hand just when you need it.” Everything happens for a reason, and she encourages women to trust in the journey, even during tough times.

She shares one of her favourite poems by Erin Hanson that speaks of the courage required to take risks:

“THERE IS
FREEDOM
WAITING
FOR YOU,
ON THE
BREEZES OF
THE SKY,
AND YOU
ASK, ‘WHAT
IF I FALL?’
OH, BUT MY
DARLING,
WHAT IF YOU
FLY?”

Arti also encourages everyone to welcome life with open arms. Things may not go as you planned. *“Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making plans,”* she quotes John Lennon’s famous words. “So, live in the moment and make the most of it; embrace the goodness in people around you.” She ends with a powerful reminder: *“I love what I do, and I think that’s the most powerful inspiration anyone can have.”*