

MNC professionals take a leap into social sector to make a difference

They are laying job satisfaction and passion ahead of compensation; NGOs also dole out well-defined roles, provide opportunities for growth

Priyanka Golikeri MUMBAI

Donning medical gloves, aprons and hair-nets, Priyal Parikh and Niyati Arya work in a research centre in Tardeo, Mumbai, attempting to concoct animal and chemical free lip balm, body wash, cleansing bar, massage oil, etc.

Contrast this with early 2010, when the two would be dressed natively in formal suits and involved in number crunching and charting out strategies.

It was sometime last year when the two friends decided to quit their high flying well paying jobs with Deloitte Consulting and Morgan Stanley, respectively, to channelise their talent towards their passion for wellness and beauty products.

But the 20-something girls are not really attempting to make money from the products.

After being acquainted through relatives with a NGO Shramik Naari Sangh in Raigarh district which creates employment for un-

derprivileged women, Parikh and Arya decided to create a unique venture, Puro (which means Pure in Spanish), which would make and sell wellness products, money from which would go to the NGO.

"We were always interested in working for some social cause and made a decision to quit the MNCs as those 12-13 hour a day jobs were not leaving us with enough time to do justice to our passion," says Parikh, who has a dual degree in engineering and arts from the University of Pennsylvania and has worked with Deloitte for three years.

"Now we often end up putting more hours than we did in the MNCs. But the satisfaction it brings, knowing that when these products are sold the money would help poor women, is immeasurable," says Arya, who quit her four-and-a-half year job as an equity analyst with Morgan Stanley.

"We did research, worked with international beauty experts for a couple of months before starting



Puro in December," she quips.

Like them, Aradhana Rai Bhushan also quit her job after working for 10 years in various corporate houses to join as the branding head at the Iskcon Food Relief Foundation, which supplies mid-day meals to school children.

Iskcon was looking for someone to handle branding and communications, while I was looking for a job with flexible work timings, says Bhushan who has worked with HSBC, J Walter Thompson and Hiranandani Constructions. "So I felt

it was a strategic fit."

The trend of professionals jumping from the corporate to the social sector is increasing at a quick pace, say job industry experts.

Sangeeta Narula, HR manager at Save the Children (India), says approximately 25% of employees at the NGO, which works for child rights, were previously working with MNCs.

The reasons are far too many. "There are several players in the social space which look for people

who can understand aspects of marketing, finance, strategy and can deploy resources accordingly," says Sunil Goel, director, Global-Hunt India, an executive search firm.

Social sector is also attracting huge interest from investors, who are looking to make some impact investments, says Aparajita Agrawal, VP (knowledge & insight) at social sector advisory firm Intelicap.

"\$0.5-5 million is typically the investment size. So investors are fine with lower returns. We also observed that fund managers are looking at investing in their own personal capacity in social ventures," says Agrawal.

Moreover, NGOs are getting more and more professional in their outlook, says Shveta Raina, head, marketing/recruitment/selection in Teach For India (TFI), a NGO which works towards educating children.

"It no longer carries the kurta-jholi feel to it. Like MNCs, NGOs

also provide opportunities for employees to analyse their performances, track their growth and dole out well-defined roles," says Raina, who worked with McKinsey & Co for two years in New York before joining TFI.

Narula says India has had a vibrant civil society presence with lakhs of NGOs and people are increasingly growing aware and interested in being part of associations which work for change.

However, a corporate to social sector jump comes with a wide gap in salaries.

Arya and Parikh say they do get compensated from the NGO; however their idea was not really to make money but to realise their passion of dabbling in wellness and helping the poor.

"When people make these jumps they are very clear about their goals in life and do so only after weighing all the pros and cons. They lay job satisfaction and passion ahead of compensation," says Bhushan.