

# Going after the small fry

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Despite the constant hankering for the need of women entrepreneurs in India, very few have made inroads in Indian business. Meeta Wasan, one such women entrepreneur aims to be one of them who has been inspired by businesswomen like Martha Stewart.

## Origins

After working nearly two decades in the US with some top tech companies, Wasan decided to come back to India and start Doon Consulting, a company that provides marketing and research services for small and mid-sized enterprises in India.

“I started the company on my return from Boston in March 2004,” says Wasan. The need for a company that can simplify marketing for small-sized companies, at a time when technology and dealing with customers are getting complex, prompted Wasan says to start this venture.

Typically, sales function involves generating leads for the product or services, following up on these leads and constantly updating on tech trends that can add value to existing or prospective customers. This lead generation is for technology products like desktops, servers, networking solutions or surveillance software. Additionally, it provides database services, which provides a company with Information about who to reach and where to contact them, which are major pre-requisites for a successful marketing campaign. It also provides introductory meetings with decision different makers in a company, which is seeing an uptake, according to Wasan. “Our data shows that over 60 per cent of meetings that were tracked have turned into business for our clients and 50 per cent of these prospects give industry referrals,” she adds.

The company does not share names of its customers due to competitive advantages but said that five of the 10 worldwide top firms in enterprise software and hardware and two of the five top Indian technology consulting firms are its customers. However, she clarifies that Doon Consulting is not a online search related advertising firm, which seems to be dime a dozen in India.

Being a woman entrepreneur in a male-dominated field such as consulting can be a quite a challenge, and it was no different for Wasan. In addition to that, she had never worked in India before starting Doon Consulting. “My friends from high school and college were scattered and I did not have even the semblance of a professional network. I made cold-calls and set up meetings for myself,” she says.

### **Challenges**

She sat outside people’s offices for hours, days and sometimes even weeks to get a purchase order and then to get a contract signed. The bottom line was, every phone call had to yield a current or future contact; every conversation was about marketing her firm and herself. Then there was the issue of funding. “Internally, I struggled with funds to organise the infrastructure, to pay my bills and staff. I struggled with finding a qualified team to work with and office space with reliable power and toilets!” she fumes. Doon is a self-funded company and so far has had no need to look out for funding outside. While she does not rule out possibility of external funding in the future, she says that she will hold off that plan as long as possible.

In 2004, Gurgaon was beginning to go through a construction boom, and she would find that on any given day, someone would have sliced through my Internet or my phone lines. “There was the irritant, that India is still a tough society and women, even forceful ones are not taken seriously,” she says.

The company currently employs about 65 people in Gurgaon but has some plan up its sleeve this year. “We are planning to open offices in Bangalore, Mumbai and will cater to clients in the Asia Pacific region,” she says. While the company is playing in an area that has a low barrier entry, competition comes in all forms and sizes. In a market place where giants like Nielsen with its established clientele and other such companies, Doon Consulting has its work cut out. Industry watchers feel that the one thing that goes in favour of companies like these is the fact that the larger players are more interested in tending to big-sized companies and the focus towards small and medium-sized companies is minimal. Also, these kinds of companies are clueless about the ways in which they can reach out to the Indian consumers and this presents a strong opportunity for businesses such as Doon Consulting.