



Day In The Life Of An Entrepreneur: Malini Gowrishankar

POSTED: MARCH 9, 2015

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Malini Gowrishankar is an engineering graduate, a voice-over artist and a mom who now helps women hit the refresh button in their lives with F5 Escapes.

My experience spans across multiple industries. After working for over seven years in the IT industry (Polaris, Oracle Financial Services and ThoughtWorks) as a techie, I decided to pursue my hobby of voice-overs full time. I went on two-months of leave without pay to experiment in the voice-overs industry and it clicked!

I quit my job and started doing voice-overs and creative writing. For over 2.5 years, I actively lent my voice for e-learning, radio and TVCs, short videos and animated CD ROMs. During this period, I also worked as a Tamil Radio Jockey (freelance consultant) for a year and a half with TimbreMedia (Worldspace Radio).



(<http://i0.wp.com/www.womensweb.in/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/DILOE-final.jpg>) Having set foot in over 16 Indian states and 11 countries, I felt that travelling outside India was a tad easier than in the country. That is when I figured that there is a genuine problem to solve here. However, the trigger came much later than the idea – the Delhi rape case was the one. That was when the urge became a raging fire inside me, pushing me to do something to make women feel safer and reclaim their space in the country.

Considering that I have travelled extensively within the country and had great rapport with people across the country, I decided to put my social capital to good use. I started an alternate travel company that specializes in all-women travel.

F5 Escapes (<http://www.f5escapes.com>) was born out of an insatiable urge in me to change the way women travel, especially in India. F5 Escapes is an alternate travel

company, focused on providing offbeat travel experiences to the urban woman. We help women hit the refresh button in their lives. Our tours are not the usual sightseeing tours with a checklist; they are experiential and offbeat. We also try and engage with the local communities and get them involved in the process.

My first year @ F5 Escapes

In a start-up, there is no typical day. Every day presents its own challenges and brings about its own bouquets and brickbats. In the initial days of F5, sometime in mid-2013, every day would begin with the worry of whether the idea is going to work, how to make women trust in us and what not! However, we were blessed; on our very first trip, two strangers (now good friends) signed up to travel with us and we had a wonderful little vacation.

That set the ball rolling and it reinforced my belief that this is indeed going to work. Quite a few days in the first year were spent in traveling, recess at different destinations and accompanying customers on trips. Sometimes my day would also involve lending a supportive shoulder to those women who took our experiential, offbeat tours as a therapy to heal – the satisfaction, which this experience brought within me was matchless!



(<http://i2.wp.com/www.womensweb.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/DSCN85171.jpg>)

By the time we completed the first year, over 100 customers had travelled with us through our group tours and customized itineraries for women's groups and families. The best part was that most of the ladies who had travelled with us were coming back to us to plan their vacations with friends and family too!

The story thereafter

Nowadays, most of the days pass by reaching out to our vendors and customers, evangelizing our trips, planning the calendar and so on. We also receive interview requests. We got featured in almost every prominent newspaper and women's magazine without spending a penny on public relations! This has been possible because for F5, word of mouth has been the most powerful marketing tool.

The quality of our service spoke for itself, because of which, we have been able to consistently take women to different destinations. What started off as small tours in and around Karnataka expanded to include destinations such as Ladakh, Gujarat, Andamans and Sikkim.

There have been quite a few difficult decisions to make too, all along the way. Days of boom and days of gloom alternate. But, that is what an entrepreneurial journey is all about, right?

A typical day @ F5 Escapes

On any given day, I don three hats – the founder of F5 Escapes, a freelance voice-over artist and a doting mom. My work day typically starts right after I send my son to school. I make mental notes of what I need to achieve in the day as I cook or take a morning walk. I then sit down to work – at home, at a café or at my friend's office and that is when most of F5 work gets done. I have a truly distributed team of four women and I manage the team remotely using virtual whiteboards and calls. Face-to-face meetings with the team happen at regular frequency to ensure that the commitment and enthusiasm levels are consistently high.

Once my son gets back from school, I spend some time with him listening to his stories of the day. Evening sees me finishing off all my voice recordings for the day at my homestudio. If I have to go out to record in a professional studio, I take my son along or finish it earlier during the day. On such days, he is treated to a visit to the library or a mommy-son rendezvous dinner. On low days, I play fetch with my four-year-old Labrador and it instantly re-energizes me!

Today, as I look back, I have no regrets for all the decisions that I made as a career woman. From IT to media to travel, the hops and the sojourns have been truly rewarding and humbling. The fact that F5 Escapes is able to bring about a mindset change in women who would otherwise never dare to venture out without family or friends, constantly motivates me to push my boundaries, thereby taking us a step closer to our lofty dream – to redefine the way women travel.

And I have miles to go before I sleep. Literally.

Website (<http://www.f5escapes.com>) | **Facebook** (<https://www.facebook.com/F5Escapes>) | **Twitter** (<https://twitter.com/F5Escapes>)

About The Author

About the author: Malini Gowrishankar is an ex-techie, voice-over artist and currently the founder of F5 Escapes, an alternate travel company,

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I had just resumed my career after a 2 year extended maternity break. This was my first international conference since then. I wasn't 'in the flow' yet... still wondering what I had missed

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**Anamika Sanyal**

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hey Malini...good to know about you...I want to try my luck as voice over artist too...can you help me with any course or job info...Thanks!

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awesome idea.... i am an egg turned momprenuer too... n gosh it feels great

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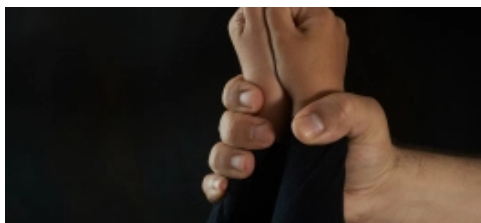
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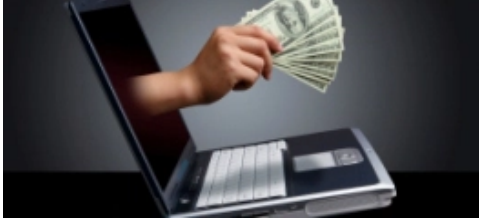
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