

On top

## Haute touch

*Tina Tahiliani, Executive Director, Ensemble, says that heading a premier fashion boutique requires a balance of creativity and business acumen*

>> SAVIA RAJAGOPAL

**The fashion scene has grown exponentially over the last few years. How does that translate to someone who is into retailing designer brands?**

It means that there is a lot more competition from within the country as well as from foreign brands. Simultaneously, the market has grown in terms of a wider consumer base whereas initially, our clients were likely to be industrialists or those with old money. Today, professionals and the upwardly mobile want to look well-dressed. Competition also increases awareness and the client is much more discerning.

**According to you, what's the most important aspect to running a business effectively?**

I think providing good leadership is important. Being able to motivate the team and also to hold them accountable is essential. Revisiting your strategy and having a clear vision is paramount.

**What's the toughest part of running a retail business?**

Managing inventory, editing merchandise well, maintaining the highest standards of quality and balancing commerce with image and fantasy — those are the challenging parts.

**On what basis do you select designers who want to retail at your store? What are the things you look for as a buyer?**

Aesthetics, quality, commitment, innovation — these are the qualities I look out for with respect to designers. In new collections, I look for a spark of originality.

**Though international buyers come to Indian fashion shows, we don't hear much about the reverse situation, that is, Indian buyers being invited to international shows. Why?**

We were invited to London Fashion Week where we bought a few collections. I think publicity is given to international buyers, frankly because we are still suffering from the 'white-man complex' and because our fashion weeks are so young. Middle-Eastern buyers acquire much more than the white buyers but we are still obsessed with a Harrods order and buyer even if it is tenth the size!

**Prêt is now looked at as a big market. Do you see it as taking off in a big way?**

It will eventually be much bigger than the current diffusion business for those who do it right.

**What do you think holds Indian fashion back when you compare it with the international markets?**

Indian fashion does not have access to professional contract factories to take care of the production. The designers are too bogged down.

**Absolute essentials for a business woman**  
**Commitment**

**Dedication**

**Hardwork**

**Balancing between home and work, and still feeling good at the end of the day.**

