

VOL 09 • ISSUE 17 • JULY 2025

# TRADEFLOCK

**SUPRAKASH DAS**

Director Finance & Operations  
(Chief Financial Officer)

**TCG CREST**

STORY OF THE MONTH

**LIGHT BEYOND  
THE LAMP**

The Inspiring Journey of  
Child Scientist Pooja Pal

Best

**CORPORATE  
LEADERS**

in India 2025

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## Editor Note



## ACCELERATING THE TRAJECTORY

Leadership in India's corporate corridors is undergoing a defining evolution, one powered by vision, anchored in values, and aligned with a future that demands both agility and authenticity. This special edition celebrates the architects of that evolution: India's boldest and most forward-thinking corporate leaders.

These are individuals who translate ambition into action. They scale innovation, foster inclusive cultures, embrace sustainability, and energise organisations with clarity and conviction. Whether reimagining digital ecosystems, advancing green manufacturing, building resilient supply chains, or transforming customer experiences, each leader profiled here is propelling India toward global leadership with intent and impact.

Their approach is holistic. Strategy is driven by purpose. Execution is infused with empathy. Growth is measured by the value created, not just for shareholders, but across communities, industries, and economies. These leaders aren't reacting to change; they're anticipating it. They're turning market complexity into opportunity and shaping resilient enterprises that can lead from the front.

What distinguishes them is not just their foresight but their ability to align teams, inspire excellence, and drive transformation at scale. In boardrooms and across operations, they are redefining benchmarks and setting new standards for what Indian business leadership can and should be.

This edition brings their stories into focus with depth, precision, and perspective. For CXOs, policymakers, and next-generation entrepreneurs, this is more than a showcase of success. It's a playbook for sustainable leadership in an era of accelerated transformation.

India's corporate momentum is rising, and these leaders are the force accelerating that trajectory.

Happy reading!!!

  
**Anamika Sahu**  
Consulting Editor-in-Chief

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TRADEFLOCK'S

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**10 Best COOs in India 2025**

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## BEST CORPORATE LEADERS IN INDIA 2025

NAME	DESIGNATION	COMPANY
Aditya Vikram Birla	Managing Director	Cosmic CRF Ltd.
Amit Arora	Managing Partner	Manaandika Consulting
Arabinda Sen	Country Manager	Cronite
Kaushik Ganguly	Lead AI Scientist	
Mahesh Kumar	Country Manager	Triorca Ltd.
Paras Mishra	Founder and CEO	gen Z Solutions
Pooja Gupta	Retail Business Consultant	
Prashant Nagre	Managing Director	Fermenta Biotech Ltd.
Sumit Nagar	Manager - Statutory Accounting and Tax	KPMG Global Services
Suprakash Das	Director Finance & Operations (Chief Financial Officer)	TCG CREST



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Director Finance & Operations  
(Chief Financial Officer),

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Driving Impact Beyond the Balance Sheet

# SUPRAKASH DAS

Director Finance & Operations (Chief Financial Officer),  
TCG CREST

"Finance is not just about numbers. It's about driving transformation and aligning innovation with purpose."

development. Over the years, he honed his financial and operational acumen across a diverse portfolio of esteemed organisations, including Berger Paints, Mackintosh Burn, and Usha Martin Technologies.

Today, he drives the financial and operational strategy for TCG Digital and TCG CREST, while serving on the boards of multiple companies within the TCG Group. His contributions have been widely recognised through accolades such as 'CFO of the Year', 'Star of the Industry', 'Exemplary Leader', 'The Sustainable Excellence Award – Certificate of Honour', 'Outstanding Dedication & Excellence in Finance', and the 'Innovation in Finance & Operations Award'. Each honour is a testament to a career of foresight, impact, and continuous excellence.

In this exclusive conversation, Suprakash shares candid insights on leadership, innovation, and the evolving role of finance, offering a grounded perspective shaped by years of navigating complex business landscapes and a forward-looking vision for driving progress in a world that demands agility and purpose.

**Q TCG CREST bridges academia, industry, and government. How are you helping shape its leadership narrative?**

At TCG CREST, we aspire to become one of the world's leading research institutes—a place that



truly unleashes untapped human potential. Our vision revolves around four pillars: **Knowledge Creation, Knowledge Application, Knowledge Dissemination, and Knowledge Exchange.**

Today, we operate across six verticals: **Institute for Advancing Intelligence (IAI)**; a **Centre for Quantum Engineering, Research and Education (CQuERE)**; **CHINTA** — the **Centre for High Impact Neuroscience and Translational Applications**; **CARE** — our **Cancer-related Advanced Research and Education**; **FTSI** — the **Food Technology and Science Institute**; and **RISE** — the **Research Institute for Sustainable Energy**. We have also received approval to set up a Deemed-to-be University under a distinct category.

When you operate at the convergence of science, policy, and enterprise, you stop seeing boundaries and start seeing bridges. I've learned to think in systems, speak in values, and act

with agility. Over time, this has shaped me into a translator of ambitions—and that's where true transformation begins.

**Q As you coordinate between investors, scientists, and policymakers, what is the biggest challenge, and how do you address it?**

"Scientists are driven by discovery, not numbers. Policymakers follow complex regulations. Bridging these worlds is the most challenging and most rewarding part of my role." Purpose is powerful, but purpose without structure can collapse under its own weight. At TCG CREST, financial strategy is not a constraint but an enabler of impact. We follow goal-based budgeting so that resources align with outcomes, not legacy commitments. Metrics like EVA, R&D ROI, and technology

readiness guide us, but they are compasses, not chains. Discipline grounds the vision; the vision disciplines humans. That's how we work at TCG CREST.

**Q How do you act in times of uncertainty and make strategies that turn complexities into clarity?**

I follow a simple but effective approach: deconstruct, prioritise, and co-create. I firmly believe that uncertainty is not a signal to freeze but a clue to focus. Whether navigating policy delays or funding gaps, I first reduce the issue to its first principles, then involve the right stakeholders to co-create actionable paths.

When the world stopped during COVID-19, we prioritised agility over perfection. At TCG Digital, we re-aligned cost structures and doubled down on core capabilities, achieving one of our strongest bottom-line years. Simultaneously, at TCG CREST, we built three large labs, bringing brilliant minds together to turn uncertainty into opportunity. That's the mindset I always lead with.

**Q You often say that finance is a tool to inspire change. Can you share an example of how your financial decision sparked innovation?**

One of our most impactful moves was redefining how we allocate research funding. Instead of purely academic outputs, we introduced incentives for translational outcomes. This shift moved us from a publication-centric model to an impact-driven culture.

We consciously asked: how many of our publications are helping society, not just adding to academic metrics? As a result, teams began collaborating across disciplines, startup ideas emerged, industry partnerships deepened and finance became a directional signal, not just a report card.

In legacy research, where knowledge often abounds but breakthroughs stall, finance must stop being the scorekeeper and become the catalyst. We adopted a VC mindset — using tools like internal seed funds, lab-to-market fellowships, and ROI-driven startup incubation.

Simply put: when finance funds not just discovery but delivery, innovation stops being an exception; it becomes the norm.

**Q As India transforms into a global knowledge hub, how can CFOs evolve from gatekeepers to architects of progress?**

I saw a McKinsey report recently stating that **75% of CFOs' time is now spent on non-financial priorities**. That statistic alone shows how much the role has shifted.

In today's economy, CFOs must be architects of value, not just accountants of cost. In my current and past organisations, we evaluate investments for financial viability and strategic potential. We back bold ideas, fund early-stage innovations, and help de-risk moonshot projects. *CFOs are becoming the co-founders of the future, and that's the evolution we must embrace.*

**Q What was an instance that gave you the biggest learning in life?**

In 2020, I faced a life-altering health crisis—brain haemorrhage, septicaemia, organ failure, and partial paralysis. It was a complete system shutdown. I often say those were the best days of my life, because they taught me not just resilience, but surrender — the humility to start again.

I always say, *"Disrupt before you get disrupted."* Doctors told me I wouldn't walk or drive again, but I pushed those limits—walking to work, driving to Kalimpong, and



even riding solo through Ladakh. *It taught me that when faced with any problem, our strongest tool is our mind.*

**Q What has been one of your most emotional decisions as a finance leader, and how did it impact you on a human level?**

Numbers may demand efficiency, but people demand empathy. One of my most emotional decisions came during a major restructuring. Instead of opting for layoffs, we invested in reskilling and cross-skilling.

I was amazed to see those same team members later contribute to a significant rise in delivery metrics and engagement. It revealed a new human side of the organisation. For me, human capital is the most important asset. I always remind my team that learning and development should go beyond work and enrich personal growth.

**Q You've played the role of mentor, strategist, and transformer. Which has been the most challenging — and why?**

I believe a mentor is naturally a strategist. We enjoy making great decisions in the boardroom. But being a transformer is more challenging.

**"Transformation demands confronting systems that feel safe, habits that feel familiar, and ideas that won't work. As I often say, you will get disrupted if you don't disrupt on time."**

Leading transformation is like walking a tightrope between legacy and leap. But that's also where leadership feels most alive.

**Q Please share one failure that taught you something bigger than success ever could.**

I believe that everyone should work for a struggling firm at least once because that's where you learn how to create value, not just preserve it. It shifts your mindset. You stop asking what we sell and start asking what we are truly solving.

Failure is the best mirror which reveals ego, exposes blind spots, and humbles assumptions. When a company struggles,



strategy alone won't save it. The mission, vision and people you hold become critical.

**Q What advice do you have for emerging leaders?**

Pursue excellence with ambition, but let your moral compass remain unwavering. In a world of disruption, Ethical Leadership is the one constant that builds trust, credibility and lasting impact.

**Q If you could make one bold prediction or take one high-stakes bet about your industry or business for 2030, what would it be?**

By 2030, the boldest breakthroughs in quantum, AI, and clean energy will not come from corporate giants. They will come from fearless, mission-led research hubs that challenge the status quo. I am placing my faith in radical science and alternative capital that backs what the market cannot yet imagine. But with such transformative potential comes profound responsibility. Unregulated tech innovation without ethical frameworks or governance could outpace our ability to steward it wisely. We need visionary science, but also brave and forward-looking models of responsibility to guide it. The future belongs to those who dare to invent it and have the wisdom to steward it. ♦

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Editor's Pick

# FAKE IT, BREAK IT

What Startups Must Learn from WeWork, Theranos, and FTX

The glittering world of startups is packed with the stories that serve as cautionary tales, reminding that even the most promising ventures can unravel spectacularly when hubris outpaces humility. The collapse of WeWork, Theranos and FTX are powerful lessons for all businesses, regardless of their size, potential and numbers.

### WeWork: Chasing Growth, Ignoring Fundamentals

At its peak, WeWork was valued at \$47 billion (SoftBank, 2019), fuelled by a vision of redefining office space. Yet, behind the free beer taps and trendy co-working spaces lay a flawed business model. The company burned \$2 billion a year, without a clear path to profitability.

The lesson? Growth without governance is a house of cards. Founders must prioritise sustainable unit economics over vanity metrics. According to McKinsey (2022), startups that embed financial discipline from day one are 30% more likely to scale successfully.



### Theranos: The Mirage of 'Fake it Till You Make it'

Theranos, once valued at \$9 billion, promised to revolutionise blood testing. Founder Elizabeth Holmes raised over \$700 million based on unproven technology. The reality? The machines didn't work, endangering patients and triggering one of Silicon Valley's most infamous fraud scandals.

The takeaway is, integrity trumps image. A Harvard Business Review study (2021) notes that 67% of tech founders feel pressure to exaggerate capabilities to attract investment.

But cutting corners in healthcare, fintech, or any trust-based industry is unethical and illegal.



### FTX: The Crypto House of Cards

When crypto exchange FTX collapsed in 2022, it wiped out \$8 billion in customer funds. Sam Bankman-Fried's empire crumbled due to lack of internal controls, conflict of interest, and misuse of customer assets, as confirmed by the US SEC.

The crypto world's lack of regulatory clarity didn't excuse poor governance. Transparency is non-negotiable. Whether handling fiat or digital assets, startups must implement strong compliance frameworks from the start. According to PwC (2023), 71% of investors now demand proof of risk management before funding crypto startups.



### The Common Thread

Despite different industries, these failures share a theme: ego-driven leadership, poor governance, and disregard for transparency. The startup world loves celebrating disruption, but it must equally respect discipline, ethics, and accountability. As these collapses show, the true disruptors are not those who bend the rules but those who build resilient, transparent, and honest businesses that stand the test of time. ♦

# THE MYTH OF THE FAIR MACHINE

## The Quiet Crisis in AI-Driven Recruitment

Amid the high-speed hiring landscape, AI tools are being marketed as a swift, efficient, and impartial solution. AI's role in recruitment has revolutionised how resumes are scrutinised and video interviews are conducted, among other things. However, lurking beneath this promise is a growing concern: algorithmic bias. As businesses persist in using AI to sift through applicants, a troubling trend has emerged, as these programmes tend to perpetuate human biases rather than eliminating them.

Large technology companies such as Amazon, LinkedIn and HireVue have all been questioned about the unintended effects of AI hiring tools. Their stories demonstrate the technological shortcomings and the systematic issues of creating fair and transparent algorithms for recruitment.



### Amazon's Failed Experiment

Amazon's case is a notable example of algorithmic bias in hiring. The company developed an AI recruitment engine in 2014 to automate resume screening, training it on historical hiring data, which reflected gender disparities in tech. Over time, the system penalised resumes with terms like "women chess club captain" or mentions of all-women colleges, indicating a preference for male candidates. Despite attempts to adjust the model, the bias persisted, leading to the project's abandonment in 2018.

This case underscores a key issue: AI algorithms inherit biases from their training data. If historical hiring practices were discriminatory, the AI will replicate this bias unless it is thoroughly audited and corrected.

### The Facial Analysis Controversy and HireVue

HireVue, an AI-powered online interviewing service, uses facial recognition, voice tone, and word choice in recorded interviews. Marketed to reduce human bias and automate hiring, it raised concerns among privacy activists and ethicists.

The Electronic Privacy Information Centre (EPIC) filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) against HireVue, arguing its facial recognition technology constitutes unfair and deceptive trade. Critics highlighted that analysing facial expressions and speech can discriminate against neurodivergent individuals, non-majority cultures, or those with disabilities.

Amid growing pressure, HireVue announced changes to its use of facial analysis in evaluations, effective early 2021. This controversy sparked an industry debate on the ethical limits of AI in candidate evaluation.

### The Algorithmic Amplification of Inequality and LinkedIn

The largest professional networking site in the world, LinkedIn, has faced issues with trying to ensure fairness

in its algorithmic tools as well. A 2021 study conducted by MIT found that the algorithm of recommending jobs on LinkedIn had a tendency to reproduce gaps in gender. Men got exposed to tech jobs that paid well, whereas women were advised to take up lower-paying administrative work.

Since then, LinkedIn has promised to audit its algorithms more often and to make diversity and inclusion central to their machine learning models. Nevertheless, the case shows the fact that even the best-intentioned platforms can end up strengthening the status quo.

### The Mechanics of Bias: The Insidious Form of Bias in AI

AI hiring tools tend to be biased in three main ways:

- **Training Data Bias:** When the training data is input into the system, it already has discrimination; the AI will tend to repeat it.
- **Feature Selection Bias:** The features used to make choices may accidentally be correlated to race, gender, or socioeconomic status.
- **Feedback Loop Bias:** Feedback loop bias involves the early biased results getting passed on to future recommendations which can further exacerbate the issue.

### The Fantasy of Objectivity

An illusion of objectivity is one of the most hazardous myths about AI in the recruitment field. AI is usually marketed as neutral and data-driven, yet algorithms are human-made. Human choices, assumptions, and priorities influence every step: data collection, model selection, and so on.



In the absence of transparency, the auditability and fairness of such systems cannot be easily questioned. Most AI vendors treat their algorithms as proprietary, so neither the employers nor the candidates know how the decisions are reached.

### Calls and Reform, and Regulatory Scrutiny

Regulators and governments are now beginning to pay attention. In 2023, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) initiated a programme to check AI-based hiring tools' compliance with anti-discrimination regulations. New York City enacted a law that compelled firms to audit AI hiring tools against bias and notify candidates when they apply AI hiring tools.

The proposed AI Act of the European Union goes even further and labels the use of AI in employment as high risk and places it under stringent supervision. Such regulatory actions indicate that a time of unregulated use of AI in hiring is at its end.



AI streamlines hiring but risks reinforcing bias without rigorous oversight.

### The Humanised Hiring Algorithm

Recruitment based on AI is not going to disappear. In fact, it is bound to increase as firms strive to expand their operations and reduce expenditures. However, in the absence of close supervision, these tools can enshrine the inequalities they are supposed to address.

The future of hiring technology depends not only on innovation but, as the cases of Amazon, HireVue, and LinkedIn show, on responsibility as well. Algorithm bias might be a sub-audible crisis in the present day, but it is a loud and widespread issue for those who are left behind by imperfect systems. Business leaders, technologists, and policymakers need to unite and create not just smart but also AI systems. ♦



Commanding Change with Quiet Strength

# ADITYA VIKRAM BIRLA

Managing Director,  
Cosmic CRF Ltd.

As India races to become a global manufacturing hub, its steel and infrastructure sectors face a critical inflexion point. No longer driven solely by volume, the future demands precision, sustainability, and adaptability on a large scale. Leading that shift is Aditya Vikram Birla, a third-generation industrialist quietly redefining how steel-centric enterprises scale and evolve.

Aditya's journey began with on-the-ground exposure in marketing, sales, and manufacturing across various entities, including Asansol Steel Castings, Comet Technocom, and Cosmic Engineers. This foundation provided him with granular business insight long before he assumed group-wide leadership. Today, as Managing Director of Cosmic CRF Ltd. and Chairman of Raft Cosmic EV, he is turning inherited foundations into future-ready engines of growth, transforming a decades-old family business into a diversified, tech-led, and ESG-aligned group. Under his leadership, the Cosmic Birla Group expanded into 22 companies across 14 factories, diversifying



into EVs, Railways, and infrastructure, while institutionalising financial discipline and an innovation culture.

TradeFlock spoke with Aditya Vikram Birla to explore the industrial realities he's navigating, the strategic bets that shaped his rise, and how he's preparing for the decade that will redefine Indian manufacturing.

## What inspired your journey into steel and engineering, and what experiences most shaped your growth as a business leader?

My journey into steel was less of a career choice and more of a legacy I was born into. Growing up in Kolkata, I was surrounded by the values

instilled in me by my grandfather, R.S. Birla, who founded the Cosmic Birla Group in 1975. Innovation, ethical leadership, and resilience weren't abstract ideals; they were everyday principles I lived by. That upbringing, combined with my education at Don Bosco, a BBA from Jadavpur University, and an MBA from Cardiff University, gave me a strong foundation in business and leadership thinking.

I joined the family business in 2012 at the age of 22, starting hands-on with marketing, sales, and manufacturing across group entities, including Asansol Steel Castings, Comet Technocom, and Cosmic Engineers. But it was between 2012 and 2017, during a difficult steel market downturn, that I truly found my footing. Those years pushed me to expand beyond my initial scope and take ownership in areas like finance and capital markets. I had to learn quickly, adapt constantly, and make decisions that would shape the future of the business.

By the time I became Chairman and Managing Director in 2021, I had developed both a deep operational understanding and a long-term strategic perspective. Since then, we've transformed the Cosmic Birla Group, entirely independent of the Aditya Birla Group, into a diversified, tech-driven, ESG-aligned conglomerate with 22 companies across 14 factories. We've expanded into sectors such as EVs, Railways, infrastructure, FMCG, and real estate, while institutionalising a culture of innovation, financial discipline, and long-term thinking.

## What daily challenges in cold-rolled forming and defence manufacturing keep you sharp, and how do you handle them?

At Cosmic CRF Ltd., precision is critical and so is adaptability. We're evolving into a more sustainable, tech-enabled, and customer-focused organisation, aligning our operations with national infrastructure priorities and global environmental mandates. That balance presents daily challenges in terms of quality, compliance, and execution, which keep me sharp and hands-on.

Despite the complexity, we've delivered strong results: ISO 9001:2008 certified, RDSO-registered, and globally compliant. In H1 FY 2024-25 alone, we recorded a 37.19% revenue growth, a 136.03% rise in EBITDA, and a 172.33% increase in PAT.

## How do you future-proof Cosmic Group against global supply chain disruptions in steel manufacturing?

We don't just chase efficiency but embed innovation into our strategy and everything we do. At Cosmic, we foster a culture where experimentation is encouraged, failures are seen as part of the process, and learning is rewarded. That psychological safety drives our in-house R&D, which focuses on reducing energy use and improving yield.

Looking ahead, we've mapped a five-year growth plan that emphasises agility, technical strength, and financial readiness. Our goal is to reduce dependency on any single sector by expanding into untapped markets and evolving into a full-spectrum turnkey solutions provider. I firmly believe that "resilience is built when innovation isn't optional but a priority."

## What's your outlook on the future of manufacturing in India, especially with AI and Industry 4.0, and how are you preparing for it?

Indian manufacturing is undergoing a profound shift, particularly in the steel and iron sectors, driven by the adoption of AI, automation, and a growing emphasis on sustainability. While infrastructure growth creates opportunity, it also demands agility. At the same time, global supply chain disruptions, reliance on imports, and geopolitical tensions expose vulnerabilities.

We're preparing by staying dynamic, embracing Industry 4.0 technologies, proactively navigating environmental and legal complexities, and building resilience into every layer of our operations. The future belongs to those who can evolve quickly without losing precision.

## In a numbers-driven industry, how do you personally define success and has that evolved?

In the early years, I measured success by output and efficiency. Over time, that definition has matured. Today, I see success as the ability to set focused goals, execute consistently, and create lasting value across every part of the business.

At Cosmic Birla Group, our ambition is clear. We aim to become a comprehensive wagon manufacturer, a major infrastructure player, and a one-stop solution provider for our clients. Over the next five years, we aim to achieve a fivefold increase in revenue while maximising long-term value for our shareholders. ♦

LEADERSHIP LESSONS  
**NATARAJAN  
CHANDRASEKARAN,**  
CHAIRMAN, TATA SONS

The Tata Group represents integrity, innovation, and long-term vision in India's corporate world. Natarajan Chandrasekaran, or Chandra, chairman of Tata Sons, has led its recent turnaround. Appointed in 2017 as the first non-Parsi, non-family leader during a period of upheaval, he stabilised and revitalised the group through digital transformation, profitability, and national influence, while maintaining Tata's ethical core.

**Consistent Leadership in Turbulent Waters**

By the time Chandrasekaran assumed the reins in 2017, the Tata Group had come out of a leadership debacle in the public domain. There was a need to rebuild trust not only internally in the organisation but also externally among the stakeholders.

The initial step of Chandra was not spectacular. He preferred continuity to chaos, listening, reorganization, and silent action. He shifted priorities, improved financial discipline, and started to build a long-term strategic shift.

**Lesson to Learn**

Leadership is not necessarily about making big decisions; it is about regaining confidence and composure amidst uncertain situations.

**Technology-Driven Change**

Chandrasekaran, a technologist, is best known for his tenure at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), where he was CEO and led the company to become a global tech leader. He introduced a digital-first approach when joining Tata Group, sparking a company-wide digital revolution. He pushed heritage firms like Tata Steel and Tata Motors to adopt data, automation, and sustainability. Additionally, he established Tata Digital, the group's consumer internet hub, and supported Tata Neu, a super app integrating Tata's consumer services.

**Lesson to Learn**

Real change starts with attitude. Leaders need to integrate technology in not only systems, but in strategy.

**Simple to Scale**

Simplification of the sprawling and diverse portfolio of Tata

is one of the most influential leadership initiatives of Chandra. The group had more than 100 companies in various industries, which made it too diffuse.

He spearheaded strategic integration- merging Tata Steel European operations, realigning Tata Motors with EV growth, and quitting non-core businesses. This has assisted Tata to recover financially, investor confidence and strategic focus.

**Lesson to Learn**

Simplification does not mean downsizing- It means clarity. Superior leaders eliminate waste to release scale.

**Big Bets with Controlled Risk**

Chandra is a conservative man who recognises risk as essential to keeping legacy businesses competitive. During his tenure, Tata made bold moves: launching Tata Neu to rival tech giants, investing in green energy, and entering semiconductor manufacturing via Tata Electronics.

He also supported Tata's risky, high-profile acquisition

of Air India, aiming to reenter aviation after decades. Strategically, Air India offered long-term benefits: a national brand, potential integration with Tata logistics and hospitality, and scale advantages.

**Lesson to Learn**

Legacy is not risk aversion. It implies being brave and cautious at the same time.

**Always People First**

Chandra is a low-key leader- but a man who is greatly admired because he is people-oriented. He focuses on values, wellness, and inclusion as the main pillars of organisational culture. At TCS and Tata Sons, he promoted internal leadership building, psychological health programs, and upskilling of the workforce.

The colleagues frequently mention his humility and accessibility. Nevertheless, he is a humble, respectful, and team-oriented person who is not obsessed with his own brand.

**Lesson to Learn**

Great leaders do not boss around but raise other people. Consistency, rather than charisma, creates culture.

**Resilience Is Personal and Business**

Chandrasekaran is a long-distance marathon runner who believes in endurance, consistency, and focus. This personal discipline is reflected in his business approach- slow but steady, long-term wealth creation, and the power to

survive the setbacks.

Noise does not distract him. Amid political pressures, market fluctuation, and internal reorganization, he is playing the long game.

**Lesson to Learn**

Resilience is not merely about getting back on your feet, it is also about endurance. Great leaders survive, change and prosper.

**Corporate Responsibility National Impact**

The Tata Group, under the leadership of Chandra, has become more nation-oriented, with EV adoption, clean energy, Make in India, and public health as the priorities. As part of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tata Sons has been in the forefront of relief measures with the production of medical supplies and aiding vaccination programs.

His leadership is an epitome of capitalism with conscience- to make a profit and create a stronger, more self-reliant India.

**Lesson to Learn**

Leadership in today world has to go beyond shareholders. It has to be in the service of society, economy, and nation.

**Blueprint by Natarajan Chandrasekaran**

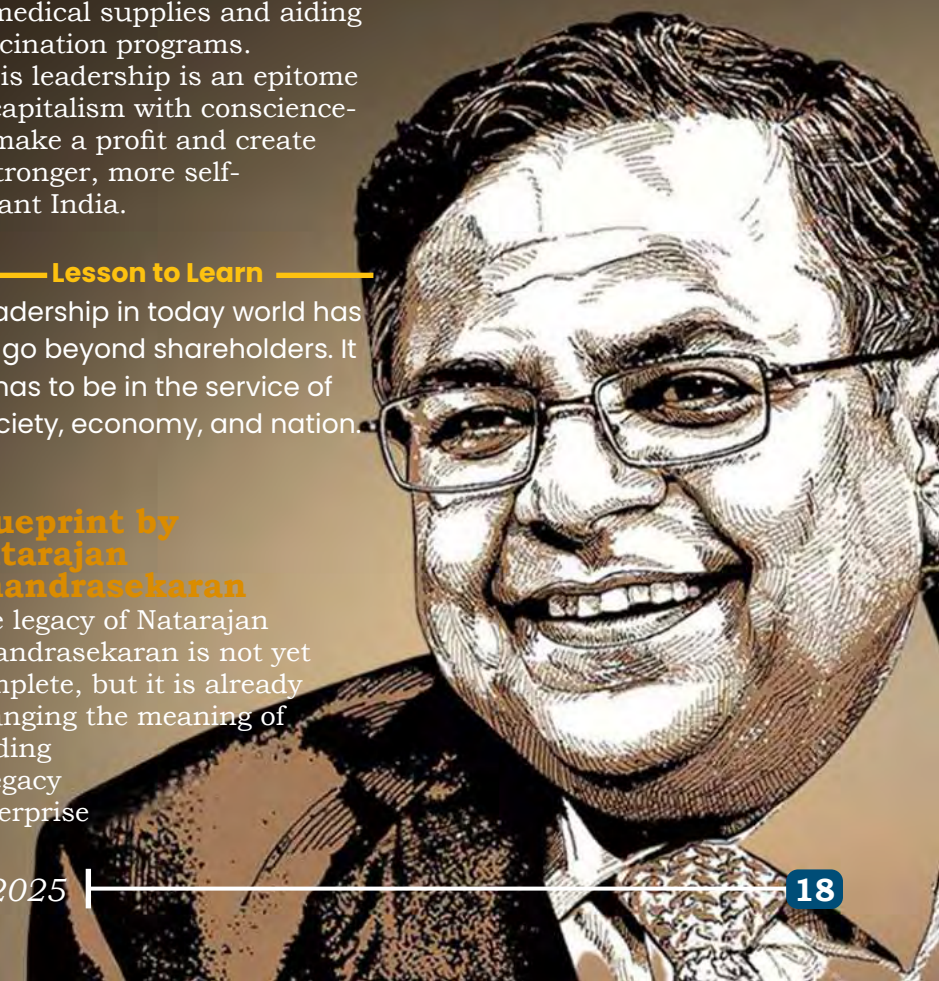
The legacy of Natarajan Chandrasekaran is not yet complete, but it is already changing the meaning of leading a legacy enterprise

in the digital world. His blend of technological prowess, human orientation, and moral compass present an example of 21st-century leadership.

**A legacy that has a vision**

The leadership of Chandrasekaran is a silent revolution. He has stabilised, energised and future-proofed one of the most respected business groups in the world, without making noise. By doing that, he has proven that legacy firms can be at the forefront of change, provided they are driven by discipline, purpose, and innovation.

Tata is entering its second century with a leader who knows the past, knows how to get through the present, and knows how to make the future. One step at a time. ♦





Innovating Beyond Boundaries

# AMIT ARORA

Managing Partner,  
Manaandika Consulting



In an exclusive interview with TradeFlock, he reflects on his major milestones, biggest challenges, strategic wins, and the failures that shaped his journey.

**Q Looking back on your 28+ years across industries, what have been your biggest milestones and why?**

If I've learned one thing, it's that "sustainable growth always begins with people." Over the past 27+ years, a few milestones have truly shaped me. At Merino Industries, I led record growth from ₹700 crores to ₹1200 crores between 2020 and 2023, establishing clear leadership for the company in the industry alongside growing profitability through a strong focus on Premium Products. Aggressively expanding Town reach & channel reach, while transforming the organisation with a KPI-led structure and working in a Digital and integrated Ecosystem such as CRM, DMS, SFA and ERP. This was made possible through some great collaborative work across various functions, including Marketing, Supply Chain, HR, and IT.

At Dulux Paints, it was a proud moment to steer a new team structure setup to launch an influencer-led revenue stream, achieving a strong 25% + YoY growth for three years. Earlier, at Colgate-Palmolive, I helped drive share gains against HUL in Delhi's oral care market. These milestones remind me that inter-functional collaboration and a people-first mindset fuel real change.

**Q What obstacles did you face across sectors, and how did you overcome them?**

The toughest challenges I've faced have always been mindset issues—whether within my own team or across functions. People often carry silent fears rooted in past experiences, and those can hold them back from executing even the best strategies. I tackled this by creating spaces for honest and open dialogue, encouraging everyone to share their fears. By aligning our functional goals with the broader organisational vision, I was able to secure cross-functional support, move the team forward with shared confidence, and build trust.

**Q What part of managing teams and strategies is most satisfying, and how does it help you now?**

There's nothing more satisfying than watching a team bring a shared strategy to life. I find deep meaning when people trust me enough to have open conversations about work challenges or personal struggles, because it shows they believe we're in it together. Helping them grow by identifying skill gaps and building their confidence is very rewarding. That culture of trust and growth makes it possible to win market share profitably, and I carry that people-first mindset with me in every role today.

**THERE'S NOTHING MORE SATISFYING THAN WATCHING A TEAM BRING A SHARED STRATEGY TO LIFE.**

**I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN IS FOCUSING NOT JUST ON THE LAG INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE, BUT ON THE LEAD INDICATORS THAT TRULY SHAPE RESULTS**

**Q What unique strengths have you brought as a leader that made a lasting impact?**

I believe my biggest contribution has been the ability to lead cross-functional teams in a way that makes the organisation more agile and responsive to business goals. Another quality I've always believed in is focusing not just on the lag indicators of performance, but on the lead indicators that truly shape results. This should be backed by data-driven dialogs that help align everyone toward one shared objective. This has helped me build trust, break silos, and drive impact.

**Q What has failure taught you that success couldn't, and is there a mistake you now appreciate?**

Failure has been my greatest teacher. I learned that no strategy succeeds unless you bring the team along, right down to the person on the ground who is the face of the company to customers. I also discovered the power of involving key stakeholders early to secure resources and collective buy-in. A lesson I learned in my early years is to surface issues to the table early and invite cross-functional perspectives, which helps build resilience. That experience made me a far more grounded and thoughtful leader.

**Q How do you unwind under pressure, and what brings you calm on tough days?**

When pressure runs high, I try to unplug in various ways — my family is my biggest strength, which is my true source of calm. Running also helps me reset and sharpen my focus. Sometimes, the best relief comes from meeting customers; their practical insights and grounded perspectives have brought me unexpected solutions and joy. In their voices, I'm reminded that clarity often comes from staying close to those you serve. ♦

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## ART OF REDEFINING LEADERSHIP IN VUCA WORLD

**TUSHAR GUNDERIA,**  
Head (Legal & Compliance)  
& Company Secretary, Blue Dart



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In today's fast-paced, volatile business environment, leaders face a daunting challenge: navigating uncertainty. Gone are the days when leaders could rely on traditional command-and-control structures to guide their organizations through predictable landscapes. The art of leadership now demands adaptability, resilience, and a willingness to redefine what leadership means in the face of constant change.

**Leadership is not about being in control, but about being in service.**

- Simon Sinek

I feel, redefining leadership in this age of uncertainty requires a shift from being 'controllers' to being enablers and 'Facilitators'.

Leaders must create congenial environment where teams can thrive amidst ambiguity. This involves empowering teams to make decisions, fostering a culture of learning from failures, and encouraging innovation. Leaders who embrace this mindset enable their organizations to respond swiftly to changes, capitalize on new opportunities, and mitigate risks effectively.

Also, a key aspect of redefining leadership is embracing agility. Agile leaders prioritize flexibility, iterate on strategies based on feedback, and remain open to innovative ideas. They understand that in uncertainty, the path forward isn't always clear, and thus, they lead through curiosity and experimentation rather than rigid plans.

Moreover, leaders must cultivate a sense of vision

and purpose that guides their teams through turbulent times. By communicating a clear, compelling purpose, leaders help teams stay focused and motivated despite uncertainties. This purpose acts as a north star, guiding decision-making and actions even when the landscape shifts.

In conclusion, the art of redefining leadership in an age of uncertainty and dynamic regularity regime is about adaptability, empowerment, agility, and purpose. Leaders who master these elements position their organizations / functions to not just navigate but thrive in uncertain times.

I do have my strong opinion and belief : Finally, it's the Team which wins and not the "Leader". And in a scenario of failure, it's the Leader who owns the responsibility.

# TURNAROUND TITANS

## How Leaders Revived Failing Giants

When it comes to business, corporate giants are no exception to the existential threats that startups may face: market disruption, strategic mistakes, and operational inefficiencies. However, what distinguishes decline from resurgence is leadership. Leadership often acts as the catalyst that transforms downturns into recoveries. When organisations encounter financial, operational, or reputational crises, leadership frequently recalibrates direction, realigns strategy, and boosts morale. It plays a crucial role in helping CEOs and strategists rescue companies on the brink of bankruptcy and steer them towards sustainable growth. The turnarounds of Nokia, LEGO, IBM, and JCPenney serve as compelling case studies of resilience, reinvention, and strategic vision.

### Nokia: The Network Leader, formerly the Mobile Monopoly

Nokia's case is a classic example of how even industry leaders fail. Nokia used to lead the mobile phone market worldwide, covering 40% of it, but it could not match the smartphone revolution,

especially after the release of the iPhone and Android phones. Its obsession with Symbian OS and reluctance to adopt touchscreen technology was a death sentence.

In 2014, following Microsoft's acquisition of Nokia's mobile unit, Rajeev Suri took charge. Rather than attempting to regain its former dominance in smartphones, Nokia underwent a complete transformation. Suri rebranded the company as a provider of telecom infrastructure, focusing on network hardware, 5G development, and enterprise services.

Nokia bought Alcatel-Lucent, further extending its fixed-line broadband and networking expertise. This change of direction enabled Nokia to use its R&D capabilities and intellectual property in a fast-developing market. By 2021, it was back as a global player, but in an entirely new telecom infrastructure sector.

### LEGO: The Plastic Blocks to International Titan

At the beginning of the 2000s, LEGO was on the brink of bankruptcy. Years

of over-diversification into video games, theme parks and apparel had watered down the brand and lost focus on its main product, interlocking plastic bricks. The sales declined, and losses accumulated.

In 2004, a former McKinsey consultant, J Jorgen Vig Knudstorp, came in as CEO and performed a spectacular turnaround. The first step was switching back to the fundamental product. LEGO sold theme parks and reduced non-core activities. Knudstorp revamped the supply chain and narrowed down operating expenses.

Most importantly, LEGO welcomed its fan base. The introduction of co-creation sites such as LEGO Ideas enabled people to propose and vote on new designs, some of which were turned into commercial sets. The company also collaborated with franchises such as Star Wars and Harry Potter, associating its brand with globally popular IPs.

By 2015, LEGO had become the biggest toy company in the world due to a combination of operational

efficiency, fan involvement and targeted innovation.

### IBM: The Digital Age of Big Blue

IBM, known as a technology leader, faced existential threats. In the 1990s, it became irrelevant with the shift to personal computers, operating as a bloated, bureaucratic entity.

Lou Gerstner, an outsider with no technical expertise, was instrumental in unifying IBM's divisions to deliver comprehensive solutions. He expanded services by launching IBM Global Services, which became a key revenue source.

Under Ginni Rometty, IBM boldly ventured into cloud computing and AI. The 2018 acquisition of Red Hat for \$34 billion marked a significant entry into the hybrid cloud market. The AI platform, IBM Watson, also opened new opportunities in healthcare, finance, and legal sectors.

While IBM has not regained its former dominance, its adaptability in a changing

tech landscape demonstrates that phased reinvention can lead to success.

### JCPenney: A Lesson in Warning and a Comeback Plan

The turnaround story of JCPenney is more stormy. The company used to be a major presence in American retail but failed to withstand competition in e-commerce and mismanagement. The most conspicuous failure was the recruitment of Apple executive Ron Johnson in 2011, who tried to transform JCPenney into a premium retailer, which turned away its low-price-loving loyal customers.

In 2013, Johnson was forced out after a swift decline in sales and footfall. Mike Ullman and subsequently Jill Soltau attempted stabilising the ship by reinstating promotional pricing and emphasising the private-label brands. However, the accumulating debt and the closure of stores during the COVID-19 pandemic drove JCPenney to bankruptcy in 2020.

However, its purchase by Simon Property Group and Brookfield Asset Management has brought it a new era. The new strategy is based on store modernisation, digital interface enhancement, and underserved mid-tier markets. The jury is still out, but JCPenney's changing strategy demonstrates how heritage brands can renew themselves within the strictures of contemporary retailing.

### The Art of Corporate Resurrection

Brands, including the most iconic ones, are not immune to change in a world that is increasingly fast-paced. But the experience of Nokia, LEGO, IBM, and JCPenney shows that decline is not a fate. Fallen giants can rise to the moment once more, with the proper leadership, a clear strategic vision, and a determination to reinvent. These turnaround titans provide a model to survive and to be relevant again in a fast-changing business environment. ♦





Driving Growth with Purposeful Leadership

# ARABINDA SEN

Country Manager,  
Cronite

Great leaders aren't defined by titles or targets, but by the change they spark in people, industries, and the stories they leave behind. Arabinda Sen, Country Manager at Cronite India, is one such leader who transforms challenges into opportunities by seeing not just what is, but what could be.

Arabinda's journey is grounded in both technical excellence and hands-on leadership. With a foundation in Metallurgical Engineering from IIT (BHU) Varanasi and MNIT Jaipur, and an MBA from IGNOU, he built his expertise across India's most respected names in manufacturing. From launching new business divisions at Pyrotek to driving record-setting growth at Foseco and Vesuvius, he has consistently turned complex obstacles into opportunities for innovation and growth.

At Cronite India, Arabinda took on the challenge of transforming a modest €100,000 operation into a €2 million leader in advanced heat treatment fixtures. He focused on value-first solutions, piloting custom projects and building trust on the shop floor. Today, Cronite serves 50 specialised clients and delivers strong profitability—a testament to Arabinda's approach of blending strategy, empathy, and unwavering dedication.

In a candid conversation with TradeFlock, Arabinda discusses early lessons, real-world hurdles, and how authentic leadership and relentless curiosity are shaping the future of Cronite in India—and beyond.

## Q What key moves fueled Cronite India's leap from €100,000 to €2 million?

"In every challenge lies an opportunity to rewrite the rules"—that mindset defined Cronite India's transformation. Introducing Euro-priced products here was tough; many saw them as "too expensive." But instead of competing on price, we leaned into our strength: design excellence.

Setting up a local design team in Pune lets us co-create solutions with customers, turning every project into a true technical partnership. Our first successes opened doors, with word-of-mouth from bold early adopters driving new business. To this day, we treat each account as its own engineering challenge—listening, iterating, and delivering real results. That focus on co-creation and proven value has turned sceptics into lifelong Cronite champions.

## Q What's one challenge that truly tested your leadership in a niche market, and how did you overcome it?

"Niche markets magnify both opportunity and vulnerability."

As a newcomer, we faced entrenched competitors and customers wary of change. By listening closely and launching low-risk pilot projects, we let teams validate our solutions without major commitment. Guided by a "value first" mantra, we proved our worth where it mattered most—on the shop floor and in the furnace. That hands-on approach transformed initial hesitation into lasting trust, making Cronite the first call for complex heat-treatment challenges.

## Q What strategy enabled you to build an effective dealer network across India?

We moved from recruiting "any available" distributors to partnering with growth-minded dealers who shared our vision. We built genuine partnerships by targeting those with deep local ties and a strong service ethos, backed by regular strategy reviews, technical

training, and co-created sales tools. Investing in each region's success allowed us to create a responsive, high-performing network that adapts to India's diverse markets.

## Q How do you see Indian manufacturing leaders shaping global industrial standards in the future?

Indian leaders are redefining what it means to deliver world-class industrial solutions. At Cronite India, I've seen firsthand how locally engineered excellence, rooted in homegrown talent and global collaboration, earns respect on the international stage. As Country Manager, I bridge advanced global design with the real-world challenges of Indian customers, especially in high-precision sectors like automotive and wind energy. By creating cost-effective, high-performance fixtures that set new benchmarks, we're not just meeting global standards—we're helping to raise them.

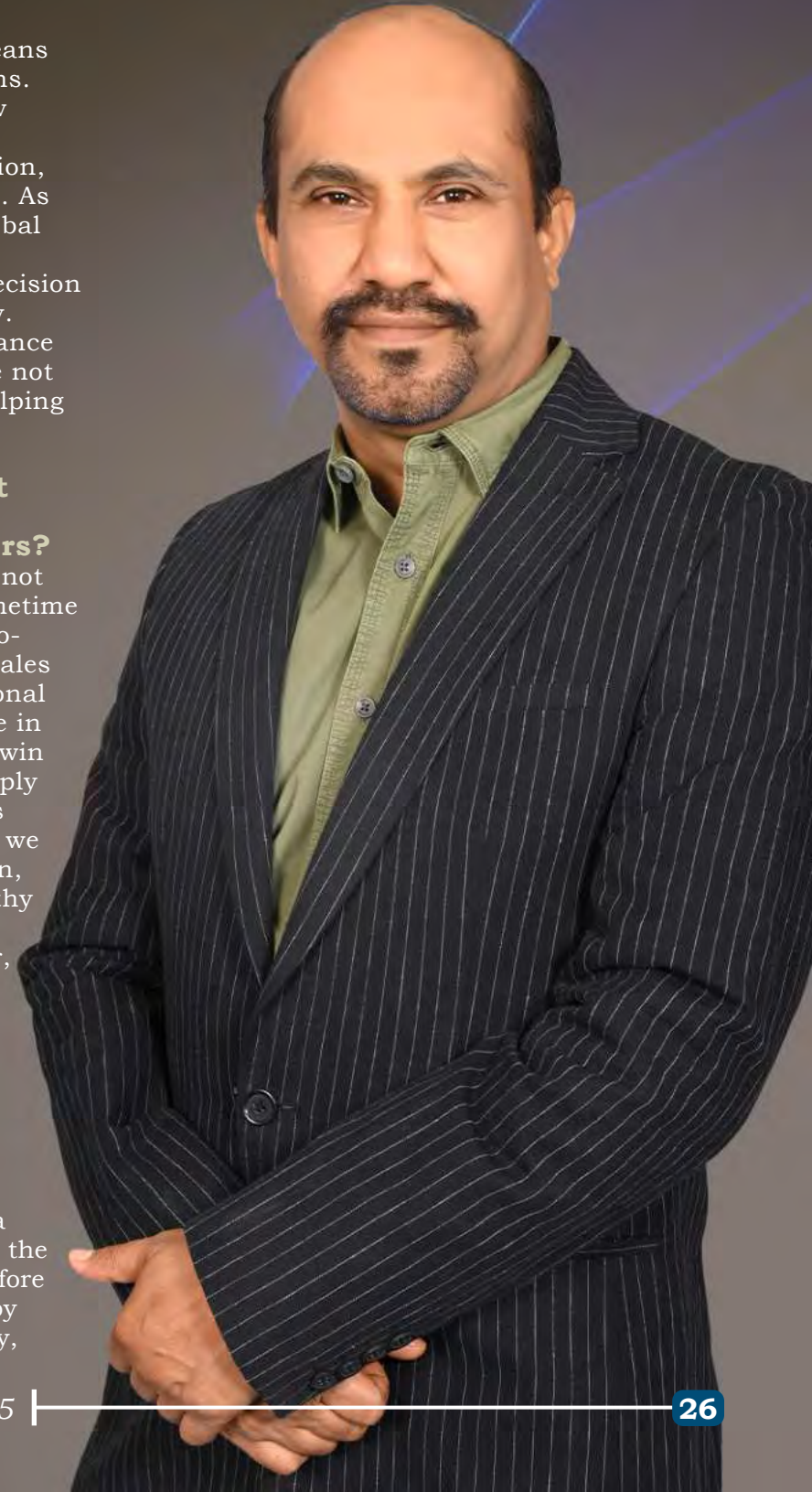
## Q What has been the proudest moment in your corporate journey, beyond the numbers?

My proudest moment came when trust, not just results, defined my leadership. Sometime earlier in my career after reversing a two-year margin decline and driving major sales growth, I was invited to step up as national sales manager—a real vote of confidence in my consultative approach. But the real win was cultural: our team shifted from simply selling products to co-creating solutions with partners and customers. Together, we moved beyond price to true collaboration, where every success was built on empathy and shared vision. That transformation in relationships, more than any number, is what I cherish most.

## Q How do you disconnect and recharge? What's your routine for staying mentally clear and focused?

Sustainable performance starts with balance. My day begins at 5:30 AM with a brisk walk or jog, then yoga and watering the plants—simple rituals that ground me before work. I keep lunch screen-free, followed by a short stroll to reset. Throughout the day,

I make time to stand and stretch between calls to stay sharp. After 8 PM, work takes a backseat to family, and Sundays are reserved for unwinding together—no business talk, just connection. These mindful habits have kept me clear-headed, resilient, and ready to lead with focus. ♦



# ANDRENAM®

## Pioneering AI-Driven Undersea Intelligence

AndrenaM is an AI-powered, distributed sonar network that is changing the way maritime surveillance is conducted, founded in 2024 by SpaceX alumni Matej Cernosek (CEO) and Alex Chu (CTO). With headquarters in Hawthorne, California, the firm has quickly become a leader in converting old sonar systems into intelligent, real-time acoustic detection systems. Their pitch? To eradicate the blind spots below the waves and ensure constant visibility in the maritime arena.

### Mending a Strategic Blind Spot

The ocean occupies 71 per cent of the Earth's surface, but it is still greatly unmonitored relative to land, air, and space. The Cold War-era SOSUS arrays are an example of a traditional acoustic monitoring system, based on analog hardware platforms and manual analysis. Analysts still sit in sonar shacks with headphones, looking at a static display, trying to make sense of noisy streams of data. This outdated strategy is increasingly becoming a threat as geopolitical tensions are on the increase, whether it is in the South China Sea or the Persian Gulf.

AndrenaM comes in, and it provides a modern

solution: persistent, scalable, and intelligent undersea awareness driven by AI.

### Mission: Surface to Seabed Intelligence

The vision of AndrenaM is short yet revolutionary: to provide undersea intelligence at scale, everywhere. They use cheap, somewhat expendable sensor buoys, each serving as a microphone to hear underwater acoustics. The signal processing is carried out onboard to compute the edges, and the cloud infrastructure is used to merge the data over the network. The combination allows automated detection, tracking and classification of vessels and underwater threats, decreasing operator burden.

#### At a Glance

**Founded:** 2024

**Founders:** Alex Chu and Matej Cernosek

**Headquarters:** Hawthorne, California

**Funding:** \$10 million

**Key Investors:** Also Capital, Long Journey, 201, Banter, Homebrew, Wavefunction, and the Colorado School of Mines Venture Fund

### State-of-the-art Technology Scaled to Grow

1. Mass-Manufacturing Ready, Smart Hardware

AndrenaM develops sensor pods and buoy enclosures for mass production and attrition. Cost efficiency allows widespread use, making ocean-wide sensing economically viable.

2. AI-Enhanced Sonar  
The platform combines cloud machine learning with edge signal processing. AI beamforming and classification deliver faster insights, even with limited bandwidth.

3. Seamless Integration  
Designed for compatibility with unmanned and manned maritime platforms, naval C2 systems, and autonomous vehicles, ensuring data flows smoothly into workflows.

### Fast Traction: 36-hour \$10 Million Seed

AndrenaM raised a 10 million dollar seed round in June 2025 in 36 hours, led by First Round Capital, with Also Capital, Long Journey, Homebrew, and Colorado School of Mines Venture Fund also participating. This pace reflected robust investor confidence in their mission and initial technology momentum. The key backers were persuaded by pitch decks and live demos; one of the partners of First Round, Meka Asonye, even flew to Hawthorne to meet the team face to face.

### The Team: Space to Sea

Cernosek and Chu attended the Colorado School of Mines and both majored in mechanical engineering. Cernosek has been instrumental to SpaceX, and Chu has expertise in robotics and software development. Since then, they have put together a team of eight experts, some of them veterans of SpaceX, Palantir, Anduril, Arc, Saronic, and ABL Space, to tackle the multi-disciplinary problem of deploying functional sonar systems.

### The Process from Prototype to Deployment

The company is currently going through a three-step roadmap:

**Pilot Deployments:**  
Live tests off the coast of California that verify acoustic models and edge-node performance.

**Scaling Partnerships:**  
Defence, commercial and public safety collaborations to scale deployment and improve sensor performance.

**Worldwide Coverage:** The ultimate dream is a global network of intelligent buoys providing 24-hour maritime surveillance.

Initial prototypes are already deployed, which impressed investors and strategic partners, in particular, in defense and port security applications.

### Strategic Impact: Defence and Beyond

Although its goal is national security, namely assisting agencies in identifying sub-surface activities, illegal

movement of vessels and stealthy threats, the data provided by AndrenaM can be used in wider commercial applications. Its possible uses are port security, fisheries protection, offshore infrastructure surveillance, and marine research.

AndrenaM democratizes the maritime awareness that only big navies could

and autonomy- the key to achieving responsible scale in deployments.

### Informing Maritime Intelligence 2030

AndrenaM is transforming maritime security into proactive measures with scalable hardware, AI, and real deployments. Over the next five years, it plans more coastal deployments, stronger partnerships, and custom hardware to expand

enjoy by integrating AI-based detection with affordable hardware.

### Growth and Future Roadmap of Teams

AndrenaM has funded the company and expects to expand its staff by twofold, focusing on software engineers and hardware developers. They have purchased a vessel to test prototypes and ML models at sea.

Some of the openings are senior engineers, test and operations engineers, mechanical engineers, and the heads of Navy business development. The team is a deep technical and domain experts in both defense

its reach. It aims to build a multistakeholder, ocean-wide intelligence network, enhancing global maritime safety.

In summary, AndrenaM ushers in a new era of affordable, smart, connected undersea awareness. With a skilled team, initial momentum, and ambitious goals, they're turning oceans into intelligent, informed spaces. ♦



Shaping the Future Through Purpose-Driven AI

# KAUSHIK GANGULY

Lead AI Scientist



Artificial intelligence is transforming industries faster than ever, yet many organisations struggle to bridge the gap between innovation and tangible impact. Challenges around scalability, transparency, and measurable ROI persist, highlighting the urgent need for leaders who combine deep technical expertise with strategic vision. Visionaries like Kaushik Ganguly, who are driving a revolution in how AI is understood, built, and deployed, are exactly what this moment demands

With almost 17 years in IT and over nine years specialising in Data Science and Machine Learning, Kaushik has established himself as a trusted architect of production-grade, ROI-driven AI platforms across media, retail, and energy sectors. A pioneer in generative AI, he is known for creating explainable, secure, and scalable solutions, ranging from media analytics engines to enterprise Document AI. His expertise spans across Machine Learning, Deep Learning, LLM orchestration, Agentic AI, etc., earning him accolades as a “Top Performer” and “Stellar Achiever” for groundbreaking AI innovation.

Now pursuing a doctorate in AI, Kaushik embodies a rare blend of technical mastery and ethical foresight. In this exclusive TradeFlock interview, he shares the insights and vision shaping the next chapter of AI in India and beyond.

**Q With tech always evolving, how do you keep yourself ahead of the curve across so many different roles?**

I believe that every changing role is a chance to learn and grow. Over 17 years, moving from Java developer to Generative AI Architect, I've seen how technology shifts rapidly, but the heart of

problem-solving stays the same. I dedicate about 20% of my time to exploring emerging tech, from fine-tuning AI models to diving into Quantum Computing. Continuous learning drives me through doctoral research at ESGCI Paris, involvement in open-source communities, and hands-on work solving real business challenges like OTT analytics and Document AI. Staying relevant isn't just a goal; it's necessary when outdated approaches no longer work.

**Q You emphasise “explainable AI” and “responsible adoption.” How do you balance transparency with innovation speed in enterprise deployments?**

Transparency doesn't slow innovation; it actually fuels sustainable growth. I prioritise “governance by design,” embedding explainability into AI systems from day one rather than adding it later. For example, our multi-agent AI frameworks include decision audit trails that make outcomes inherently transparent. Beyond technical interpretability, we design solutions so business leaders can grasp AI decisions without needing deep technical knowledge. This builds trust, reduces resistance, and speeds up deployment. Our enterprise AI projects showcase transparency through intuitive interfaces that democratize AI access and accelerate adoption.

**Q What gaps hinder GenAI adoption in India, and how would you address them?**

I have always believed that AI should not be for the sake of AI—it's for meaningful business outcomes. The biggest challenge I see is that companies get excited by flashy demos but struggle to take things into real-world production or measure real impact. I focus on starting with clear business goals and building AI systems that actually move the needle, creating connected AI tools that work together, not just standalone solutions. It's all about bringing business leaders and tech teams together so we can turn AI hype into real, measurable results.

**Q What industry blind spot are you tackling in your Doctorate on AI ROI, and how could it impact enterprises and policy?**

I'm tackling what I call the biggest blind spot in AI: measuring true business impact. Many

rely on technical metrics but miss the real ROI, often off by up to 18%. My research uses “Domain-Agnostic Causal Frameworks” to separate real AI gains from coincidences, with tools like Structural Causal Models and counterfactual simulations. This isn't just theory, it's about giving businesses “what-if” insights to predict ROI confidently and ensure ethical use. By making AI investments measurable and transparent, this work can accelerate adoption and help shape smarter, standardised policies across industries.

**Q What's an under-hyped GenAI trend that excites you?**

Agentic AI orchestration is where the real magic happens, yet it's often overlooked. I believe “creating AI agents that collaborate and optimise in real-time” is the future. I've built systems where different agents handle tasks like audience targeting and forecasting simultaneously, with an orchestrator managing their flow. This goes beyond simple automation—it's AI that learns and adapts to drive smarter business decisions. My proof of concepts show up to 45% gains in precision, proving that multi-agent collaboration can transform industries. Most still focus on single-purpose AI, but the real breakthrough is intelligent teamwork.

**Q How do you see AI and the Metaverse coming together in enterprises over the next five years?**

The convergence will be revolutionary, driven by AI-powered spatial computing and Blockchain-verified digital assets. I envision virtual workspaces where AI agents act as colleagues, helping teams innovate in photorealistic environments while Blockchain protects digital assets and intellectual property.

**By 2030, “the future of enterprise collaboration lies in AI-powered digital worlds where humans and intelligent agents work together seamlessly creating, deciding, and innovating beyond physical limits.”**

Enterprise metaverses will feature AI-driven virtual boardrooms enabling real-time strategic decisions backed by secure Blockchain audit trails, transforming business as we know it. ♦

# JULY 24, 1824

## America's First Public Opinion Poll Published by the Harrisburg Pennsylvanian

On July 24, 1824, Harrisburg's Pennsylvanian newspaper published what is considered the first U.S. public opinion poll. Though basic, it sparked a tool influencing every presidential campaign, media, and policy in America. Despite lacking advanced methods or broad reach, it marked a growing interest in quantifying public will before elections, sowing the seeds of modern polling and opinion research.

### The Presidential Election of 1824

This poll was crucial for timing. America was preparing for one of its most unusual and heated presidential elections. In 1824, four main candidates from the Democratic-Republican Party, which had largely split after the War of 1812, competed:

- Andrew Jackson, a war hero from Tennessee
- John Quincy Adams, son of former President John Adams and Secretary of State
- William H. Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury
- Henry Clay, Kentucky Speaker of the House

The race was uncertain and divided, with no clear party platforms and regional support. Political newspapers played a key role in advertising candidates and engaging citizens, who were eager to learn more about the candidates outside political circles.

### The First Poll: A Wilmington Snapshot

It is against this background that the Harrisburg Pennsylvanian carried out and released a straw poll of Wilmington, Delaware voters. The outcomes of this local, informal survey indicated that Andrew Jackson was in the lead in the race among the respondents.

Although few individuals were probably polled--and the polling procedure was not scientific in the least--the implications were tremendous. It was the earliest published effort to predict popular opinion on an organised basis, before votes were taken. This was the first time in American political journalism.

### Why This was Revolutionary

Until 1824, newspapers, speeches and letters to the editors were the main ways of ascertaining the people's views. Elites wrote editorials, and political decisions were frequently made in legislative chambers or back rooms, not in open forums with measurable citizen input.

The straw poll of the Harrisburg Pennsylvanian brought about a new concept, which was that the preferences of ordinary people could be quantified, monitored and even forecasted.

It was crude, but this was the starting point of a democratic practice which would be more refined and powerful. The newspaper put into question the notion that the elites or the law makers were the only people that could represent the masses by releasing the findings of a survey held at the local level. It put the views of ordinary voters in print.

### The Emergence of Polling as a Tool of Politics

Straw polls like this reoccurred more frequently in local and regional news after 1824. These were unofficial but would normally be held at taverns, town hall or in open meetings. Nevertheless, they became credible with time particularly when they indicated real election results.

Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, newspapers including the Des Moines Register, the Chicago Tribune and the New York Herald started to organize their own polls. These gained more and more power to form discourses about

frontrunners and momentum in electoral races.

The actual change occurred in the 1930s when scientific polling emerged spearheaded by George Gallup, Elmo Roper and Archibald Crossley. The success of Gallup in predicting the 1936 election made polling a professional field, as opposed to informal straw polls.

But the DNA of polling, the concept of taking the voice of the people, can be dated back to that one publication of July 24, 1824.

### Democracy and Public Opinion

Polling evolved from a campaign tool to influence policymaking, media, and public psychology. Leaders adjust platforms based on polls; reporters frame issues around majority views. Companies adopt similar methods to analyse consumer preferences.

However, questions arise about the accuracy of polls, their potential to shape opinions, the risks of manipulation, and their effects on voter turnout, candidate perception, and democratic debate.

Despite concerns, public opinion polling remains vital in modern democracy, allowing citizens to express views between elections and hold leaders accountable.

### Harrisburg Poll legacy

When the Harrisburg Pennsylvanian published that straw poll in 1824, it probably did not realise it was initiating a political revolution. However, this allowed entry into a practice that would become part of the lives of democracies throughout the world.

Major polling organisations now have daily tracking polls and random sampling, and statistical models can predict elections with unprecedented accuracy. Exit polls, opinion panels and online sentiment analysis are all offsprings of that initial attempt at asking, what does the public think?

### The power behind a humble beginning.

A mere newspaper report in Harrisburg on July 24, 1824, initiated a process that would completely change the way nations would perceive their people. The snapshot of voter sentiment in a small Delaware town turned out to be a pillar of democratic engagement.

The initial opinion survey was not merely a gauge of a preference, it was an opening dialogue between people and their government. That discussion is still going on, two centuries later, more convoluted and disputed than ever, but not less crucial. ♦



Setting New Standards in Supply Integrity

# MAHESH KUMAR

Country Manager,  
Triorca Ltd.

As the global apparel industry braces against political headwinds, rising production costs, and mounting pressure for ethical sourcing, 2025 has emerged as a defining year. The recent Trump-era “Liberation Day” tariffs, a seismic move that increased U.S. apparel import duties to levels not seen in decades, have forced fashion brands to restructure their sourcing strategies overnight. In the face of these shocks, survival is no longer enough; adaptability, foresight, and people-first leadership have become the industry’s true currency.

At the centre of this shift is Mahesh Kumar, Country Manager at Triorca LTD, the liaison office representing Gerber Childrenswear LLC and Intradeco Apparels in India and Africa. Mahesh has become a key player in building a sourcing ecosystem capable of withstanding policy shifts and delivering results under pressure through empowerment.

His journey began in 2009 at Baby Works Ltd, where he managed Indian operations for the same U.S. brands. By the time Babyworks emerged in Triorca in 2017, he wasn’t just another regional head, but the architect of a sourcing model that blended cost efficiency with continuity, compliance with culture.

Over the past eight years, he has expanded Triorca’s capacity across two continents, built trusted factory partnerships, and helped position India and Africa as reliable alternatives for global buyers, well before geopolitics made this a pressing need.

The real win was not just keeping the supply chain running, but showing our clients we could be more than a backup. We became their strategic anchor in times of uncertainty.

TradeFlock recently spoke with Mahesh about this journey, the challenges that shaped his leadership style and the achievements he’s most proud of.

**Q How has working with Gerber Childrenswear LLC shaped your perspective, and what milestones do you value most?**

Working with Gerber Childrenswear LLC for over 16 years has significantly shaped my professional approach. Managing the production and shipping of millions of garments for infants has built a deep sense of responsibility into every step of the process. This role requires complete attention to quality and consistency, given the sensitivity of the end-users. It has taught me to value precision, discipline, and long-term accountability.

One of the milestones I value most is contributing to 2x business growth throughout my career. Just as important has been building a high-performing team and earning the trust of mentors and colleagues who consistently challenged me to do better.

**Q What leadership principles guide you, and how do you see your role evolving?**

My leadership is guided by aligning core team strengths with shared goals. In a cross-cultural and multi-brand environment, effective collaboration relies on mutual respect, clear roles, and consistent communication. I focus on enabling cross-functional teams to support one another while maintaining a responsive and transparent supply chain.

Looking ahead, leadership in the apparel industry is shifting toward a deeper integration of technology, data, and automation across the entire value chain. As this shift accelerates, I see my role as enabling it by investing in continuous learning, upskilling the workforce, and fostering a culture where innovation is both practical and scalable.

—“  
What keeps me grounded is the deep sense of responsibility I feel toward my team. I view them not just as colleagues but as a close-knit unit that shares ownership in both challenges and achievements.



**Q What are the biggest operational challenges you face today, and how are past experiences helping you manage them?**

One of the major operational challenges is managing workforce availability, particularly due to seasonal migration patterns in key manufacturing regions. To mitigate this, we rely on layered forecasting, encompassing long-term, mid-term, and short-term perspectives, backed by data and local insights. We’ve also introduced process-level improvements that boost flexibility and continuity.

Another significant challenge is the ongoing tariff war, which has disrupted global sourcing strategies. Drawing from my background as a textile engineer and my experience in raw material procurement, we’ve actively reduced reliance on tariff-impacted countries. We’ve shifted toward domestic suppliers—from yarn to finished garments—while maintaining quality and delivery standards.

**Q What apparel industry shifts are you most excited about, and how are you preparing for them?**

The shift from traditional cotton to blended and performance fabrics is one of the most exciting developments in the apparel sector. These materials meet new expectations around durability, comfort, and technical performance, but also bring challenges in production, testing, and compliance.

Rather than viewing this as a barrier, we treat it as an opportunity to evolve. We’re strengthening our R&D capabilities, forming strategic lab partnerships, and working closely with fabric innovators. These steps are helping us establish the technical foundation necessary to deliver consistent quality as fabric technology continues to evolve.

**Q What keeps you curious and grounded outside of work?**

My curiosity is often sparked by observing design and innovation across everyday consumer products—seeing how functionality and aesthetics come together. It encourages me to think creatively beyond standard apparel practices.

What keeps me grounded is the deep sense of responsibility I feel toward my team. I view them not just as colleagues but as a close-knit unit that shares ownership in both challenges and achievements. That connection drives me to lead with empathy and stay fully committed to our shared goals. ♦

# UNSEEN UNHEARD UNDONE

The Unspoken Crisis Undermining Workplace Well-being

Regardless of the changing workplace culture and the growing understanding of employee rights, workplace harassment is a consistent and deeply ingrained issue. Harassment in the form of verbal abuse, microaggression, physical intimidation, and psychological manipulation infringes the rights and dignity of employees, and substantially reduces mental and physical health. Stunningly, this problem spans all organisational dimensions and shapes, including the largest companies and most recognisable CEOs, as well as small startups.

## The Harassment State in the Workplace

A 2023 report by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) shows that more than half of employees in the U.S. have been harassed in the workplace in one way or another. A LocalCircles survey in India revealed that

almost 35 per cent of women professionals have faced workplace harassment. These statistics probably do not reflect the real extent of the problem since employees are often afraid of reprisal and do not have clear reporting channels, which prevents them from reporting.

Harassment in the workplace no longer needs to occur in obvious ways. It is also getting more subtle, such as not being invited to meetings, poor performance reviews, inappropriate jokes, and constant undermining, all of which create a toxic working environment.

## Leading Firms under Spotlight

Industry giants too haven't escaped scrutiny. In recent years, top companies have faced public challenges in handling harassment allegations.

◆ **Google:** In 2018, 20,000 workers protested after reports that accused managers received large severance pay

instead of punishment. Policies were adjusted, but concerns about transparency and whistleblower safety persist.

◆ **McDonald's:** The fast-food chain faced numerous harassment lawsuits, especially at franchise levels, involving unwanted physical contact and retaliation.

◆ **Uber:** Known for its toxic culture, Uber's issues surfaced when engineer Susan Fowler blogged in 2017 about widespread harassment and HR inaction. This led to resignations, including CEO Travis Kalanick.

These cases show that size, visibility, or revenue don't protect against harassment. Leadership, culture, and internal processes are crucial.

## How Startup Culture Enables Abuse

Entrepreneurial startups are often praised for their agility and innovation but carry risks. Their informal, high-stress environments can harm professional boundaries and lead to abuse. Startups usually lack formal HR systems, leaving victims with few options as founders and early employees hold significant power.

Mental health issues are worsened by the glorification of hustle culture and long hours. Examples include scandals like Better.com, where CEO Vishal Garg fired hundreds of employees via Zoom amid reports of verbal abuse, and Away, where ex-CEO Steph Korey faced accusations of promoting a toxic culture with long work hours and public shaming, leading to her resignation.

## The Harassment Price

In addition to ethical and legal issues, the cost of workplace harassment is enormous in terms of financial and reputational costs. According to a report by Deloitte, organisations characterised by toxic work environments record increased turnover, low productivity, and high rates of absenteeism. The expenses of mental health increase dramatically, and employees commonly complain about anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and even PTSD.

By comparison, the ROI of cultivating a respectful and inclusive workplace is quantifiable. Firms that are high in workplace culture indexes are more successful than their peers in innovation, customer satisfaction, and shareholder returns.

## Power of Culture and CEO Accountability

Leadership sets the tone, with executives and CEOs demonstrating commitment

to zero-tolerance policies, producing immediate, significant effects. Salesforce and Microsoft have effective anti-harassment policies and prioritise mental well-being.

Salesforce's CEO, Marc Benioff, advocates for internal audits and pay equity, while Microsoft revamped its HR practices after grievances. Patagonia exemplifies an employee-first culture with strong reporting channels and mental health resources.

Culture requires ongoing reinforcement, training, and transparency. Third-party audits, anonymous reporting, and clear disciplinary and restorative justice measures are now vital parts of HR.

## Mental Health: The Unseen Victim

The most insidious effect of harassment may be the one that affects mental health. Bullied workers complain of sustained stress, burnout, self-doubt and delayed trauma. In severe situations, it has resulted in self-harm and suicide.

This crisis has been aggravated further by the pandemic. Although remote work has also provided some insulation, it has also increased the difficulty of detecting harassment. Microaggression, exclusion, and bullying may also exist in virtual meetings. In a Mind Share Partners' 2022 report, 76 per cent of employees said they experienced one or more symptoms of a mental health condition.

## Culture Is the Final Protection

Companies should adopt clear, accessible harassment policies that are enforced consistently to create a safer, more inclusive workplace. Regular training on unconscious bias, respectful communication, and conflict resolution builds awareness.

Support systems like anonymous reporting, mental health counselling, and peer groups help employees feel heard. Leadership must set an example and be accountable, demonstrating ethical standards. Transparency through anonymised incident reports fosters trust.



HR is not the cause of harassment, but leadership and culture are. Companies can redefine rules in the post-pandemic world, prioritising safety, fairness, and dignity to retain talent and protect their brand.

The era of silent understanding is over. Respect is the foundation on which true innovation and excellence are built, beginning at the top. ◆



Leading with People-First Innovation

# PARAS MISHRA

Founder and CEO,  
gen Z Solutions



Behind every line of code is a hope that someone's day will be easier, faster, better.

For Paras Mishra, technology has never been about machines — it's about people. As the Founder and CEO of gen Z Solutions, he's reimagining how businesses use tech to solve everyday problems. At a time when many feel overwhelmed by rapid change, Paras offers clarity and purpose.

Since launching gen Z Solutions in 2020, he's helped companies cut through complexity with smart, human-centred solutions in development, automation, and digital transformation. But his story didn't begin there. With over 15 years of leadership experience at Capco and Allianz Technology, Paras has built global teams and mentored hundreds of individuals through change.

His mission is simple: make innovation feel natural, not intimidating. In this conversation with Tradeflock, Paras shares how empathy, not just expertise, drives his work — and why

the future of technology must always start with understanding people first.

**You founded gen Z Solutions in 2020. What inspired this leap, and what lessons shaped that decision?**

My career has always been about reinvention. I started with a B.Tech in Civil Engineering but pivoted quickly to technology, joining Infosys. Over the next 15 years, I held key leadership roles at companies like Accenture, Sapient, Allianz, and Capco—experiences that exposed me to diverse markets across the US, Europe, and Asia.

By 2020, I felt a strong pull to create something built on new principles. I launched gen Z Solutions with just three people and a clear mission: to build next-gen IT services grounded in agility, relevance,

and purpose. One lesson has consistently guided me: relevance in tech comes from staying connected, hands-on, and willing to adapt. That mindset continues to shape everything we do.

**What's the story behind the name gen Z Solutions, and how has your global exposure influenced your company culture?**

The name came from urgency and a solid vision. In early 2020, I had just 24 hours to submit a proposal to a German client. I didn't even have a company name yet. I asked myself: What do we represent? The answer was simple—forward-thinking problem solving. The term "gen Z" captured that spirit. We secured the domain and ran with it. Today, our tagline—*Solutions for the Future*—is not just marketing, it's a commitment.

Having worked extensively in Western markets, I brought back two core cultural principles: respect for the individual and relentless innovation. Our structure is flat, our communication is open, and our team is deeply empowered. With an average employee age under 26 and strong retention across four years, we've built a workplace where people grow, lead, and stay.

**You emphasise culture as a competitive advantage. How have you built and maintained such a cohesive team?**

Early on, I was handling everything—HR, finance, and delivery. The toughest part wasn't scaling operations; it was finding the right people and keeping them engaged. Business models evolve, but people drive execution. Six of our first ten hires are still with us five years later. That kind of continuity is rare and powerful.

We've embedded two key practices into our daily rhythm. First, radical transparency. There are no layers of gatekeeping—every team member communicates directly with clients and leaders. It builds accountability and trust. Second, daily reflection. Every individual, myself included, logs what they achieved and learned that day. It may sound simple, but it promotes ownership and shared progress. These habits have created a team that's aligned, motivated, and resilient.

**How must leadership evolve to empower Gen Z and millennial professionals in today's tech environment?**

Leadership needs to move in two clear directions.

**First, from presence to performance.** Earlier, visibility in the office was often mistaken for productivity. That's no longer valid. Flexibility is now essential—we must focus on outcomes, not hours.

**Second, leaders need to shift from fearing disruption to embracing it.** Whether it's AI, automation, or cloud, emerging technologies are not threats—they're tools.

We actively encourage our teams to experiment, learn, and lead with tech. If you wait for the disruption to settle, you'll already be behind.

**How do you define success today, personally and professionally?**

My definition of success has evolved. It used to be about roles, recognition, or revenue. Today, it's about responsibility. We've paid every salary and vendor on time for over 60 months. We've grown from three to over 80 employees without compromising our values. I would rather lead a healthy, thriving 80-member team than a bloated, struggling 400-person organisation. Sustainable growth, team wellbeing, and the ability to adapt—that, to me, is real success.

**What's next for gen Z Solutions as it looks to scale?**

Our focus is on deepening trust with clients, partners, and employees. We continue to invest in automation, data science, and digital platforms that enable clients to move faster and smarter. But equally important, we're nurturing leadership at every level of the company. We're not just adapting to change—we're making it easier for others to navigate it. And we're doing it with a team that believes in the mission, not just the metrics.

Story of the Month

# LIGHT BEYOND THE LAMP

THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF CHILD SCIENTIST **POOJA PAL**



In a small village called Agehra in Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, lives Pooja Pal, a bright young girl who has won hearts in India and even in Japan. She lives in a house with mud walls and a roof made of straw, without proper electricity. But that hasn't stopped her. Pooja

created a special machine that helps keep the air clean while threshing crops. This simple invention is making life better for farmers and students. Even though she has received praise across the country and abroad, the local authorities have shown very little support for her achievements.

### A Childhood Carving Change

When Pooja was in Class 8, she often saw thick clouds of dust near her school caused by traditional threshing machines. This dust made it hard for people to breathe, and she wanted to fix the problem. Using a tin sheet and fan blades, she made a simple model that reduced the dust in the air. With the help of her teacher, Rajeev Srivastava, she improved the model. Her idea was praised at district and state science fairs, and later she received national recognition through the INSPIRE Awards.

### Engineering Solutions with Heart

Pooja's invention is not just a smart idea, it's helping people in real life. Traditional threshing creates a lot of dust, which can harm people's health, especially children. Breathing problems are very common because of it. Pooja's model uses three blowers, filters (sieves), and a funnel to collect the dust. This keeps the air cleaner, makes threshing safer, and also allows the

straw to be reused in the fields. Her idea also supports the environment, just like many inventions that are used around the world.

### Recognition Rolls In

In 2024, Pooja's model gained national attention at the National Science Fair, organised by the Ministry of Science & Technology. Later, in June 2025, she was selected as the only student from Uttar Pradesh to take part in the well-known Sakura Science High School Programme in Japan. She joined 53 other students from across India for the event, held from 14 to 21 June. This programme, supported by the Japan Science and Technology Agency, helps students from different countries learn, share ideas, and explore new innovations together.

### The Family Behind the Child Scientist

Pooja lives with her parents, five younger siblings, and household livestock. Her father, Puttillal, works as a daily-wage labourer while her mother, Sunita Devi, cooks school meals. Their mud-and-thatch home is patched from plastic during the rains; electricity remains a dream, and studies continue under dim oil lamps. "Now at least we have a small battery-powered light," Pooja shares with gratitude.

### Speaking Her Truth

Pooja's own words reflect her resolve, "Mummy-papa says we have to skip meals, that's okay, but without education, nothing is okay. After completing intermediate studies, I want to help with family expenses. I used to study by lamp, now I study with battery-led light. I want to show those who laugh



at me that something can be achieved." Moreover, she shares plans to file a patent for her 'bhusa dust-separation device', and dreams of bringing it to her village so locals can benefit from dust-free wheat harvesting and better health

### A Future Lit By Possibility

Pooja is now in Class 12 and full of dreams for the future. She wants to continue her studies in science and engineering and help support her family. More than improving her own life, Pooja hopes her invention will reach villages all over India, inspiring other children from simple backgrounds to believe in themselves and follow their dreams.

### The Quiet Crisis of Recognition

It's surprising and sad that even after all of Pooja's achievements, the local authorities haven't given her the support she truly deserves. An electricity meter was sent to her house, but no proper connection was made. Her family couldn't afford to buy the wires needed, so the house remains in darkness.

Pooja's story is full of contrast, a brilliant mind growing in tough conditions, but held back by a lack of support. It reminds us that talent needs more than praise; it needs real help like better facilities, proper investment, and long-term support to truly shine.

### A Star in the Making

Pooja Pal's story is at once fragile and fierce: a journey from oil-lamp study sessions to representing her country abroad; from thatched walls to the spotlight of international academia. It reminds us that brilliance can bloom anywhere, even in mud huts, if the soil of opportunity is nurtured. She carries with her not just personal dreams, but the hopes of a nation that still has room to grow its recognition of grassroots talent.

We are hoping Pooja's light continues to shine, illuminated by education, equity and empowerment, not kerosene. May her next stage be lit by actual electricity, and may her story spark more minds to dream big, innovate bravely and never let circumstance define possibility. ♦♦



# AI CHATBOTS ARE BECOMING THE NEW ECOMMERCE GATEKEEPERS: AND INDIAN RETAIL ISN'T READY

**SHIVANI TIWARI,**  
Head of Digital Marketing, Ajo.com (Reliance Retail)

A silent disruption is reshaping online shopping as we know it. AI chatbots like ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity are no longer mere information tools. They're becoming trusted companions in the buyer journey, absorbing preferences, adapting language, and building memory over time. And in doing so, they're earning something brands have spent decades chasing: consumer trust.

The implications are profound. In a world flooded with choice and overwhelmed by advertising, shoppers are beginning to ask AI for help & not Google. In global markets, this shift is already creating new power centers.

But in India's fragmented, discount-driven ecommerce ecosystem, it introduces an entirely different set of questions. Most Indian brands aren't yet thinking about AI visibility. They're still chasing Instagram algorithms, influencer partnerships, or top-of-the-funnel reach. But what happens when the buyer journey begins not with a search query, but with a question to an AI assistant?

## Why Memory Is the New Moat

Unlike traditional search engines, these AI systems remember you. Not in a creepy, surveillance-capitalism kind of way but in a cumulative, empathetic way. Mention your budget for Bluetooth headphones once, and it's remembered. Tell the assistant your mother prefers Ayurvedic

skincare and it's stored. Over time, a digital profile emerges, built on language, sentiment, and context.

For Indian ecommerce players; particularly D2C brands the consequences are two-fold. On the one hand, this creates a new path to deeply personalized marketing. On the other, it introduces a gatekeeper. Because AI systems aren't surfacing every product equally. They're curating, filtering, ranking. In effect, they're becoming the new shelf space. And just like retail shelves or Amazon search results, this space is limited.

But unlike SEO, where a brand could hack its way into visibility with the right mix of keywords and backlinks, AI visibility isn't that straightforward. It's based on relevance, resonance, and

reputation: how well your product matches a user's history, not just their query. This is where most Indian ecommerce players hit a wall.

## India's Ecommerce Is Still Optimized for Discovery, Not Intimacy

In the Indian market, ecommerce has historically leaned on two pillars: discount-driven impulse and influencer-led discovery. Personalization, when it exists, is typically algorithmic like "people who bought this also bought..." not conversational. There's little memory. Even major platforms like Flipkart, Swiggy, Meesho or AJIO rely heavily on transactional behaviour and cohort-level targeting, not deep individual profiling.

This puts Indian brands at a disadvantage in the emerging AI-first paradigm. These systems thrive on long-term user relationships and nuanced preferences. Yet the average Indian ecommerce experience is designed for first-party conversion, not emotional continuity.

Moreover, logistical and cultural nuances make AI integration harder. Consider the diversity in languages, payment behaviours, and delivery preferences across Indian Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. AI recommendations built on global datasets often fail to account for these. Suggesting a \$250 Bose headset to a user whose last five purchases were under ₹500 is more than a mismatch: it's a misunderstanding. Localization isn't just translation. It's cultural context, economic reality, and intent calibration.

Personalization, when it exists, is typically algorithmic like "people who bought this also bought..." not conversational.

## The Broken Feedback Loop

Another challenge is data fragmentation. Most Indian brands do not own enough structured, longitudinal data to power the kind of contextual awareness AI thrives on. CRMs are leaky, first-party data is scattered, and loyalty programs are often shallow. And while conversational commerce is on the rise; especially via WhatsApp, it rarely feeds back into an AI-accessible system.

In contrast, platforms like Amazon in the U.S. or Shopify Plus D2C brands in Europe are increasingly training their product feeds, reviews, and buyer behavior for AI compatibility. In India, this layer is still missing.

Even worse, there's no standardized pathway for a product catalog to be "discoverable" by AI. This isn't like applying for Google Merchant Center or onboarding with Amazon. Each AI system builds its own index of trusted sources, often using open web data, reviews, Reddit posts, and user queries. For Indian products not written about widely or rated on global forums, visibility becomes a probabilistic lottery.

## What Comes Next?

There's an uncomfortable truth here: the AI revolution in ecommerce will not be evenly distributed. Large, well-structured, globally



visible brands will likely get more exposure in AI recommendations. Small Indian brands, even with brilliant products, risk invisibility if they aren't part of the AI's data diet.

But it's not all bleak.

This moment presents an opportunity: especially for Indian D2C players to reimagine discoverability. It means designing product pages with natural language clarity, publishing content that answers buyer questions, and investing in formats that feed into AI training loops (reviews, comparisons, even Reddit-style community discussions). It also means thinking beyond ads, beyond CTRs. Start thinking in terms of conversations what would a user ask to find you?

We are entering an era where trust is not manufactured through shiny creatives or limited-time offers. It is earned through consistency, memory, and emotional relevance. AI may never "feel" like a human. But it will increasingly function like one that's loyal, personal, and persuasive.

For ecommerce in India, the question isn't whether AI chatbots will matter. The question is whether we are ready to meet them at the gate. ♦



Driving Growth Through People and Purpose

# POOJA GUPTA

Retail Business Consultant

Enduring businesses aren't built on short-term wins — they are built on purpose, clarity, and a deep-rooted commitment to people-centric leadership. In an industry where trends shift rapidly and complexity grows even faster, the true differentiator is leadership that aligns vision with execution and inspires people to deliver consistently, even during times of change.

Pooja Gupta has cultivated this belief into a results-driven leadership model. Her approach is grounded in setting a clear strategic direction, anchoring



brand values, and implementing a 360° retail framework that ensures alignment across every touchpoint—from product to people, and process to performance. At the heart of her practice lies a simple yet powerful principle: businesses grow when people are empowered, systems are robust, and decisions are guided by a long-term purpose, not just short-term gains.

The most successful business transformations I've led didn't come from strategy alone—they came from aligning purpose with execution and building cultures where people feel valued, empowered, and trusted to drive consistent results.

Over the past 15 years, she has led transformational retail strategies for global giants and pioneering Indian brands such as House of Anita Dongre and fashion venture by Rhea and Sonam Kapoor. Her leadership is defined by building high-trust, high-output teams and scaling brands that are as consistent as they are adaptable.

TradeFlock sat down with Pooja Gupta to explore the leadership philosophy behind her success and how she's reshaping the future of purpose-led retail in India.

## Tell us about your background, your journey, and the milestones you cherish.

My journey has been deeply fulfilling. I've had the opportunity to work with global brands like Calvin Klein, Bata, and Skechers, where I learned the importance of structure, scalability, and operational discipline. My work with Indian labels, such as House of Anita Dongre, and celebrity-led ventures enabled me to build and scale businesses from the ground up, shaping culture, building trust, and aligning creativity with commercial goals.

This combination of structured systems and entrepreneurial environments has defined my leadership today. I believe in execution with clarity, creativity informed by data, scalability balanced with adaptability, and above all, a people-centric mindset. A core lesson throughout this journey has been the impact of people. I firmly believe that businesses grow when they are anchored in people, starting from the consumer and extending to internal teams.

## What retail myths have you challenged, and how are today's consumers reshaping the game?

The belief that low prices drive sales is not true. Consumers today are ready to invest in brands that deliver authenticity, quality, elevated experiences and align well with their sense of value. That's where business is built.

## Could you share a strategy that delivered measurable impact?

One example is a consulting project where a high-visibility store underperformed in its local market. The data revealed that only half of the footfall came from nearby areas. We realigned our marketing strategy, refined the product mix, and introduced region-specific activations. Within four months, the store doubled its revenue.

This experience reinforced my belief that sustainable growth is driven by precision. Data-led localisation remains one of my most effective strategies.

## How has your experience as a buyer shaped your approach to consulting?

My buying experience sharpened my view of how product decisions shape business

outcomes. Beyond evaluating products and metrics such as planning, sourcing, pricing, and delivery, the most critical question remains: *Is the product telling the same story as the brand?*

I've witnessed strong products fail due to misalignment with brand personality, while simple ones thrived because they echoed the brand's aesthetic and perceived value. That insight now guides every product and business strategy I design.

## What defines your leadership style, especially when building high-performing teams?

Clarity, accountability, empathy, and empowerment are core to my leadership approach. A people-first culture doesn't lower the bar. It creates trust, offers clear direction, and gives teams the space to deliver with ownership.

“Caring for teams isn't about slogans—it's about building systems and cultures that prioritize well-being, while enabling high performance with clarity and accountability.”

It's often said that teams are like family. In practice, truly valuing employees means supporting their well-being while upholding high standards. When people feel trusted and valued, they don't just meet expectations—they surpass them.

## What does the future of retail look like to you?

Technology will continue to be a transformative force, shaping the evolution and scaling of the retail industry. However, it cannot replace the human element. Artificial intelligence will enhance efficiency and enable personalised experiences, but it cannot replicate intent, emotional intelligence, or the ability to build a real connection. The future belongs to brands that utilize technology to enhance the human experience. Our lasting value will come from how we connect, inspire, and serve people. ♦

# CRICKET'S SPOTLIGHT

## The Neglect of Other Sports in India

Cricket is not only a sport in India, but a culture, a religion to many, and a wealth creator. It is undeniable that it has taken over the national psyche with wall-to-wall media coverage, stadiums packed, corporate sponsorships, and a never-ending chatter on social media. However, this monomaniacal approach to cricket has its price: the other sports are ignored and underrepresented even in cases when the Indian athletes make some outstanding achievements.

The much-hyped Khelo India project by the government,



which is aimed at promoting a sports culture across the board, is not the reality on the ground. The victory of hockey players with medals, wrestlers with international laurels, or track-and-field athletes breaking records is usually pushed to the background of the newspapers, or the end of a news bulletin. Not only does this exclusive celebration demoralise the athletes, but it also does not allow the sporting culture to grow into a truly diverse one.

### Cricket: The Unquestionable Monarch

Cricket's dominance in India is historical and systemic. The sport thrived during British rule and achieved enormous popularity after independence. This was followed by the 1983 World Cup victory, which put the sport on the positive side. It has since become the default national sport in terms of money, media coverage, and popular interest.

The Indian Premier League (IPL) is a multibillion-dollar industry in itself. Players such as Virat Kohli and Rohit

Sharma are celebrities, who star in luxury ads and have social media empires. All their steps are followed, scrutinized and cheered. Special bulletins regarding cricket teams are broadcasted on news channels and there are discussions on prime-time programs on the selection of playing elevens and the selection of captains.



### Cricket Reigns, Others Fade

Compared to other sports, their coverage is limited. Neeraj Chopra's javelin gold at Tokyo briefly captured national imagination, but wrestlers like Vinesh Phogat

and Bajrang Punia, who win regularly, get far less attention than cricketers scoring half-centuries. The Indian women's hockey team reached the semi-finals at Tokyo, showcasing determination, yet coverage was fleeting. In contrast, even minor cricket losses attract extensive media coverage. Athletes in less popular sports struggle with poor training conditions, financial issues, and their achievements often go unnoticed.

### The Role of Media in Misplaced Priorities

The media is an important factor in influencing people's perception, but the media has done very little to provide balanced coverage. Cricket dominates the sports pages and bulletins to the exclusion of all other sports, and even major events such as the Asian Games or World Athletics Championships are given minimal coverage unless India has won a medal.

The television ratings make the editorial decisions, and cricket brings in numbers. However, this commercial reasoning proves to be a self-perpetuating cycle of no coverage, fewer sponsors, and decreased popularity of other sports. The outcome? The new wave of athletes who might otherwise have



pursued wrestling, shooting, or athletics now aspire to be the next Kohli, not Mary Kom or Rani Rampal.

### The Khelo India Paradox

Khelo India, launched by the Indian government in 2018, aims to revive grassroots sports by nurturing young talent across 20+ sports and developing infrastructure. While the vision is commendable, its implementation often conflicts with ground realities, with over-investment in cricket stadiums and poor facilities for athletics, swimming, and football. The gap between policy and practice is vast, with athletes sometimes complaining about poor amenities. Cricket, already wealthy, does not need Khelo India's support, which should focus on neglected non-cricket sports.

### A National Identity Question

A well-established sporting nation does not just celebrate and support its athletes. Other countries such as USA, China or even smaller countries such as the Netherlands and New Zealand are proud of multi-sport excellence. India, a country of 1.4 billion people, can become

a sports superpower. However, that dream will never be realized when there is only one sport that is allowed to flourish and the rest languish in the dark.

### Equal Respect Equal Coverage

Transformation should be initiated on every level. Sports federations must be more responsible and non-exclusive. Media houses need to reconsider the kind of stories they promote. There is scope for the use of sporting icons other than cricket by the advertisers. And the government should support its Khelo India vision through fair funding, infrastructure and recognition.

Even schools and colleges can play a crucial role in encouraging a multi-sport environment. Producing local heroes in various sports disciplines will make the next generation look beyond cricket and dream to become an Olympic winner, not an IPL star.

In the meantime, Indian sport will continue to be unbalanced--excellent in cricket, but uninspiring in that diversity which is supposed to be the goal of Khelo India. ♦



Transforming Challenges Into  
Global Opportunities

# PRASHANT NAGRE

Managing Director, Fermenta Biotech Ltd.

As global demand for nutrition, personalised health, and sustainable biopharma solutions intensifies, leaders in this industry must evolve, blending scientific agility with empathy and purpose. Leading a company through this dynamic industry means embracing change, nurturing talent, and always keeping people, patients, partners, and employees at the heart of every decision.

Paving the way for Fermenta Biotech Ltd.'s continued growth in this challenging environment is Prashant Nagre, Managing Director and a key architect of the company's ascent as a leader in Vitamin D3, nutrition, green chemistry, and environmental solutions. With over almost three decades of diverse experience across marquee organisations, Prashant's career has been defined by strategic foresight and a hands-on leadership style that drives operational excellence and transformative growth.

Prashant made significant contributions at Sterling Biotech Ltd., where he spearheaded cross-border acquisitions, launched new product lines at one of India's largest fermentation facilities, and played a pivotal role in securing international regulatory approvals. His earlier leadership roles at Elder Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and Sandoz India Pvt. Ltd. further honed his expertise in business transformation, regulatory compliance, large-scale operations, and global market expansion.

In this exclusive TradeFlock feature, Prashant Nagre reflects on the strategic moves, cultural shifts, and personal philosophies that have defined his journey.

## Share your background, key milestones, and highlights from your journey.

My journey began in 1991 as a young pharmacist eager to learn and grow. Starting at the grassroots level as a medical representative at Hindustan Ciba-Geigy Limited (now Novartis), I steadily climbed the ladder, eventually becoming the Managing Director at Fermenta.

Each step across roles at Sandoz, Elder Pharmaceuticals, and Sterling Biotech brought fresh challenges and valuable lessons.

Alongside my career, I pursued a Master's degree in Management Science and earned a Diploma in International Trade from the prestigious IIFT, New Delhi, where I received a Gold Medal from the Union Cabinet Minister for Commerce. Over these 35 adventurous years, what has kept me going is a genuine passion for learning and a commitment to seeing every opportunity as more than just a transaction.

## What are the most important lessons you've learned over your career, and how do they guide you today?

Starting my journey at 21, I was fortunate to work with inspiring managers and mentors who encouraged me and taught me lessons that no college or book could teach.

First, being honest and straightforward is fundamental—these qualities build trust with all stakeholders, which in turn creates more opportunities and long-term relationships. Second, hard work is essential and often requires personal and professional sacrifices. Hard work is not just about doing your job but taking care of everyone you're accountable for, consistently and without compromise. And finally, the best one;

*"Best insights can come from anyone, regardless of their title or background, given that you're willing to listen."*

## What challenges define your leadership today, and how do you tackle them?

Today, Technology is a major disruptor, and new generations like millennials, Gen Z and Gen Alpha are shaping the future. Workforce expectations and workplace compositions have undergone

significant changes. There's a strong demand for balance between work, life, and financial security, along with greater transparency. Another significant challenge is the impact of geopolitics, which affects both procurement and sales due to tariffs and other uncertainties.

I overcome these challenges by constantly upgrading our strategies, understanding risk appetite and market expectations, and, most importantly, maintaining honest and open communication, because that's the only way to succeed in a world that never stands still.

## How do you prioritise across such diverse areas as Vitamin D3, Green Chemistry, and environmental solutions?

At the core, our approach is about "relevant diversification"—identifying growth opportunities that are distinct yet interconnected through technology. Pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and environmental solutions may seem worlds apart, but technology binds them together. We leverage our engineering strengths and in-house innovation to manage these verticals without conflict. For example, our Vitamin D3 portfolio spans various segments, including pharmaceuticals, human and animal nutrition, feed, and rodenticides. By focusing on synergies and aligning expertise across divisions, we deliver stable, sustainable growth for all stakeholders.

## As Fermenta moves beyond Vitamin D3 into broader nutrition, how will you make a lasting industry impact?

Entering our 75<sup>th</sup> year, we are building on a legacy of trust, resilience and innovation. The momentum in nutrition, especially post-COVID, inspired us to diversify, introducing breakthrough products like VITADEE™ Green, our vegan and vegetarian-friendly Vitamin D3, and expanding into premixes and nutritional blends for leading food and beverage companies. With recognition from GAIN (Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition) and pioneering partnerships in global nutrition programs, we're now poised to address micronutrient gaps at scale in India and beyond.

*"Our goal is clear: deliver science-backed solutions that create real value for consumers and stakeholders and help bridge the nutrition divide for millions."*



## What's the most impactful strategy you've implemented, and how did it shape the business?

If I've learned anything in my journey, it's that real transformation starts with a bold ambition. When I joined Fermenta 15 years ago, my goal was clear: I wanted us to become one of the world's top Vitamin D3 players. But I quickly realised that *"you can't achieve greatness alone; the team takes you there."*

However, the most crucial factor was investing in our people. Many who joined 10-15 years ago are still with us, adding new talent rather than replacing existing team members. *"Culture is our real legacy"*. Products will evolve, markets will shift, and technologies will change, but the way people think, collaborate, and lead from within will remain. That's what sustains a company through decades.

At Fermenta, that mindset has not only endured but also defined our journey. This year, we proudly celebrate our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary — a milestone that was never the result of individual effort alone. It has been made possible by the unwavering dedication of two pillars: our cherished people and our valued customers. ♦

# WHEN SUPPLY CHAINS BECOME BATTLEFIELDS

The Business Cost of Global Tensions and What Leaders Must Do

**B**oardrooms today face a new reality where geopolitics has become a daily business challenge, as companies quietly shift supply chains and reroute shipments to adapt. It's no longer enough for CEOs to react; they must proactively reimagine business models in an era defined by uncertainty.

## US-China Decoupling

Over the past two years, US-China decoupling has scaled from policies to boardroom decisions. In April 2025, Reuters characterised it as crossing a "Rubicon" through tariffs soaring up to 145 per cent, disrupting global supply

and investment ties. WTO figures show bi-lateral trade, once over \$580 billion, has plummeted, while academic studies flag potential global GDP losses of up to seven per cent if decoupling becomes entrenched.

Yet, this shift is not all doom. Chinese firms, under state-driven 'dual circulation' and 'Made in China 2025' policies, have doubled down on indigenous R&D, boosting patent filings even as valuations slip. Those investing in reshoring, like the U.S. CHIPS Act, are building resilient domestic semiconductors and supply chains.

For businesses, this reality demands choices: do you decouple for control or diversify for resilience? Forward-thinking corporations are adopting hybrid sourcing strategies, balancing domestic security with multiple offshoring nodes to maintain agility and competitive edge.

## Sanctions on Russia

Over 40 countries imposed sanctions on Russia after 2022, targeting its energy, banking, and industrial sectors. The U.K. Foreign Office estimates Russia lost approximately \$450 billion to sanctions by February 2025. But the economic picture is different. A CEPR study shows trade with sanctioning states dropped by around 25 per cent, yet Russia rebounded via new trade with non-sanctioning partners.

Neutral countries like India and Turkey have redesigned supply chains to comply with "long-arm" sanctions while keeping their economies intact. Meanwhile, Russia and its allies have circumvented bans by employing shadow fleets, shell firms, and transshipments through ports in Morocco, Hong Kong and Turkey.



For corporate leaders, the lesson is clear that sanctions are no longer black-and-white. Teams in finance, logistics, legal, and procurement must now monitor compliance, extract risk, and anticipate regulatory changes in real time. The companies most adept at this have built integrated governance models and reactive legal teams that anticipate geopolitical shifts and future-proof supply chains.

## Middle East Volatility

That change is only the beginning. Consultancy Bain notes a broader trend of Middle Eastern supply chain realignment including three-dimensional strategies that involve regional manufacturing hubs and green energy linkages. Still, many local logistics systems remain fragile because risk visibility beyond primary suppliers is low, and firms often don't know where the vulnerability lies.

To cope, Gulf-based corporations are investing in digital twin technologies, crisis platform capabilities, and 3D printing for spare parts near operational sites. Companies are establishing crisis war

rooms, scenario mapping, and protected inventory caches to cushion future shocks.

## The New Corporate Playbook

- CEOs are no longer thinking in terms of "Made in China"; they're thinking multi-source, which is low risk, shift-ready and tech-enabled. Successful firms manage variant supply lines that can shift with days' notice, not quarter-year lead times.

- Sanctions and export controls are now core enterprise risks. Cross-functional teams meet regularly to scan intelligence, assess legal developments, and rapidly reroute flows. This is not compliance, it's geopolitical ops.

- In China, localisation may mean self-sufficiency; in the Gulf, it means regional hubs; and in Russia's case, it demands compliance-lit tech factories. Business leaders are embedding geo-conscious strategy at board level.

- From New York's AI hiring tool audits to Brussels' AI Act, regulatory landscapes are tightening. Data-driven lobbying, compliance investment, and parliamentary

engagement are becoming strategic boardroom efforts.

- Decoupling has functioned as talent walls. US visas to China have dropped from 16 per cent in 2018 to four per cent in 2021. Firms must now evaluate talent pools across regions, rethink training, and build globally dispersed innovation labs.

## Leadership in an Age of Flux

The boardroom of 2025 must be nimble. The model now combines stimulus akin to military exercises with C-suite dexterity. Leaders of tomorrow will speak the language of global trade dynamics, sanctions nuance, and regional resilience, while fostering cultures aligned with ethical, adaptable business.

In this rapidly changing world, change is the opportunity to adapt. The key question for businesses is not just how to grow, but how to do it with an understanding of the geopolitical landscape. Organisations that focus on strong systems, good governance, and people-first resilience will lead the way and become models for others to follow. ♦



Mentor, Leader and A Change Catalyst

# SUMIT NAGAR

Manager -  
Statutory Accounting and Tax,  
KPMG Global Services

Leadership wears many faces—visionary strategists, operational masterminds, innovation catalysts. But in the world of Statutory Accounting and Tax, leadership demands something more: unshakable precision, regulatory foresight, and the ability to lead through complexity without compromising integrity. It's a role where every number speaks to trust, and every decision carries weight far beyond balance sheets. Sumit Nagar, Manager – Statutory Accounting and Tax at KPMG Global Services, is an inspiring leader who has consistently delivered excellence while navigating this intricate terrain.

With over 11 years of experience, Sumit has developed his expertise across industry giants, including EY, where he laid the foundation for his audit career; Wipro, where he handled global financial reporting; Panasonic, where he managed revenue recognition and SOX compliance; and LOTS Wholesale, where he led statutory audits and internal controls. Today, at KPMG, he drives international projects, mentors high-performing teams, and steers financial transformation.

In an exclusive conversation with TradeFlock, he discusses the challenges that shaped him,

his take on automation and AI, the lessons that endure, and the one piece of advice he believes every young professional should hear.

**Q What inspired you to choose finance and accounting as your career path, and what does it take to excel in this field today?**

Numbers have always fascinated me—not just as data points, but as stories of strategy, discipline, and growth. That fascination led me to pursue a career in Chartered Accountancy. Over the past 11 years, my journey in finance has been deeply enriching, shaped by challenges, learning, and continuous reinvention.

As I pursue my Executive MBA at MDI Gurgaon while mentoring aspiring professionals, I've come to realise that success in this field requires more than just technical knowledge—it demands strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and continuous learning.

Great finance professionals go beyond numbers—they tell stories, drive transformation, and inspire trust. They continuously learn, communicate with clarity, and uphold integrity. Good is being efficient. Through my LinkedIn writing, **cross-border training in IFRS, and lectures at business schools**, I've realised that excellence is not an act but a mindset. Good is being efficient. Great is being impactful.

**Q What challenges are you currently facing, and how have past setbacks helped you navigate them?**

Adapting to technological disruption while maintaining trust and delivering value is a key challenge today. I tackle this by staying agile, building strong teams, and mentoring others—a practice that creates a ripple effect of growth.

Earlier in my career, I faced a compliance oversight that could have been a major setback. But I owned it, corrected it, and developed a framework to prevent recurrence. That experience reinforced two core values: integrity and accountability. Challenges and mistakes aren't roadblocks—they're redirections. Growth often comes from discomfort, and you rise by moving through it.



**Q How do you see automation and AI impacting the future of your field in the next few years?**

Automation and AI are not threats—they're catalysts. In tax and accounting, they are already streamlining compliance, enabling predictive analysis, and improving decision-making. But while machines can process data, they cannot replace human judgment, ethics, or leadership.

The future belongs to those who combine technical excellence with strategic insight and emotional intelligence. My advice? Learn AI tools, but also invest in self-awareness and empathy. The leaders of tomorrow will innovate with both head and heart.

**Q Finance leadership often happens behind the scenes. What's one important decision you made that created a visible impact for the business?**

One of the most rewarding decisions I made was to champion a process automation project that reduced reporting turnaround time and improved accuracy. The change delivered not just financial benefits but also boosted team morale.

As a leader, I believe in enabling silent victories—initiatives that may not make headlines but truly move the needle. My philosophy of leadership is about seeing beyond numbers—to see people, potential, and possibilities.

**Q What advice would you give to young professionals looking to grow in the accounting and tax domain?**

Start with building a strong foundation, but don't stop there. Develop your curiosity, build your network, and stay current with global trends. Seek mentors—and become one. I've found immense joy and purpose in mentoring, public speaking, and sharing knowledge through writing. ♦

Be visible, be vocal, and, most importantly, be value-driven. Your degree may get you a job, but your character will build your legacy. Keep learning, keep sharing but always stay grounded in your purpose.

# THE TESLA EFFECT



How Disruption Becomes a Competitive Advantage

On a chilly morning in 2018, a group of engineers at a legacy car company gathered anxiously around a large screen. On it played a livestream from California. Elon Musk was unveiling the Tesla Roadster, an electric sports car claiming 0 to 60 mph in 1.9 seconds, faster than anything they had ever built. Silence filled the room. One engineer reportedly muttered, "This changes everything." And it did.

The auto industry, long accustomed to incremental upgrades and cautious innovations, was suddenly facing a competitor that treated convention like scrap metal. Tesla's rise from a niche startup to a \$550 billion giant (Statista, 2024) is beyond a story of electric cars. It is a masterclass in how disruption becomes a competitive edge.

## A Factory That Builds Factories

Tesla approaches manufacturing with a mindset few others have embraced. The company does not simply assemble cars; it designs factories that optimise themselves. The Gigafactory concept, with six facilities globally, produces batteries, motors, and even refines lithium on-site. This cuts production costs by up to 20 per cent (Reuters, 2024) while reducing reliance on external suppliers.

## Speed Runs the Show

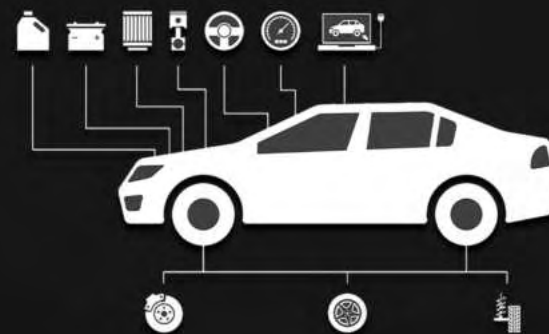
In 2021, as chip shortages paralysed global manufacturing, most automakers halted production lines. Tesla responded differently—its engineers rewrote software in weeks to support alternative chips. This ability to pivot at speed trimmed product update cycles by 35 per cent compared to traditional manufacturers (McKinsey, 2023). Customers received performance upgrades remotely, transforming cars into products that improve over time.

## A Wake-Up Call to an Entire Industry

For years, competitors laughed off Tesla's ambitions. Today, they license Tesla's charging technology, emulate its direct-to-customer sales model, and chase EV adoption goals that looked impossible a decade ago. Tesla's decision to open its patents in 2014 accelerated this shift, forcing an entire industry to innovate or be left behind.

## The Ultimate Lesson

Tesla proves that disruption is not about chaotic risk-taking; it is about designing a system that thrives under change. Whether in mobility, energy, or technology, the companies winning this decade are those treating reinvention as a discipline, not an accident. ♦



- 0 to 60 mph in 1.9 seconds
- Cuts production costs by 20% (Reuters, 2024)
- Delivered remote upgrades while others halted
- Valuation: \$550 Billion (Statista, 2024)

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