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OCTOBER

FROM ENGINEERING SYSTEMS TO RESPONSIBLE AI

Building Trust Into the Way Enterprises Use Data

Building the **Next Generation of Trusted Enterprise AI.**

A Two-Decade Journey Across Data, **AI and Leadership**



WOMEN In Tech

2026


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FROM THE EDITOR

Meet the Women Driving the Next Era of Enterprise Intelligence

Artificial intelligence, enterprise automation, and digital transformation are reshaping industries, with women leaders playing an increasingly influential role in this shift. From developing advanced AI systems to transforming healthcare, improving data management, and building inclusive technology ecosystems, they help turn innovation into measurable business value.

Across industries, the focus is shifting from technology experimentation to responsible implementation that delivers tangible results. These leaders bring expertise in engineering, research, product strategy, and business, sharing a common goal: making technology work effectively for organizations and people.

From AI Experimentation to Enterprise Execution

As businesses adopt Generative AI and Agentic AI, the challenge is moving beyond proof-of-concept projects to production-ready solutions. These systems must integrate enterprise knowledge, fit existing workflows, and deliver measurable outcomes.

Lekha Priyadarshini Bhan, an AI architect specializing in enterprise AI, Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), GraphRAG, and multi-agent systems, focuses on building solutions that can be measured, monitored, and controlled.

Swarnamalya Mohan, an AI/ML engineer at FedEx, shares this emphasis on practical implementation. Her experience highlights the importance of scalability, reliability, efficiency, and effectiveness when deploying AI solutions in production environments.

Connecting Technology with Business Outcomes

Technology creates lasting value when it addresses genuine business challenges. Shumaila Batool, Head of Product at UAS International Trip Support, brings this perspective through her experience in aviation and digital product leadership.

Her guiding principle is that “the best products are not necessarily the ones with the most features. They are the ones that make difficult things feel effortless.”

Krishna Kumari Palle's experience leading global delivery at Tech Mahindra similarly highlights the importance of connecting technological advances with concrete business outcomes. Successful transformation requires more than adopting new tools; it involves rethinking workflows and empowering teams.

Building Trustworthy and Responsible AI

As organizations expand Generative AI and Agentic AI adoption, they must ensure intelligent systems remain reliable, observable, and controllable. Enterprise AI needs appropriate oversight to function effectively within complex business environments.

Bhan's work in enterprise AI architecture addresses these requirements, while Mohan's experience at FedEx reinforces the need to evaluate whether solutions can operate efficiently and reliably at scale.

Together, their perspectives underline a broader industry priority: ensuring AI systems deliver practical benefits beyond experimental environments.

Technology with a Human Purpose

Technology's impact becomes particularly significant when it addresses essential human needs. Teja Sravanthi Darapureddy, Founder and CEO of Sysrek Infosolutions, is advancing healthcare innovation through explainable AI, predictive analytics and mobile diagnostic services.

Her approach to responsible healthcare technology centers on a fundamental question: “Would I trust this for my own family?” This perspective places patient safety, privacy and explainability at the heart of innovation.

Sarah Julia Kriesch, an architect at Kyndryl and an open-source advocate, contributes through her knowledge of Linux, mainframe and open-source technologies.

Ira Agarwal, an expert in AI entrepreneurship, governance and human-centered innovation, emphasizes that meaningful innovation must address relevant challenges and create genuine value.

Creating the Next Generation of Women Innovators

Beyond their technical expertise, these leaders recognize the importance of education, mentorship and community building. Technology leadership extends beyond developing systems to creating organizational cultures and governance frameworks that support responsible innovation.

As businesses pursue digital transformation, leaders who combine technical knowledge with business understanding will remain essential. By prioritizing accountability, inclusion, and measurable outcomes, women innovators are helping shape a technology landscape that serves both organizations and society.

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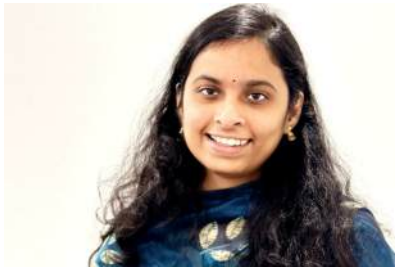
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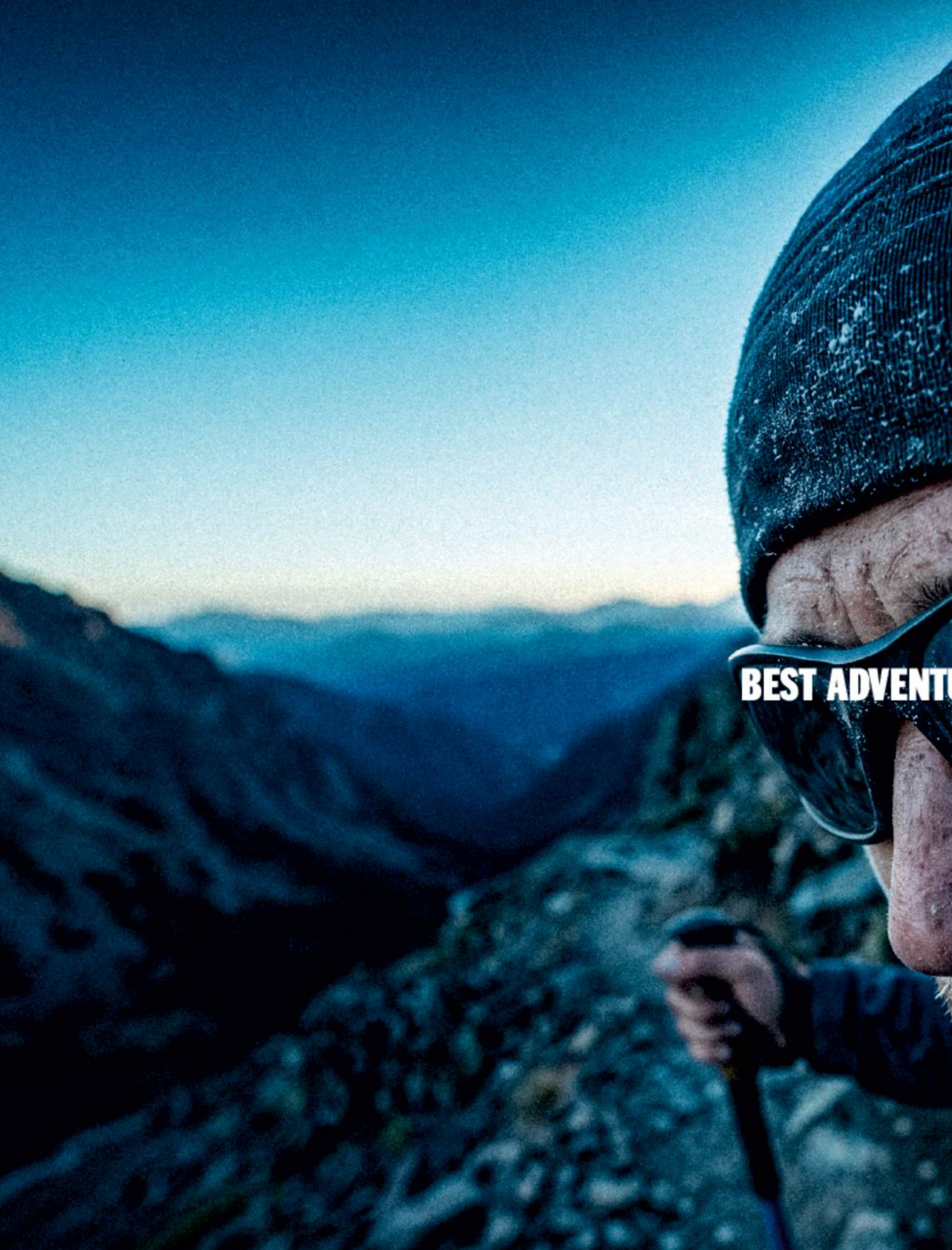
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Ira Agarwal

Architecting the Future of AI Through Visionary Innovation, Intelligent Governance and Global Impact

With more than 25 years of distinguished experience spanning technology, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, entrepreneurship, governance and innovation, Ira Agarwal is helping shape the future of responsible and human-centered AI. A Wharton alumna, she has also completed advanced programs in Human-Centered AI at Stanford HAI and the Stanford d.school. She is the Founder and Board Chair of EmergeAI Technologies, Founder and CEO of AIM Elevate Ventures, and Founder of Meet Ira, a leadership and mentorship platform. She also serves as an Independent Director at ITCONS e-Solutions Ltd and as a strategic advisor to AAPNA Infotech, TeamTech EHS and Mallawa Ventures.

Her work lies at the intersection of Agentic AI, responsible innovation, digital governance, entrepreneurship, ESG, social impact and leadership development. Across her corporate and entrepreneurial journey, she has contributed to more than 500 intellectual properties, frameworks, accelerators, utilities and business-impact solutions; established over 10 technology innovation centers, incubators and innovation councils; and influenced a cumulative business portfolio exceeding $3 billion. Through her mentorship and social-impact initiatives, she has empowered thousands of leaders, entrepreneurs, students and communities, transforming innovation into meaningful, measurable and lasting impact.

What shaped your journey from enterprise technology into AI innovation entrepreneurship and board leadership

My journey from corporate leadership to entrepreneurship and boardroom excellence has been shaped by technology, continuous learning and a steadfast belief that innovation must solve real-world challenges and create meaningful impact.

I began my career in enterprise technology, working with leading global organizations such as Tata Consultancy Services, HCL America, Techspan, Compunnel, Headstrong, Genpact and Veersa Technologies. These experiences strengthened my expertise in technology architecture, automation, artificial intelligence, program management, global delivery, client engagement and large-scale business transformation.

As my career evolved, so did the scope of my vision. I moved beyond implementing technology to exploring how it could become a powerful catalyst for organizational growth and transformation. I developed automation frameworks and intellectual property, established centers of excellence, built innovation ecosystems and led strategic transformation initiatives for global enterprises.

This evolution paved the way for my transition into entrepreneurship and board leadership, enabling me to work at the intersection of artificial intelligence, governance, innovation and social impact.

Today, through EmergeAI Technologies, AIM Elevate Ventures, my board responsibilities and mentorship initiatives, I bring together decades of experience across technology, business, governance and



Founder & Board Chair | AI Research & Innovation Fellow

social impact. My focus is not only on developing innovative solutions but also on building responsible, purpose-driven ecosystems that create sustainable value for businesses and society.

One of the most defining lessons from my journey is that technology alone is never the complete solution. Its true power emerges when it is thoughtfully aligned with people, strategy, governance and purpose.

For me, leadership is not a destination; it is a continuous journey of learning, evolution and contribution. I believe that every role, challenge and experience should strengthen not only my own growth but also my ability to empower others and create a lasting legacy.

What is your vision for EmergeAI Technologies as organizations move toward Agentic AI

My vision for EmergeAI Technologies is to help build an AI ecosystem where innovation and responsibility advance together.

We are entering an era in which AI is no longer limited to generating information or automating isolated tasks. Agentic AI can increasingly reason, make decisions, coordinate actions and operate within complex business environments. While this creates extraordinary opportunities, it also raises critical questions about trust, explainability, accountability,



risk, compliance, governance and human oversight.

EmergeAI Technologies is focused on advancing Agentic, Governed and Human-Centered AI. Our innovation ecosystem includes EA-AURA and the AURA Growth Navigator Suite, GovernxONE, AIQA Risk Analyzer and AI Career fit. Together, these platforms support intelligent decision-making, business growth, AI governance, assurance, risk management and responsible AI adoption.

Our philosophy is governance-first. Governance should not be introduced after an AI system has already been deployed; it must be embedded throughout its architecture, development, deployment and entire lifecycle.

I believe the future of AI will not be defined solely by how powerful the technology becomes, but by how responsibly organizations apply that power. Our objective is to help enterprises improve decision-making, accelerate innovation, enhance operational efficiency and achieve sustainable growth while preserving human oversight, trust and accountability.

A significant milestone in this journey came in September 2026, when EmergeAI Technologies successfully completed the Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center's Ethical AI Milestone Makers Program with honors, achieving 100 percent of its defined milestone. During the program, GovernxONE progressed from platform development and launch to five customer pilot engagements, validation by five CEOs and industry leaders, and numerous strategic partnerships. We also initiated documentation for intellectual property protection in India.

This achievement strengthened our resolve to build AI solutions that are intelligent and scalable, transparent, accountable and aligned with human values.

How has continuous learning influenced your leadership philosophy

Continuous learning has been one of the strongest foundations of my leadership journey.

Technology changes rapidly. What is considered transformative today can become conventional tomorrow. Therefore, leaders cannot rely only on what they learned at the beginning of their careers.

My academic experiences across Wharton, Stanford HAI and d.school, Stanford GSB Seed Spark, Duke LEAP, ISB, IICA and other institutions have helped me understand technology from multiple perspectives, including business, human behavior, innovation, governance, entrepreneurship, sustainability and social impact.

My work in Human-Centered AI reinforced the importance of designing technology around human needs and

outcomes. AI should be technologically capable, but it should also be accessible, responsible and aligned with the people and organizations it serves.

Wharton strengthened my understanding of leadership, business strategy and innovation. My education in corporate governance and ESG, including the Wharton Board Governance Certificate and IICA certifications, deepened my understanding of board accountability and sustainable business practices.

But education becomes truly valuable only when it is translated into action, which is why I have focused on developing frameworks, platforms, research initiatives, intellectual property, entrepreneurship ecosystems, and mentorship programs.

I believe a strong leader should remain curious. We should constantly ask questions, challenge our assumptions, learn from different disciplines, and then convert that learning into something that creates value.

For me, learning is not a phase of my career. It is a permanent leadership practice.

What inspired you to build AIM Elevate Ventures

AIM Elevate Ventures was created from my desire to help emerging entrepreneurs turn potential into sustainable growth.

There are many talented founders with innovative ideas, but having a great idea is only the beginning. Entrepreneurs also need access to technology, strategic guidance, governance frameworks, market opportunities, mentorship, branding, and the right ecosystem to scale.

AIM Elevate focuses on empowering micro and nano entrepreneurs, especially women-led ventures, while also supporting student innovators and emerging founders. We help them build scalable, governance-ready and impact-driven enterprises.

The platform combines AI literacy, digital enablement, growth support, governance, ESG, market access and human mentorship.

One of our key philosophies is that business growth and social impact should not be viewed as separate objectives. A successful enterprise should be capable of creating economic value while also contributing to people, communities, sustainability, and responsible development.

The AIM Elevate ecosystem now operates through four connected pillars: the Enterprise Hub, Academy, Research and Innovation Institute, and Foundation. Its initiatives include the government-recognized AIM Elevate Digital Spark Framework, the UN SDG Translation Lab and an AI-powered marketplace launched in July 2026.

Our latest impact metrics include more than 70 supported ventures, of which about 80 percent are women-led or women-owned. These ventures have supported more than 1,200 jobs, recorded average revenue growth above 55 percent, reached more than 2,000 individuals and extended the ecosystem's presence across more than five countries.

The numbers matter because they represent greater confidence, stronger enterprises and wider opportunity.

AIM Elevate Ventures is also a United Nations Global Compact Business Participant, a Women's Empowerment Principles signatory and a CEO Water Mandate endorser. These



commitments connect enterprise growth with responsible governance, inclusion and sustainability.

How do you define meaningful innovation

For me, innovation is not simply about creating something new. It is about creating something that solves a meaningful problem and produces measurable value.

Over the years, my work has contributed to 500+ IPs, accelerators, utilities, frameworks, platforms, prototypes, and business-impact drivers, along with 10+ technology innovation centers, incubators, and innovation councils.

I have also been fortunate to work on initiatives that influenced a cumulative portfolio revenue of more than $3 billion, helping organizations pursue expansion, transformation, and innovation.

These experiences taught me that innovation must ultimately connect with outcomes.

A technology can be impressive, but if it does not solve a real business or societal challenge, its long-term value is limited.

That is why I focus on purposeful innovation: connecting technology with strategy, people, sustainability and measurable outcomes.

Research is an important part of this work. Through EmergeAI Technologies and its Research and Innovation hub, we are building evidence-based frameworks for emerging technologies, AI governance and enterprise transformation. I have published two papers in Scopus-indexed, SCImago Q1 journals, including research on Agentic Artificial Intelligence in corporate governance and on AI-enabled social entrepreneurship.

I believe the next generation of innovation will belong to organizations that can combine speed with responsibility and creativity with governance.

How is technology changing the role of corporate boards

Technology has fundamentally changed the boardroom.

AI, cybersecurity, data, automation, digital transformation, and emerging technologies are no longer purely technical topics. They influence business models, financial performance, workforce strategy, customer experience, risk, compliance, and long-term competitiveness.

As an Independent Director and strategic advisor, I believe my responsibility is to bring a technology and transformation perspective into strategic conversations while maintaining a strong focus on governance and stakeholder value.

Boards need to understand what technology can do and the risks and responsibilities that accompany it.

With AI becoming increasingly autonomous, boards need to ask questions around accountability, transparency, explainability, data governance, cybersecurity, ethical considerations, and human oversight.

I do not believe governance should slow innovation.

Good governance actually enables responsible innovation because it creates clarity around risk, accountability, and decision-making.

The future boardroom will require leaders who can understand technology deeply enough to challenge assumptions and ask the right questions, while also understanding business strategy and organizational responsibility.

This is why I see digital board leadership and AI governance becoming increasingly important.

At EmergeAI Technologies, GovernxONE supports this need through a unified platform for AI risk monitoring, policy enforcement, compliance management, audit readiness, accountability and executive oversight. The aim is to give boards and management clearer visibility as AI adoption scales.

What have you learned from mentoring the next generation

Mentorship has been one of the most rewarding dimensions of my leadership journey.

Through Meet Ira and other initiatives like ISB Executive Education Mentor, I have had the opportunity to work with aspiring entrepreneurs, students, professionals, women leaders, and executives. Each interaction has reinforced one important lesson: leadership potential exists everywhere, but people sometimes need the right environment, encouragement, and direction to recognize it.

My approach to mentorship is centered on empowerment.

I encourage people to develop strategic thinking, confidence, innovation capability, entrepreneurship skills, personal branding and leadership suited to a changing world.

I also encourage authenticity. Leadership should not be about copying someone else's personality or career path. Every individual needs to understand their own strengths, values, experiences, and aspirations and build their leadership identity around them.

Across Meet Ira and related initiatives, more than 5,000 people have been mentored in leadership, entrepreneurship, education, innovation and career development.

I am particularly passionate about supporting women because leadership opportunities should be accessible to

talent regardless of background or circumstance.

Mentorship should ultimately create independence. The goal is not to make people dependent on advice, but to help them develop the confidence and capability to make better decisions themselves.

When someone tells me that a conversation helped them take a step they once believed was impossible, I see that as one of the most meaningful outcomes of mentorship.

What legacy do you hope to create through AI entrepreneurship governance authorship and social impact

I want my legacy to be defined not by titles or individual achievements, but by the ecosystems and people I have helped empower.

Through EmergeAI Technologies, I want to contribute to a future in which AI is intelligent, responsible, governed, explainable and human-centered.

Through AIM Elevate Ventures, I want to help entrepreneurs, particularly women founders and emerging innovators, build sustainable organizations that create economic and social value.

Through board and advisory roles, I want to contribute to stronger governance and help organizations navigate technology-led transformation with strategic clarity.

Through mentorship, I want to continue creating opportunities for future leaders.

Through my writing and research, I explore the relationship between technology, human potential, consciousness and purpose. My first book, Quantum Hearts of Kailasha, became an Amazon number one bestseller. My second book, Decoding the Infinite Algorithm, is scheduled for launch in September 2026.



Recent recognitions have included a TIME100 AI Asia and Forbes, NASDAQ Times Square feature, the Global Woman Leader in AI and Digital Boards recognition at the Elets AI Summit, the Bharat 2.0 Conclave Shakti Edition Award for Most Influential Leader in AI and Technology Innovation 2026, Recognition and feature by The Wharton School, Wharton Alumnae Founders & Funders Association and Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center.

I also remain deeply connected to education through the Er. Ira Agarwal Gold Medal for Academic Excellence in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning at P.D.A. College of Engineering.

The larger vision is simple: innovation should improve lives.

We can build ambitious businesses while remaining responsible. We can deploy powerful AI while preserving human agency. We can pursue economic growth while creating social value. We can strengthen governance without limiting innovation.

The future will need leaders who can connect these dimensions.

I hope to continue contributing to that future by building responsible technologies, empowering entrepreneurs, mentoring leaders, supporting inclusive growth and creating practical frameworks for responsible transformation.

Leadership is ultimately reflected in the people we empower and the systems we help create. If my work can contribute to more responsible technology, more inclusive leadership, more sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation that improves lives, that would be a legacy I would be proud to leave.

Shumaila Batool

What first drew you to product management, and how has your approach to building products evolved over the past 13+ years?

I started my career with an engineering background, but what fascinated me most was never just how technology worked. It was understanding why we were building something in the first place and whether it genuinely solved a problem.

Product management gave me the opportunity to connect technology with human behavior, business needs and real-world outcomes.

Early in my career, I was naturally focused on delivery. How do we build this? How quickly can we launch? How do we get the requirements right?

Over time, especially working in operationally complex industries, my questions changed.

Why does this process exist? Who actually benefits from it? What happens before and after someone uses our product? Are we solving the root problem or simply digitizing an inefficient process?

One of my biggest realizations was that digitizing a broken process does not fix it. It simply makes the broken process digital.

Today, I spend considerably more time understanding systems, challenging assumptions and identifying the right problems than immediately discussing features.

I have also learned that great product leadership requires knowing when not to build something. Sometimes the most valuable decision is simplifying an existing workflow, changing a business process or removing a feature entirely.

My approach has evolved from building products to building outcomes. That shift has fundamentally changed how I lead teams, engage stakeholders and define success.

You've worked across aviation, mobility, logistics, health-tech, and enterprise platforms. What have these diverse industries taught you about solving complex product problems?

Different industries often appear to have completely different problems. But when you look beneath the surface, the patterns are remarkably similar.

Information is fragmented. Teams operate in silos. Processes depend on manual intervention. Customers have limited visibility. And people develop workarounds because existing systems do not support how they actually work.

I have encountered these challenges in almost every industry.

At Tradeling, scaling fulfilment meant understanding what happened beyond the digital interface, including warehousing, order processing and the physical movement of goods.

At CAFU, mobility services required technology to work seamlessly with real-world operations. A beautifully designed application meant very little if the operational ecosystem behind it could not deliver the promised experience.

Today, in business aviation, the complexity is even more pronounced. A single trip can involve multiple countries, regulations, service providers, operational teams and systems. A seemingly small product



Head of Product, UAS International Trip Support

decision can have significant downstream consequences.

These experiences taught me something important: **complexity is rarely a technology problem alone. It is usually a coordination problem disguised as a technology problem.**

The solution begins with understanding the complete operational journey, not just the screen someone interacts with.

My biggest advantage from working across industries is that I do not automatically accept industry conventions as limitations. Sometimes the best solution comes from applying a principle that worked successfully somewhere entirely different.

Technology changes. Industries change. But the fundamentals of understanding people, simplifying processes and creating value remain surprisingly consistent.

You emphasize staying close to the customer and the problem. How do you balance customer needs, business priorities, and technical constraints when making product decisions?

I believe product management exists at the intersection of three realities: what customers need, what the business must achieve and what technology can sustainably support.

The challenge is that these three do not always agree.

A customer might request a feature that solves an immediate inconvenience. The business may be focused on efficiency or cost reduction. Engineering may be dealing with architectural limitations that are invisible to both.

My responsibility is not to automatically choose one side. It is to

“The next era of AI will belong to systems that are not only more intelligent, but also more efficient, explainable, adaptive, and deeply connected to real-world needs.”

Shumaila Batool

Head of Product, UAS International Trip Support



understand the underlying problem and find the best possible outcome.

One principle I follow is to separate a customer's requested solution from their actual need. Customers are incredibly valuable at explaining their frustrations, but the solution they propose is not always the most effective one.

Similarly, business priorities need to be translated into measurable outcomes. If the objective is cost reduction, the conversation should not immediately become about reducing resources. It should be about identifying which processes create unnecessary cost and whether automation can remove that burden sustainably.

Technical constraints matter, but they should inform the solution rather than end the conversation.

At UAS, we work with operational teams whose processes are deeply interconnected. We cannot make decisions in isolation because a change that benefits one department might create additional work for another.

I encourage teams to understand those dependencies early, involve the right stakeholders and evaluate decisions against their broader operational impact.

Ultimately, good product decisions are not about making everyone happy. They are about making informed trade-offs that create the greatest sustainable value.

You've led the development of platforms designed to simplify complex flight operations. What are some of the biggest opportunities you see for AI, automation, and data to transform operationally intensive industries?

I believe we are entering a particularly exciting phase of technology, especially for industries that have historically relied on human expertise to manage operational complexity.

For years, digital transformation largely focused on moving manual processes into software. We built dashboards, workflows, forms and reporting tools.

That was necessary, but it was only the beginning.

The next opportunity is to build systems that do more than store information. Systems that understand context, connect fragmented data, identify risks and help people make better decisions.

Consider business aviation. Planning a flight involves evaluating aircraft capabilities, airport restrictions, weather conditions, regulatory requirements, fuel availability and operational feasibility. Much of that information exists across different systems and requires experienced people to interpret it.

With SkyX, our AI-powered flight feasibility initiative at UAS, we are exploring how these considerations can be brought together to support faster, more informed operational planning.

But the opportunity extends far beyond aviation.

In logistics, AI can anticipate disruptions and recommend alternatives. In mobility, it can improve demand forecasting and resource utilization. In enterprise operations, it can automate repetitive decisions and surface exceptions that genuinely require human judgment.

However, I strongly believe that AI should not become another interface employees must learn to operate. Its



real value is reducing the amount of work they need to do in the first place.

The greatest transformation will happen when AI, automation and connected data become embedded within everyday workflows.

My vision is not to replace operational expertise. It is to give experts better information, remove repetitive work and allow them to focus on decisions where their experience matters most.

You have worked extensively on B2B and B2B2C products. How does product strategy differ when you are building for businesses, consumers, and multiple stakeholders simultaneously?

One of the biggest misconceptions about B2B products is that user experience matters less because the customer is a business.

I believe the opposite.

In consumer products, the person choosing, paying for and using the product is often the same individual. In B2B, those responsibilities can belong to completely different people.

The person purchasing the software may care about return on investment. Management wants visibility and control. Operational teams need efficiency. End users want simplicity.

And sometimes what one stakeholder wants creates friction for another.

This means B2B product strategy requires a deeper understanding of the entire value chain.

At CAFU, for example, delivering mobility solutions involved connecting the digital customer experience with the operational teams responsible for fulfilling the service.

At UAS, a customer-facing capability in GTMX may depend on internal operational workflows, backend services and integrations with third-party systems.

The customer experiences one product, but delivering that experience requires an entire ecosystem to work together.

My approach is to distinguish between the buyer, the user, the operator and the beneficiary, then understand what success means for each.

The product must create commercial value for the business while making the daily experience better for the people using it.

I often remind teams that B2B users are consumers too. They use intuitive, beautifully designed applications in their personal lives and should not have to lower their expectations when they arrive at work.

Enterprise complexity is not an excuse for poor product experiences. It is

precisely why thoughtful product design matters so much.

Can you share a product challenge or transformation that particularly tested your leadership and problem-solving skills, and what did you learn from the experience?

One of the most defining experiences in my career was working on large-scale digital transformation at CAFU.

We were dealing with an operational environment where customer journeys, internal processes and supporting systems had to evolve together. Migrating thousands of B2B customers was not simply a technical exercise. It required understanding established customer behaviors, operational dependencies, data readiness and the risk of disrupting an existing service.

The challenge was balancing the ambition to modernize with the responsibility to maintain business continuity.

What made the experience particularly valuable was realizing that a technically successful migration does not automatically translate into a successful customer experience.

You can move customers onto a new platform, but if the experience introduces confusion, disrupts familiar workflows or creates additional work for operational teams, the transformation is incomplete.

It reinforced the importance of phased execution, cross-functional ownership, clear communication and measuring success beyond the launch itself.

Another important lesson was that leadership during transformation is less about having all the answers and more about creating clarity when multiple teams are dealing with uncertainty.

I learned to bring people closer to the problem, make trade-offs visible and establish shared accountability for outcomes.

Those lessons continue to shape how I lead product transformation today.

A successful transformation is not when the new system goes live. It is when the business and its customers are genuinely better off because of it.

From migrating thousands of clients to automating workflows to launching products in new markets, what principles help you scale a product without compromising the customer experience?

Scaling is often misunderstood as acquiring more customers, launching in more markets or adding more capabilities.

To me, real scalability means the business can grow without complexity, operational effort and customer friction growing at the same rate.

I learned this particularly through my experiences in mobility and logistics, where digital products depend heavily on physical operations.

At CAFU, expanding mobility services and working on new propositions, including electric vehicle services in Canada, required us to think beyond the application. We had to consider whether the operational model, supporting systems and customer experience could work together in a different market.

At Tradeling, building fulfilment capabilities reinforced the same lesson. Growth exposes every weakness in a process. What works through manual coordination at a small scale can become a significant bottleneck when transaction volumes increase.

My approach to scaling rests on a few principles.

First, simplify before automating. Automating unnecessary complexity only makes it harder to change later.

Second, build reusable capabilities instead of solving every new requirement as an isolated feature.

Third, make operational visibility part of the product. Teams cannot manage what they cannot see.

And finally, treat customer feedback as an ongoing input, not something collected only before launch.

I also believe in progressive transformation. Large, disruptive changes may look impressive on a roadmap, but smaller, carefully managed improvements often deliver more sustainable value.

The true test of scale is whether your thousandth customer receives an experience as thoughtful and reliable as your first.

As AI becomes increasingly embedded in product development and decision-making, what do you believe product leaders need to understand about AI beyond simply adopting the technology?

I think the biggest risk for product leaders today is confusing AI adoption with AI strategy.

Integrating a large language model into a product is becoming increasingly accessible. Building an AI-powered experience that is accurate, trustworthy, commercially viable and genuinely useful is a very different challenge.

Product leaders need to understand how AI systems behave, where they fail and what it takes to operate them responsibly.

That includes understanding data quality, context engineering, retrieval, model limitations, evaluation frameworks, latency, cost and the importance of human oversight.

But technical literacy is only part of the equation.

The more important question is whether AI is solving a meaningful problem.

I have seen how easily organizations become excited about the technology before clearly defining the business outcome. That creates a risk of investing in impressive demonstrations that never become valuable products.

In operationally sensitive industries such as aviation, the consequences of incorrect information can be significant. An AI system must distinguish between verified information, assumptions and uncertainty. It also needs clear boundaries around decisions that require human validation.

I believe product leaders should approach AI with both ambition and healthy skepticism.

We should experiment aggressively, but evaluate rigorously.

And we should measure outcomes such as time saved, decision quality, reduced errors and improved customer experience rather than simply counting AI features shipped.

The future will not belong to companies that use the most AI. It will belong to those that apply AI to the right problems with the greatest discipline.

What challenges or opportunities have you encountered as a woman building a leadership career in technology, and what lessons would you share with women aspiring to become product leaders?

Building a leadership career in technology has taught me that competence, confidence and influence are three different things.

You can be exceptionally capable, understand your domain and consistently deliver results, yet still need to learn how to communicate your perspective with conviction.

Over the years, I have learned that leadership is not simply about being the person who knows the most. It is about being willing to make difficult decisions, challenge assumptions and take accountability for outcomes.

Working across engineering, commercial, operations and executive leadership environments has required me to develop that confidence continuously.

One lesson I would share with women is not to wait until you feel completely ready before pursuing an opportunity.

Growth often happens when you take responsibility for something that initially feels bigger than your experience.

I would also encourage women to build strong technical and commercial understanding. Product leadership requires more than empathy, communication and stakeholder management. You need to understand technology, business economics and how decisions translate into measurable outcomes.

And importantly, develop your own point of view.

It is easy to spend a career becoming excellent at executing other people's ideas. Leadership begins when you start bringing your own thinking to the table and can explain why you believe in it.

I want more women to see themselves not just as participants in technology, but as people who can shape its direction.

You do not need to be the loudest voice in the room. But you should never underestimate the value of having a voice worth listening to.

Looking ahead, what emerging technologies or product trends do you believe will have the greatest impact on how businesses operate, and what kind of products do you hope to build next?

I believe the next major shift in enterprise technology will be from systems that help people manage work to systems that actively help them complete it.

For decades, businesses have invested in software that records transactions, tracks tasks, generates reports and provides visibility.

But employees are still responsible for connecting information across systems, interpreting what it means and coordinating the next action.

AI agents, intelligent automation and interoperable platforms have the potential to fundamentally change that model.

Imagine an operational system that does not simply tell you a service is delayed, but understands the downstream impact, identifies alternative options, prepares the necessary actions and brings the right decision to the right person.

Or an enterprise platform that can connect commercial commitments, operational delivery and financial reconciliation without requiring employees to manually transfer information between disconnected systems.

That is the kind of transformation I find most exciting.

I am particularly interested in the convergence of AI, workflow orchestration, predictive intelligence and enterprise data.

However, I do not believe the future is entirely autonomous. In complex, high-stakes environments, the most successful products will combine machine intelligence with human

expertise, accountability and judgment.

As for what I hope to build next, I want to continue creating products that challenge the way entire industries operate.

Products that make sophisticated capabilities accessible, reduce unnecessary complexity and create measurable value at scale.

Ultimately, I want to build technology that makes the difficult invisible, so people can focus on what actually matters.

Why simplicity is one of the hardest things to build

One belief that has stayed with me throughout my career is that simplicity is not the absence of complexity. It is the result of understanding complexity deeply enough to remove it from the user's experience.

When someone completes a task in a few clicks, they rarely see the years of operational knowledge, business rules, integrations and design decisions that make that simplicity possible.

That is what I find most rewarding about product management.

The real achievement is not how sophisticated the technology appears. It is how naturally it fits into someone's life or work.

I believe the best product teams are the ones willing to take on complexity themselves rather than passing it to their customers.



Teja Sravanthi Darapureddy

Teja Sravanthi Darapureddy is the Founder, Managing Director and CEO of Sysrek Infosolutions Pvt. Ltd., a technology company based in Hyderabad, and the founder of SCAHI, the Sysrek Centre for AI & Healthcare Innovation.

Teja has more than 16 years of experience in technology, across enterprise IT, product ownership, business analysis and technology leadership. She completed her Master's in the UK and worked there for several years in enterprise IT operations and in medical device and diagnostics environments. Working closely with healthcare technology in the UK gave her a strong understanding of how quality, safety and regulation shape every product that reaches a patient.

she came back to her roots and in 2025 she started Sysrek Infosolutions in Hyderabad with a simple idea: Think. Build. Scale. Sysrek works with enterprises, healthcare organisations and government programmes in India and abroad, building custom software, cloud and data solutions, digital health platforms and management information systems.

Healthcare has always been close to her heart. Through SCAHI, the research and development centre of Sysrek, Teja is working on predictive disease analytics, explainable AI for clinicians, healthcare data interoperability and Healthcare on Wheels, a mobile healthcare model that takes screening and diagnostics to people who find it difficult to reach a hospital. She also brings hands-on knowledge of healthcare regulations such as ISO 13485 and India's Medical Devices Rules under CDSCO, and experience of working on public-sector technology projects in emerging markets.

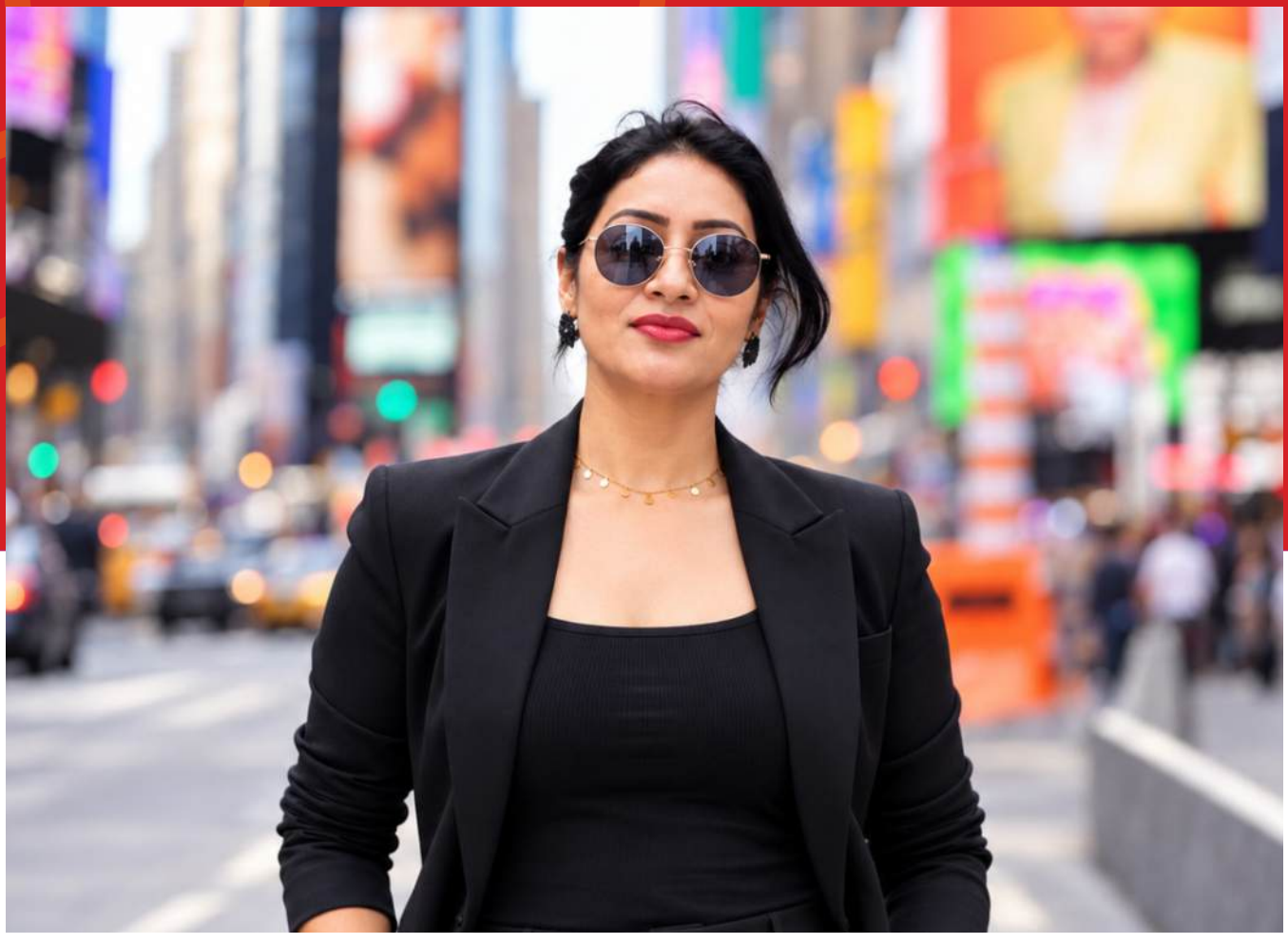
Her motto, “Empowering Healthcare Through Innovation”, reflects what drives her every day. Teja is passionate about responsible AI, about making good healthcare reachable for everyone, and about encouraging more women to take up leadership roles in technology.

1. You have spent over 16 years working across enterprise IT, product ownership, business analysis, and technology leadership. What key experience from your early career has most influenced your approach to entrepreneurship and innovation?

My early years in software quality assurance shaped the way I approach almost every business decision today. In that role, I learned to examine how a system actually works, question assumptions and look for problems before they affect the user. It also taught me that meeting a technical specification is not the same as solving a business problem.

I began my career in IT and later completed my master's in information technology at Coventry University in the UK. As I moved into broader business and operational responsibilities, I began seeing the same issues from the customer's and management's perspectives. A good idea only becomes valuable when people can implement it reliably.

That is the experience I carry into entrepreneurship: understand the problem first, ask difficult questions early and make sure the solution works in the environment for which it was designed.



Chief Executive Officer, Sysrek InfoSolutions

2. What inspired you to establish SCAHI, and how does its vision align with your broader mission of making healthcare more accessible through technology?

Honestly, SCAHI came from two things I kept seeing again and again.

One was that a lot of good AI research in healthcare never reaches the actual hospital, lab or patient. It stays in papers and presentations. The second was access. In India, especially in rural areas and smaller towns, many people get diagnosed very late, simply because testing and screening never reached them in time.

At Sysrek we were already building healthcare software. But I wanted a dedicated space where we could work on the bigger questions, like how to predict disease risk early, how to make AI that doctors can understand and trust, and how to take diagnostics to people instead of waiting for them to come to us. That is how SCAHI started, as the R&D centre of Sysrek.

My mission has always been to empower healthcare through innovation. For me, accessible healthcare means care that reaches people early and close to where they live, and SCAHI is built exactly around that.

3. As a woman leading initiatives across AI, healthcare, and technology, what has been one of the most valuable lessons you have learned about leadership?

The biggest lesson for me is that leadership is about trust. You cannot be in every meeting and every decision. If your team clearly understands why the work matters, they will take ownership and very often do better than you expected.

As a woman in AI, healthcare and technology, I also learned not to wait for someone to give me permission. I realised early that the best way to earn

“The future of healthcare will belong to technology that reaches people early, that doctors can trust and understand, and that works where care is actually needed, not just in big hospitals.”

Teja Sravanthi Darapureddy

Chief Executive Officer, Sysrek InfoSolutions

respect is through delivery. When you keep your commitments, people start trusting you, whether they are clients, partners or your own team.

I also strongly believe in giving young people, especially young women, real responsibility early. That is how they grow, and that is how we build the next set of leaders.

4. Your Healthcare on Wheels initiative integrates diagnostics, telemedicine, digital health infrastructure, and AI-enabled risk analytics. How do you envision this model addressing healthcare accessibility challenges in underserved communities, particularly across India and emerging markets?

The idea behind Healthcare on Wheels is very simple. If people cannot come to healthcare, healthcare should go to them.

Our mobile units go to villages and underserved areas and do screening and diagnostic tests on the spot. Everything is recorded digitally, so each visit creates a proper health record instead of a paper report that gets lost. Through telemedicine, patients can connect with doctors and specialists who may be far away. And with AI-based risk analysis, the health team can quickly see who needs follow-up first, so the limited doctor time is used for the people who need it most.

We are building it on standards like FHIR and HL7, so the data can be shared with hospitals and public health systems instead of sitting separately.

The problems we are trying to solve are very common across India and many emerging markets, like long distances, not enough specialists, late diagnosis and scattered health data. I see Healthcare on Wheels as a model that governments, NGOs, CSR programmes and hospitals can adapt for their own regions, and we are open to working with partners who share this vision.

5. What does responsible AI in healthcare mean to you?

For me, responsible AI in healthcare starts with one question: would I trust this for my own family?

That means the AI has to be properly tested on real data before anyone depends on it. Doctors should be able to see why the system is flagging a patient, not just a score. It should work fairly for different groups of people, because a model trained on one population can give wrong results for another. And patient privacy and consent have to be respected at every step.

I also believe AI should support doctors, not replace them. The doctor is responsible for the final decision, so the technology has to earn their trust. And it does not stop after launch. We have to keep monitoring how the system performs in the real world and follow the regulations that apply to healthcare and medical devices.

6. SCAHI is exploring intelligent diagnostic laboratory systems, explainable AI, AI-enabled medical devices, and healthcare data interoperability. Which of these research areas do you believe holds the greatest potential to transform healthcare delivery over the next five years, and why?

All of these areas are important and they are connected to each other. But if I have to pick one, I would say intelligent diagnostic laboratory systems.

Labs are at the centre of so many clinical decisions, and they produce a huge amount of good quality data every single day. With AI, labs can pick up unusual patterns earlier, prioritise urgent samples, improve quality checks and help doctors see how a patient's health is changing over time. I feel this is one of the fastest ways to move towards earlier diagnosis.

But this will only work if the AI is explainable, because pathologists and doctors need to understand the reason behind every alert. And it needs interoperability, so the information can flow between labs, hospitals and public health systems. AI-enabled medical devices will also grow a lot in the coming years, and they will depend on the same foundation.

7. How do you balance long-term strategic vision with the practical challenges of building and scaling a technology-driven business?

This is something I deal with every day. As a bootstrapped company, we cannot afford to only dream big, we also have to deliver every month.

What helps me is keeping the long-term vision very clear, and then breaking it down into what we need to achieve this quarter. Sysrek's client projects keep us connected with what organisations need right now, and SCAHI gives us the space to work on what they will need in the future. Both actually help each other. Our projects show us which problems are worth researching, and our research makes our products stronger.

I also try to move fast on small decisions and take more time on the big ones. Not every decision needs a long discussion, but the ones that shape the company do.

8. Your career spans enterprise IT operations in the UK, medical-device and diagnostic environments, and entrepreneurship in India. How has this cross-industry and international experience shaped your approach to

building scalable healthcare solutions and developing global partnerships?

Each place taught me something different. In the UK, I learned discipline, especially in regulated industries, where documentation, quality systems and validation are part of everyday work. In India, I see speed, scale and a lot of creativity, where people find solutions even with limited resources. And working on public sector projects in emerging markets taught me how important local partners, government processes and ground realities are for any project to succeed.

All of this shapes how we build at Sysrek and SCAHI. We think about compliance right from day one. We use open standards like FHIR and HL7 so our solutions can work across different countries and systems. And we design for real conditions, like poor connectivity or users who are not very tech-savvy.

When it comes to global partnerships, my experience is that they work best when you combine strong local partners who understand the ground with technology that is flexible enough to adapt.

9. What role do collaboration between industry and academia, intellectual property development, and research commercialization play in turning promising healthcare research into practical solutions?

I think it is very important. So many good ideas in healthcare never move beyond research, because the journey from lab to patient is long and not very clear.

Universities bring research depth, proper methods and young talent. Industry brings real problems, practical experience and the ability to build and support solutions at scale.



And hospitals and labs bring the clinical understanding and validation that every healthcare solution needs. At SCAHI, we are actively inviting universities, research institutes, hospitals and diagnostic labs to work with us, and we also offer research fellowships and internships for young researchers.

Intellectual property matters because it protects real innovation and gives partners and investors the confidence to support it. And commercialisation, through proper pilots, clinical validation and regulatory approvals, is what finally takes research to the patient.

10. Looking ahead, what is your long-term vision for SCAHI and Sysrek, and what impact would you like your work to have on the future of healthcare innovation and the next generation of women leaders in technology?

For SCAHI, I want it to become a well-known centre for practical healthcare AI, building solutions in India that work for India and for other emerging markets. I would love to see our predictive analytics and Healthcare on Wheels help people get diagnosed earlier, and show that responsible AI can be used in real life, not just talked about.

For Sysrek, my vision is to grow into a trusted global technology partner known for quality, honesty and real impact in healthcare, enterprise and the public sector.

At the end of the day, I want my work to help people get the right care at the right time, especially those who have been left out so far.

And for young women who want to build a career in technology, I hope my journey shows them that it is possible to start a company, work in AI and solve problems that really matter. You don't need to have everything figured out before you start. Just start, keep learning and keep going.



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Sarah Julia Kriesch

Sarah Julia Kriesch has been grown from an education as a Linux System Administrator via different education steps into an IT-Architect role in Kyndryl. She is Chair of the Linux Distributions Working Group and is the go-to person for open source contributors, who want to contribute also to the mainframe area. She is an Expert for Hybrid Cloud, DevOps, Linux and AI. She is telling about her career, how she has been growing into this role and how the world will be adopted within the next years. She will highlighting, what should be recognized and how the industry can develop new talents.

What inspired you to pursue a career in Linux, open source, and mainframe technologies, and how has your journey evolved over the years?

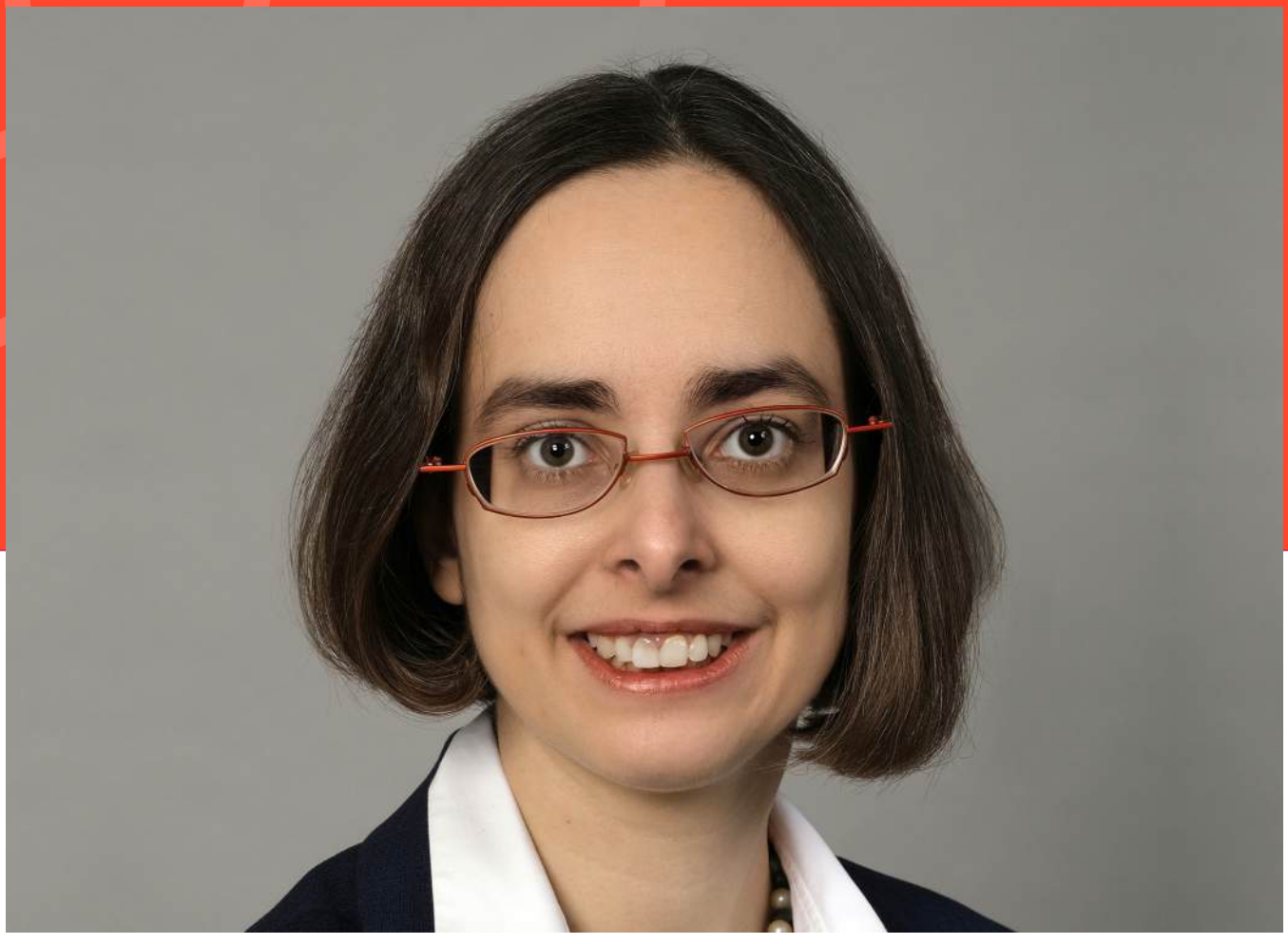
I have played already with tech and the nature during my school time. I took part of the contest “Youth researches” in the area of Physics and had an eye for the Computer Scientists there. I was interested, how to write such computer programs, but the Computer Scientist was missing in the family for the education. I received the hint there to choose a dual education as a Computer Science Expert. I did that and I didn't know before that most of the internet is based on Linux operating systems. I was positively surprised, that open source software is available for free and that you can learn based on the public code and the compatibility more than using Windows. My education had the focus on Systems Administration, and I became a Linux and Open Source Enthusiast on this way. In the second year of education, I wanted to meet the people, who have been providing my operating system openSUSE. I went to the openSUSE Conference and had a great time in an open and welcome community, where people have been helping each other. I have received also a Mentor supporting me until the end of my first education. I am staying there until today.

After 4 years as a Linux System Administrator, I wanted to learn more about efficient Software Engineering and I started my Bachelor studies at the Technische Hochschule Nürnberg. In comparison to other students, I have known my reasons and goals for learning Software Engineering. I wanted to become a Linux Developer and IT Architect in this direction for combining the knowledge about IT Infrastructure with the Linux and Open Source Development. Open Source Events in Germany have been part of my calendar yearly also. I was part of the Student Council and at the end of my 2nd year, we have received an invitation to the Mainframe Summer Camp by the Academic Mainframe Consortium e.V. at IBM. I have not heard about mainframes until then but thought then: “Wow! A new architecture for me as an extension and I can run Linux and containers on it.”

Afterwards, I wrote my Bachelor Thesis about Kubernetes on the Mainframe. Finally, I was qualified enough for taking over the s390x Port for openSUSE, what I maintain until today. After some months as a Consultant with this responsibility, I was invited to the IBM Z Day, where I have been nominated as an IBM Champion based on my contributions. There was also a presentation about the Open Mainframe Project, where I and Elizabeth Joseph have founded the Linux Distributions Working Group directly afterwards. Based on this open source career, I have been growing from a Trainee status to a Leadership role within the open source community.

1. What does open source mean to you personally, and why do you believe it is essential to the future of technology?

Open Source is for me living the open source freedom with the possibility to use, adopt and contribute to great software in a community of collaboration world-wide.



Senior Lead, Mainframe Architect & Open Source Evangelist - zCloudKyndryl

Finally, we can have happy users and companies, who want to sell support or IT-Consulting based on our work, can create happy customers. That is also, what I want to achieve as an Open Source Contributor and as an IT-Architect.

Companies requesting Consulting with me, can tell about existing problems, what I can solve via Upstream First and integrate into Linux distributions or I can provide container images based on that. The same is happening also at open source conferences with other open source developers. I am already well known for my open source community and Enterprise network in the IBM community. Therefore, people are reaching out to me, if they want to enable their open source project for IBM Z & LinuxONE. This year, the Maintainers of GNUCobol and gcobol as part of gcc, as an example, have received Virtual Machines (VM) for development in the LinuxONE OSS Community Cloud. Such VMs are free resources for Open Source Contributors, sponsored by IBM, in the Marist College data centre as part of the Open Mainframe Project, where I am (Co-)Chair of the Linux Distributions Working Group.

In general, open source is the foundation for innovations of tomorrow and Digital Sovereignty. There is no Sovereign Software without open source software as a foundation. It is essential for the future of technology, because the open source review process is multiple eye based with Contributors from different companies and from different parts of the world. That prevents security issues and potential risks, because distributed processes can be different. In comparison to that, commercial software is created by one company with only an eye on a special set of processes and based on a reduced set on tests.

2. You believe in bringing different hardware platforms and technologies together through open source software. How can organizations bridge the gap

“

Innovations based on emerging technologies will be developed within the open source community across all platforms, where hardware resources are available for testing and verification. That includes technologies for Linux, DevOps, AI and more.

”

Julia Kriesch

Senior Lead, Mainframe Architect &
Open Source Evangelist - zCloudKyndryl

between traditional mainframes, Linux, cloud infrastructure, and emerging technologies to build more flexible and efficient IT ecosystems?

Kubernetes platforms are the solution to bring cloud-native platforms into the own data centre. Kubernetes is open source software and every Public Cloud is providing also Kubernetes platforms in the cloud. With Service Mesh you can use Istio or Envoy as open source software to connect all those clusters and sync data between. So you can create a bridge between mainframes with Linux based Kubernetes platforms to cloud infrastructure together with emerging technologies. Apache Kafka is a good example for enabling data streaming between different platforms. KServe can be used for syncing AI between different Kubernetes platforms. That makes the ecosystem more flexible and efficient.

3. You have been recognized as an IBM Champion for multiple years. What does this recognition mean to you, and how has your involvement in the technology community shaped your professional journey?

The IBM Champion recognition is approving that I am interacting pro all in the open source community and pro IBM for bringing all together with the goal to keep open source up to date on the mainframe. IBM Champions are an Enabler community teaching others in the direction of IBM technologies, giving presentations and are watched as role models/Experts in the IBM world. I have been recognized directly after my Bachelor degree and became well known in the IBM community on this way really fast. I am called an IBM Expert for open source on the mainframe and most people are reaching out to me, if they need IBM Z hardware for development or if there are some communication problems with IBM with rejections as a result. A good success example this year was a meeting with open source Cobol Compiler Developers (gcc and GNUCobol) at FOSDEM, where we have received Developer VMs for them and they can improve the open source Cobol for s390x now.

4. You were nominated as a Woman in AI in the "Women Leading AI Change" category. How do you see open source, Linux, and mainframe technologies contributing to the development and adoption of AI?

I am calling the latest IBM z17 & LinuxONE V as the "modern AI mainframe". The Telum processor has been made for AI applications and the Spyre card can be used for small AI training. If IBM is providing the required hardware for the open source community, the software can be tested and verified also for AI and other new features on the mainframe. I am working with automated tests based on OpenQA for verifying the functionality with Linux and upstream Python. But IBM is adding the compatibility features into IBM adopted Python software with "IBM accelerated Python" and with special self-developed Compilers. Also the Kubernetes Operator for the Spyre card is only available for OpenShift. Based on that, IBM is excluding the open source community with all innovations outside of the IBM world. In my case, I try to combine all that exists and work together. Python for AI is working on different platforms on all Linux distributions. You





can stream AI across those platforms based on open source software. The last step is the possibility to use also every hardware feature as open source software for the correct use case, for what the hardware is made.

5. Through conferences, training sessions, and hackathons, you actively share your technical knowledge. What role do these platforms play in encouraging collaboration, developing future talent, and making complex technologies more accessible?

I am living the knowledge sharing culture together with many other IBM Champions.

It is well known that most universities don't provide mainframe related courses anymore. Also, Open Source Developers have got a misunderstanding of Big Endian architectures really often. That is where I jump in with trainings, conference talks and mentorship for the next generation of Linux on Z Developers. Most of my openSUSE zSystems team are educated by myself or friends. They stay, because they enjoy this open exchange fostering collaboration as a result. If you can understand the different system types better, you can provide also more complex technologies. You can achieve more together than alone! Many people think, Open Source Developers are sitting alone and publish code. We can not provide such innovations with complex technologies without collaboration and education. Meeting the community every year for a conference with knowledge sharing and common discussions, provides the foundation for further development and a good understanding about new technologies.

6. What have been some of the biggest challenges you have faced in your technology career, and how did you overcome them?

My biggest challenge in my career was, that I am not accepted as a technical Expert from all male Managers. That does not count for all Managers. But most in every company, there were Managers not supporting women in their career. Male colleagues have received promotions and listening to women had no value. The solution is finding male colleagues as Allys supporting you in such situations. They can help and repeat your ideas as good ideas for solutions and reference it as your ideas then. That has helped me a lot in the job.

7. What barriers do women still face in technical fields such as open source,

infrastructure engineering, and AI, and what practical steps can organizations and industry leaders take to create more inclusive environments?

The funny case is, that there are less barriers in the open source world than in the Enterprise world. The open source community is open for everybody, unimportant which education, gender or country. Meritocracy is the foundation for being allowed to grow and that everybody can take over responsibility. So, I was already nominated as an openSUSE Board Member after 4 years in the openSUSE community. The infrastructure engineering is a male dominated field with many attacks against young technical women. You need the support of mentors and managers for growing in the field. It is good, that many companies provide already mentorship programs. But industry leaders should keep in mind, that managers can ignore good meant hints also if you are speaking everywhere about gender equality. Speaking is not enough! Doing and checking the behaviour is also required. We, at Kyndryl, have got a KIN network for exchange, how we can improve us in this direction. We share best practices and read books together.

8. As AI, cloud computing, Linux, and mainframe technologies continue to evolve, what major changes do you expect to see in the technology landscape over the next five years?

AI will change our work places. We will be more Analysts and Reviewers instead of Developers. The required knowledge for doing our job is the same, because we have to check the AI results. But AI will be our Co Worker supporting us. The industry is doing wrong things with not hiring young people, because they want to replace the tasks with AI. How do you want to receive the required Professionals for in 10 years? The job starters of today are the Professionals of tomorrow. In the best case, you invest into the next generation with creating tandems of a Junior and a Senior, that the Juniors can grow faster than in the past in their area. The technology landscape can be developed faster today. In 5 years, that will be more. Also the technologies become more complex and we should take more eyes on protecting our it infrastructure with post-quantum cryptography and related technologies.

Not only AI can create attacks against systems. Also Quanten Computers can break algorithms. That all for protecting our systems can be developed based on open source software and can be integrated into Linux distributions. We should create secure open source AI, use post-quantum technologies in Cloud Computing, the same as on the mainframe and should protect our it infrastructure against future possible attacks.

9. What advice would you give to young women who want to build careers in open source, DevOps, Linux, AI, or other emerging technology fields.

They should create a network, where they can learn and grow. Knowledge is key for further qualifications and good jobs. Innovation comes mostly from the open source community. Therefore, you should join there and go to conferences, if you want to know all about the latest emerging technology fields. That includes also DevOps, Linux and AI.



Krishna Kumari Palle (KK)

1. What inspired you to pursue a career in technology and leadership?

What drew me to technology was its extraordinary ability to solve real-world problems at scale. Technology is never static. It continuously challenges us to learn, adapt, and imagine better ways of working. Early in my career, I realized that the most meaningful transformations happen when technology is combined with a deep understanding of customer needs, businesses outcomes and people.

I did not initially pursue leadership as a title. I consistently chose learning, difficult assignments and situations where I could make a difference. My approach was to be 'always ready' - ready to step into an escalation, support a team, solve an unfamiliar problem or take ownership when the path was unclear. Over time, those choices led naturally to larger leadership responsibilities.

Today, I lead global delivery for portfolio for around $950 Mn for diversified industry businesses spanning retail and consumer goods, logistics, energy and utilities and professional services, what continues to motivate me is the opportunity to transform businesses, build leaders and create outcomes that endure beyond any one individual

2. You have led business growth from $10 million to over $250 million. What were the key decisions and strategies that made this growth possible?

The growth was not driven by one breakthrough decision. It came from making a series of disciplined choices and executing them consistently.

First, I shifted the conversation from delivery inputs to client outcomes. We invested in understanding each client's business, industry pressures and strategic priorities, which helped us move from executing scope to shaping the broader transformation agenda.

Second, we made delivery credibility the foundation for growth. Strong governance, transparent risk management, clear accountability and predictable execution created the trust required to expand relationships.

Third, we built leadership depth rather than centralizing decisions. Leaders were empowered close to the customer, but aligned through a common strategy, operating rhythm and outcome ownership.

Finally, we treated innovation and solutioning as part of account management, not as occasional interventions. This combination of customer relevance, execution excellence, empowered leadership and differentiated solutions enabled us to scale businesses, rejuvenate underperforming portfolios and sustain growth.

These principles have remained central to my leadership approach.

3. How do you see AI and digital transformation reshaping industries such as retail, logistics, and energy over the next five years?

Over the next five years, AI will evolve from being an enabling technology to becoming an integral part of how businesses operate and make decisions.



Senior Vice President, Global Delivery Head, Tech Mahindra

In retail and consumer businesses, AI will reshape customer engagement, merchandising, pricing, supply chains and store operations. The shift will be from analysing past behaviour to anticipating demand and orchestrating more relevant experiences in real time.

In logistics, connected intelligence will improve forecasting, network planning, route optimisation, warehouse operations and disruption response. The real opportunity is not isolated automation, but an ecosystem that can detect a change, evaluate alternatives and trigger the right action.

In energy and utilities, AI will strengthen asset performance, predictive maintenance, grid operations, field productivity and the integration of distributed and renewable energy. It will help organisations balance reliability, affordability, sustainability and regulatory expectations.

The winners will not be those with the most pilots. They will be those that redesign workflows, build trusted data foundations, establish responsible governance and equip people to work effectively with AI. In my own portfolio, the priority is to embed AI and GenAI into delivery and client processes so that intelligence becomes part of the operating model, not a stand-alone experiment.

4. What does effective leadership mean to you, especially when managing global teams across different cultures and regions?

Effective leadership begins with clarity, trust and context. When teams are spread across countries, cultures, and time zones, people need to understand not only what they are expected to deliver, but also why their work matters.

“The future belongs to enterprises that move beyond adopting AI to redesigning how work gets done, combining human judgement, intelligent systems, trusted data and responsible governance to create measurable and sustainable value.”

Krishna Kumari Palle (KK)

Senior Vice President, Global Delivery Head,
Tech Mahindra

I do not believe one leadership style works everywhere. Values, standards and accountability must remain consistent, but communication and engagement must reflect the culture, maturity and needs of each team. Some situations require decisive direction; others require listening, collaboration or greater autonomy. Effective leadership is about recognizing what the situation demands and responding accordingly.

I believe in creating a shared purpose, establish a transparent operating rhythm and empower leaders close to the customer. I also want people to raise risks early, challenge established thinking and bring forward different perspectives without hesitation. Its responsibility of the leader to create an environment where people feel trusted and safe to fail.

Leading across businesses and geographies has reinforced a simple lesson: consistency creates confidence, empathy creates connection, and accountability converts both into outcomes.

5. What has been the biggest challenge in your leadership journey, and how did you overcome it?

One of the most demanding challenges has been turning around underperforming businesses while protecting client confidence and employee morale. These situations are rarely only financial or operational. The root causes may include fragmented ownership, unclear priorities, capability gaps or weakened trust. .

My first step is to establish a fact-based view of the situation and remove ambiguity about ownership. I then focus the organisation on a small number of priorities: stabilise delivery, reconnect teams to client outcomes, strengthen governance, address leadership or skill gaps and create early, measurable wins. Early progress is important because it restores confidence and gives teams the belief that transformation is possible.

I have learned that urgency must not become short-termism. A sustainable turnaround requires difficult decisions, but also transparent communication, patience and relentless follow-through. My leadership principle in such moments is simple: make the reality visible, take ownership, act decisively and stay with the problem until confidence is restored.

This approach has helped transform underperforming engagements into high-value businesses while improving client satisfaction, retention, and profitability.

6. How can organizations move beyond AI experimentation and turn emerging technologies into measurable business outcomes?

Organisations must start with the business outcome, not the technology. The first question should not be 'Where can we use AI?' but 'Which problem are we solving, what will change, and how will that value be measured?'

From my experience, successful AI programs begin when business and technology leaders jointly own the use case, baseline and outcome measures. Productivity, faster decisions and improved quality are valuable, but they do not automatically become financial returns. Value is realised only when workflows, roles, ownership and capacity are redesigned around the technology.

The foundation is equally important: relevant and secure data, scalable architecture, responsible governance, skilled people and clear accountability for moving from pilot to production. Organisations must also decide where AI should assist, recommend or act, and where human judgement must remain decisive.

A clear baseline is equally important. Unless an organization understands its starting point, it cannot credibly demonstrate improvements in productivity, speed, customer experience, cost, revenue, or risk.

At Tech Mahindra, we bring these principles together through AI Delivered Right, an approach focused on making AI practical, responsible, and scalable while delivering transformation, productivity, innovation, and assurance. It is not simply about deploying the latest technology. It is about ensuring that AI is implemented with purpose, governed responsibly, and connected to measurable business value.

My view is that the most reliable predictor of AI ROI is not whether the model works. It is whether the organisation redesigns the workflow and ownership required to capture the value. AI creates sustainable returns when it becomes part of the operating model and is measured through business outcomes rather than activity metrics.

7. As a woman in technology leadership, what barriers have you faced, and what helped you navigate them?

Women in technology leadership often face both visible and subtle barriers: underrepresentation in decision forums, assumptions about leadership style or mobility, and greater scrutiny when they are one of very few women at the table.

Early in my career, I concentrated on delivery, credibility and taking on difficult assignments. Over time, I learned that performance is essential, but it must be accompanied by visible aspiration, strong networks and the



courage to accept roles before you feel completely ready. Mentors provide perspective, while sponsors create access by advocating for you in rooms where opportunities are decided.

One of the realities of senior leadership is that women can sometimes find themselves as the only woman, or one of very few women, at the table. That visibility can bring opportunity, but it can also create isolation and greater scrutiny. What helped me most was staying anchored in outcomes, continuing to learn and not trying to imitate a narrow leadership archetype. Empathy and authority are not opposites. A leader can listen deeply, acknowledge uncertainty and still make a firm decision.

As I moved into more senior roles, I became increasingly conscious that leadership was no longer only about my own progression. People were also observing whose voices I invited into the conversation, whom I encouraged to take on larger roles, and how I used my influence. I now see it as a responsibility to mentor, sponsor and create visible opportunities for other women through leadership programmes, professional networks and direct advocacy.

My engagement with women professionals and networks such as the CII Indian Women Network, HYSEA, and NGOs is part of that responsibility.

For me, success is not simply reaching a leadership position. It is helping create an environment in which more women can reach those positions without having to navigate the same barriers alone.

8. How do you balance business growth, operational excellence, and employee well-being while leading large and complex teams?

I do not see business growth, operational excellence, and employee

well-being as competing priorities. When approached thoughtfully, they reinforce one another. Operational discipline reduces avoidable pressure. Capable and engaged teams deliver better client outcomes. Strong outcomes build trust and open new avenues for growth. The challenge is to avoid pursuing one dimension at the expense of the others.

At scale, this balance cannot depend on one leader's intervention. It must be built into the operating system through clear governance, empowered leadership, capability development, succession planning, recognition, regular communication, listening mechanisms and early escalation of risks.

As a Global Delivery and Operations Head and Hyderabad Location Head, my focus spans P&L outcomes, delivery predictability, talent, culture, compliance, innovation and employee engagement. Leadership town halls, mentoring forums, capability programmes and direct dialogue help ensure that people remain connected to both the strategy and the leadership team.

Employee well-being is therefore not a separate HR agenda. It is a leadership indicator of whether growth is being achieved sustainably.

9. Through your board and mentoring roles, how are you helping develop the next generation of women leaders, and what more needs to be done to improve women's representation in technology and boardrooms?

I use mentoring to help women prepare before the opportunity arrives. That means building a combination of technology depth, business and financial acumen, strategic communication, decision-making confidence and the ability to operate when the answer is not obvious.

Mentoring, however, is not enough. Sponsorship is what converts readiness into access. Women need advocates in the rooms where critical assignments, succession decisions and leadership appointments are made. They also need opportunities to lead businesses, transformations, client relationships and operational portfolios, because those experiences build executive and board readiness.

Through my governance roles and my involvement with leadership programmes and networks such as CII Indian Women Network and HYSEA, I contribute to conversations on strategy, innovation, talent and inclusion. I also value lateral networks, because senior leadership can be isolating and trusted peer relationships are an important source of perspective. Peer relationships across businesses, functions, and geographies give women a trusted space to exchange perspectives, discuss difficult situations, and support one another as they take on greater responsibilities.These experiences have reinforced the importance of creating visible and credible pathways for women into strategic and governance positions.

Improving representation, however, requires more than mentoring programs or individual champions. Organisations must make progress measurable through leadership pipelines, equitable access to business-critical roles, return-to-work pathways and diverse succession slates. Boards must also look beyond the same established networks and recognise women with substantial operating, technology, financial, academic and transformation experience. Representation matters only when it comes with voice, authority and influence.

For me, leadership legacy is not about being remembered. It is about what continues without me. Success will be when women progressing into technology leadership and board positions is no longer seen as exceptional, but as expected, normal, and enduring.

10. What advice would you give young women who aspire to become technology leaders and take on strategic decision-making roles?

My first piece of advice is to build strong fundamentals. Understand technology, but also learn how the business creates value, how customers make decisions, and how financial outcomes are measured. Strategic leaders connect technology choices to business consequences.

Second, do not wait until you feel completely ready. Some of the most defining opportunities will be larger than your current experience. Accept the challenge, prepare rigorously, ask questions and surround yourself with people who will give you honest feedback.

Third, make your aspirations visible. Good work builds credibility, but people must also know where you want to contribute and what you are prepared to take on.

Fourth, develop your own voice. Speak with evidence, listen with curiosity, and do not allow temporary setbacks to reduce your ambition. Careers are rarely linear, and resilience is often what separates a difficult experience from a defining one. Stay ready, take ownership in difficult moments

Finally, help other women as you progress. Leadership is not only about reaching a position. It is about using that position to create possibilities for others. Be competent, be courageous, remain authentic, and never underestimate the value of your perspective.

Swarnamalya Mohan

Technology has always been at the centre of Swarnamalya Mohan's journey—first as a tool to solve complex engineering problems, and increasingly as a way to reimagine how intelligent systems can operate at scale. With more than four years of experience across software engineering, enterprise systems, cloud technologies, and artificial intelligence, she has built her career around turning emerging technologies into practical, high-impact solutions.

Currently serving as a Software Engineer Advisor in AI/ML at FedEx, Swarnamalya works at the intersection of artificial intelligence and enterprise engineering. Her experience spans AI/ML pipelines, AI agents, RAG, model inference optimization, intelligent automation, distributed systems, and production-graded workflows for application development.

Her contributions at FedEx have earned her the Five Star Award, the company's highest form of recognition for top-performing team members, along with multiple Bravo Zulu Awards recognizing her exceptional efforts, contributions, and success in delivering challenging assignments. These recognitions reflect not only her technical capabilities, but also her ability to take ownership of complex problems and translate innovation into meaningful business impact.

She holds a Masters degree in Computer Science from North Carolina State University and a bachelor's degree in computer science and engineering at BNMIT. Her career began with strong foundations in software engineering at Trellix, formerly McAfee Enterprise, followed by her research work at North Carolina State University. During her masters, she also led groundbreaking research on Tensor Train optimization using PyTorch, exploring techniques to accelerate AI inference and improve the computational efficiency of machine learning systems.

As her career evolved, Swarnamalya developed a deeper interest in AI beyond conventional model development—particularly Agentic AI, retrieval-augmented generation, intelligent automation, and the challenge of making AI reliable and production-ready within enterprise environments.

Beyond her professional role, she actively contributes to the technology community through research, technical speaking, and hands-on workshops. In 2026, she was selected to speak at forums including the Women in Tech Global Conference, Women Who Code, FedEx Data and AI Summit, Agentic AI North America, AI Builders Global Conference and Orbit where her sessions received highly positive responses from audiences for their practical insights and real-world relevance.

For Swarnamalya, technology is ultimately about continuous learning, embracing difficult challenges, and transforming complex ideas into solutions that create measurable impact.

What first drew you to Computer Science, AI, and Machine Learning, and how has that interest evolved throughout your career?

My journey into Computer Science began at home. My older sister first



Applied AI/ML at FedEx

introduced me to coding, and I still vividly remember her explaining object-oriented programming to me while I was in high school. My parents have also always been enthusiastic about technology, so curiosity around computers and emerging technologies naturally became part of my upbringing.

That curiosity grew during my Bachelor's in Computer Science and Engineering at BNMIT, where I went far beyond the curriculum through hackathons, workshops, and technical challenges. One of the most defining experiences was reaching the finale of the Smart India Hackathon as a lead team member, where we built a Virtual Tourist Guide using machine learning, user preferences, and contextual data to address a challenge presented by the Government of Goa. I also worked on projects such as a gesture-recognition system, a SafeSOS application, and a drone designed as a "third eye" for visually impaired users.

Hackathons became one of the most valuable parts of my learning journey because they taught me how to quickly explore new technologies and apply them to real-world problems. Through workshops and technical training programs, I was introduced more deeply to AI and machine learning, and several of my projects received best-project recognition during final demonstrations. That was when my interest in AI/ML became much more intentional.

After graduation, I began my career as a Software Engineer at Trellix, where I built automation tools, dashboards,

> The next era of AI will belong to systems that are not only more intelligent, but also more efficient, explainable, adaptive, and deeply connected to real-world needs.

Swarnamalya Mohan
Applied AI/ML at FedEx

and software frameworks. Wanting to deepen my expertise in AI/ML, I later moved to the United States to pursue a Master's in Computer Science at North Carolina State University, with coursework in Machine Learning, Neural Networks, Data Science, Statistics, and Data Structures.

Today at FedEx, my focus has evolved from learning individual algorithms to building AI/ML solutions at enterprise scale. I work with technologies such as AI agents, retrieval-augmented generation, and intelligent automation to solve real customer and business problems. What has remained constant throughout the journey is my curiosity and the drive to keep learning, experimenting, and turning emerging technologies into practical solutions.

You have worked across software engineering, applied AI/ML, automation, and data engineering. Which experience has shaped your technical thinking the most, and why?

Working on AI/ML solutions at enterprise scale at FedEx has shaped my technical thinking the most. It changed the way I approach technology—from asking, "Can we build this?" to asking, "Can we make it scalable, reliable, efficient, and genuinely useful in production?"

I have learned that a successful AI solution is never just about the model. Data quality, system architecture, inference performance, infrastructure, observability, and integration with business processes all matter.

Whether I am optimizing AI inference or building AI agents for incident triage, I try to understand the problem end-to-end rather than focus on a single component. I start with the customer need, then look across the system to identify where technology can create the greatest impact.

That mindset has also shaped how I approach emerging technologies such as Agentic AI and RAG. I am excited by innovation, but I believe enterprise AI must go beyond impressive prototypes—it needs to be measurable, trustworthy, scalable, and useful in the real world.

How do you approach complex technical problems when the solution is not immediately obvious?

When the solution is not immediately obvious, I first try to simplify the problem before trying to solve it. I break it into smaller components, identify what is known versus uncertain, and make sure I understand the actual customer or business problem behind the technical challenge.

From there, I usually explore multiple approaches, validate assumptions with data, and build small proofs of concept rather than committing too early to one solution. I also believe strongly in learning through experimentation—many complex problems become much clearer once you start testing ideas and observing how the system behaves.

Another important part of my approach is collaboration. I actively seek perspectives from people with different expertise, especially when the problem spans areas such as AI, infrastructure, data, and software engineering.

Most importantly, I stay comfortable with not having the answer immediately. Some of my best solutions have come from continuously questioning assumptions, learning quickly, and iterating until the simplest, most reliable solution becomes clear.

Your recent research explores evidence-grounded multimodal LLM agents for capacity readiness in AI data centers. What problem were you trying to solve, and what makes this area particularly important today?

The problem I was trying to solve is that in AI data centers, installed capacity does not always mean usable capacity. A rack may be physically installed, but it may still depend on power, cooling, network connectivity, storage, monitoring, safety checks, or commissioning before it is truly ready to support AI workloads.

My research explored how evidence-grounded multimodal LLM agents could help determine that real state of readiness by bringing together information from multiple sources—such as rack and thermal imagery, telemetry, topology, work orders, commissioning records, specifications, and operating procedures. The goal was not simply to have an LLM generate an answer, but to make the system reason from verifiable evidence, identify conflicting information, explain why capacity may not be ready, and recommend the next appropriate action while abstaining when the evidence is insufficient.

The work was selected among the top five papers at the IEEE conference, which gave me the opportunity to present the research to a broader technical audience. That recognition was especially meaningful because it reinforced the importance of the problem and the growing need for trustworthy, operationally grounded AI systems.

For me, the broader value of this work is in showing how LLM agents can move beyond conversational use cases and support complex operational decision-making—while still maintaining traceability, human oversight, and safety.

As AI systems become increasingly autonomous, what do you believe is essential for making AI agents reliable, explainable, and useful in real-world environments?

As AI systems become more autonomous, I believe reliability has to be designed into the system from the


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beginning rather than added as an afterthought.

For me, the first requirement is grounding. An AI agent should make decisions based on trusted data, enterprise knowledge, and verifiable evidence rather than relying solely on what a model generates. The second is explainability—we should be able to understand what information influenced a decision, what actions the agent took, and why.

Observability is equally important. Just as we monitor traditional software systems, AI agents need strong logging, evaluation, confidence measures, and clear ways to detect when something is going wrong. I also strongly believe in human-in-the-loop design, particularly for high-impact decisions. Autonomy should not mean removing human judgment; it should mean knowing when the system can act independently and when it should ask for help or abstain.

Finally, usefulness matters just as much as intelligence. A sophisticated agent has limited value if it does not integrate naturally into the workflows of the people it is meant to support.

The future of Agentic AI, in my view, will depend not on how autonomous we can make systems, but on how responsibly we can combine autonomy with evidence, transparency, guardrails, and human judgment.

From your experience, what are some of the biggest gaps between what AI models can demonstrate in research and what is required to deploy them effectively at scale?

One of the biggest gaps is that research shows what a model can do, while production requires proving that it can do it consistently, efficiently, and safely at scale.

In real-world environments, model accuracy is only one part of the equation. Data quality, latency, infrastructure cost, observability, security, failure handling, and integration with existing workflows are equally important.

Evaluation is another major gap. Beyond benchmark scores, production systems must handle edge cases, hallucinations, drift, uncertainty, and situations where the model should abstain or involve a human.

Ultimately, deploying AI at scale requires strong engineering around the model—continuous evaluation, guardrails, monitoring, and clear operational ownership. The goal is not just to build something impressive in a demo, but something people can trust, maintain, and derive measurable value from over time.

You have worked on both emerging AI research and enterprise-scale engineering. How do you decide when a new AI technology is mature enough to move from experimentation into a real-world solution?

I usually look at maturity through three lenses: technical reliability, business value, and operational readiness.

A new AI technology may perform well in a proof of concept, but before moving it into a real-world solution, I want to understand how consistently it performs outside controlled conditions. That means testing accuracy, latency, failure modes, edge cases, security, cost, and how well it handles uncertainty.

The second question is whether it is solving a meaningful problem. I try to avoid adopting technology simply because it is new. There should be a clear customer or business need, measurable value, and a reason why the AI approach is better than a simpler alternative.

Finally, I look at whether the surrounding ecosystem is ready. Can we monitor it? Can we explain its behavior? Are there appropriate guardrails and human-in-the-loop mechanisms? Can the system be maintained and scaled over time?

For me, a technology is ready to move beyond experimentation when it stops being just impressive and starts becoming dependable, measurable, and useful in the environment where people actually need it.

What advice would you give to women who want to build careers in AI/ML but may feel intimidated by the technical depth or the rapidly changing nature of the field?

My biggest advice would be: do not wait until you feel completely ready, because in AI/ML, the field evolves too quickly for anyone to know everything.

Start with strong fundamentals, but learn by building. Some of my fastest growth came from hackathons, workshops, research projects, and hands-on experimentation where I had to understand a new concept and immediately apply it to a real problem.

It is also important not to compare your beginning with someone else's expertise. AI/ML can feel intimidating because the field spans mathematics, software engineering, data, infrastructure, and constantly evolving models. You do not need to master all of it at once. Pick an area that genuinely interests you, go deep enough to build something meaningful, and gradually expand from there.

I would also encourage women to actively seek mentors, communities, conferences, and opportunities to present their work. Sharing what you build not only strengthens your confidence, but also opens doors to conversations and opportunities you may not have anticipated.

Most importantly, stay curious and be willing to take on problems that initially feel beyond your comfort zone. Technical depth develops over time.



Curiosity, consistency, and the willingness to keep learning are what make the biggest difference.

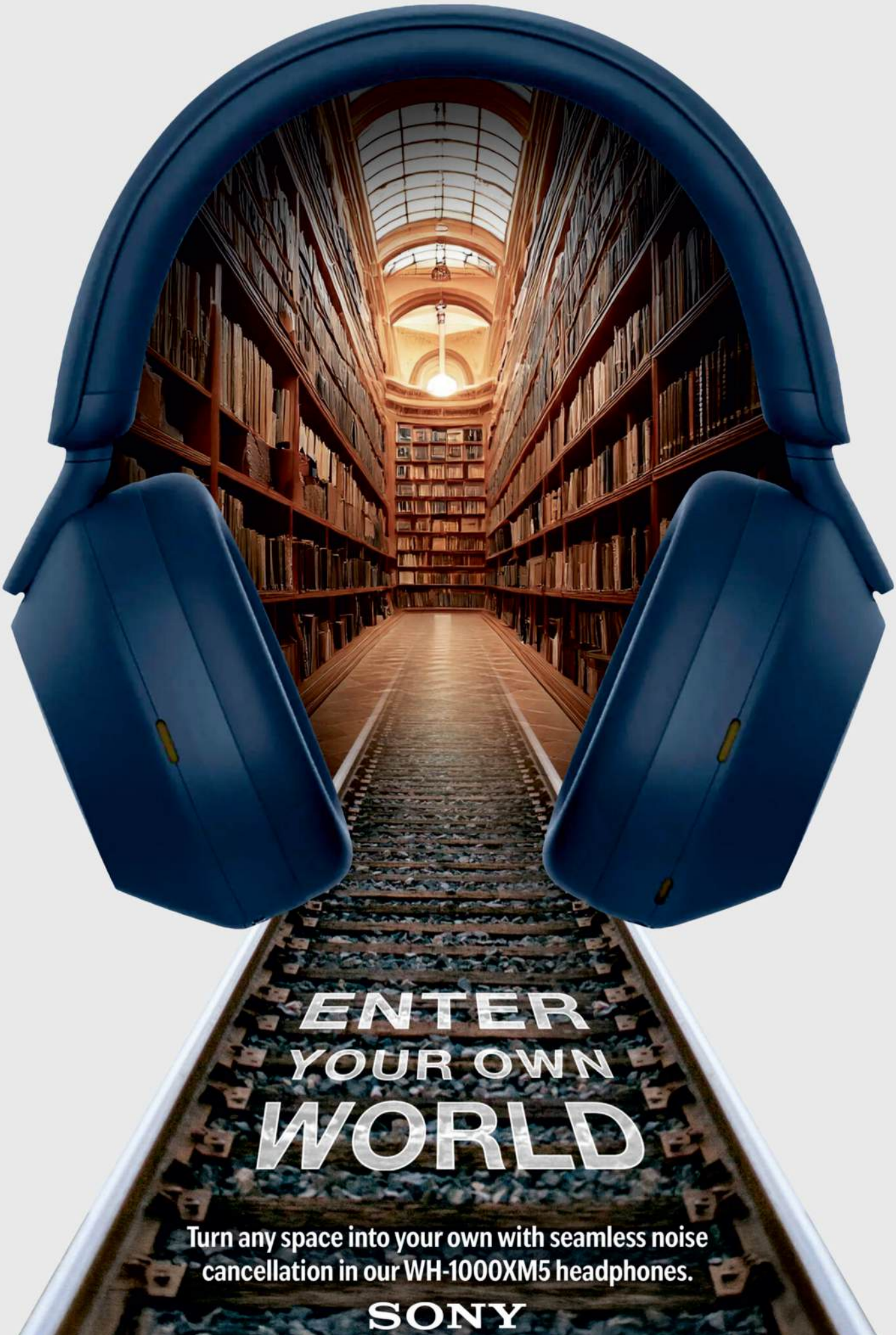
Looking ahead, what areas of AI and emerging technology are you most interested in exploring, and what kind of impact do you hope your work will create?

Looking ahead, I am particularly interested in the evolution of AI from individual models into intelligent, adaptive systems. Areas such as multi-agent orchestration, multimodal reasoning, advanced retrieval architectures, and autonomous workflows are especially exciting to me because they move AI beyond simple assistance toward systems that can reason, collaborate, and act across complex environments.

I am also very interested in adaptive inference and AI systems optimization—how we can dynamically choose models, allocate compute, and improve reasoning at inference time while balancing performance, latency, and cost. As AI systems become more capable, efficiency will become just as important as intelligence.

Another area I want to explore is how agents can continuously learn from feedback, evaluate their own performance, and improve over time while still operating within strong safety, governance, and human-oversight boundaries.

Ultimately, I want my work to contribute to the next generation of enterprise AI systems: systems that are multimodal, agentic, efficient, and capable of solving complex problems with greater autonomy, while remaining explainable and trustworthy. My goal is to help bridge the gap between frontier AI research and dependable real-world systems that create measurable impact.


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Aishwarya Shah

From Engineering Systems to Responsible AI

Building Trust Into the Way Enterprises Use Data

Aishwarya Shah's career reflects a new kind of leadership emerging at the intersection of business, data, and technology. Trained first as a mechanical engineer, she moved through data analytics, financial and investment analysis, enterprise operations, and ultimately the governance questions that sit behind trustworthy data and responsible AI. Across those transitions, one theme has remained constant: understanding complex systems - not only how they work, but how they can work better.

Today, as a manager at a major financial institution, Shah works across data governance, analytics, operational strategy, and business-technology transformation. Her work brings her into the space where data lineage, operational controls, product decisions, documentation, ownership, and human judgment must work together. Rather than viewing governance as a layer of control added after innovation, she approaches it as an operating capability that can help organizations scale technology responsibly, establish clearer accountability, and turn complexity into decisions people can trust.

Her professional work is complemented by a growing presence in the broader technology and leadership community. Shah is a Doctoral Researcher pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in Business Intelligence and Data Analytics, a Founding Member of WomenTech Network, and a Founding Member of the Senior Executive AI Think Tank. She also contributes through speaking, research reviewing, judging, mentorship, and professional service.

In this conversation, Shah reflects on the unconventional path that brought her to responsible AI, why governance should be designed into transformation rather than added at the end, and why the next generation of enterprise leaders will need to connect technology with business strategy, operating realities, accountability, and human judgment.

Your background spans mechanical engineering, analytics, finance, enterprise operations, and responsible AI. How do you make sense of that journey today?

I used to think I had taken several different turns in my career. Now I see one continuous thread: I have always been interested in how systems work, where they break, and how to make them work better.

Mechanical engineering gave me that instinct first. You learn very quickly that one component rarely exists in isolation; a small failure can tell you something about the larger system. When I moved into data analytics, the objects changed, but the way I thought did not. Instead of mechanical systems, I was looking at datasets, models, processes, and decisions. At Northeastern, I worked on machine learning, forecasting, database development, risk analysis, and cloud-oriented projects. Later, financial and investment analytics taught me that data is never just technical—it carries business consequences.

That became even clearer in enterprise operations. I found myself increasingly drawn not only to what a number said, but to where it came from, what happened to it along the way, who relied on it, who owned the decision, and what happened when something



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went wrong. That curiosity is what eventually pulled me toward data governance and responsible AI.

So I do not think of my career as engineering, then analytics, then governance. I think of it as an expanding view of the same problem: how do we design systems—technical and organizational—that people can understand, trust, and improve?

There has also been an international dimension to that journey. I began my career in India as a graduate engineer and later worked in analyst roles before an opportunity took me to the UK, where I worked in investment analysis in Edinburgh, Scotland. My career eventually brought me to the United States. Working across India, the UK, and the USA has shaped how I think about people, culture, and work just as much as the different roles themselves. I have seen how culture can influence communication, decision-making, collaboration, and the way people approach ambiguity. It taught me not to assume that one way of working is universally right, and to spend more time listening and understanding context before trying to solve a problem.

What does that look like in your work today?

A lot of my work lives in the space between a technical issue and a business consequence. In a large financial-services environment, a

“My most personal definition of governance is making important knowledge less dependent on who happens to be in the room.”

AISHWARYA SHAH

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process can span data sources, transformations, applications, operational teams, product teams, and reporting outputs. When something surfaces downstream, the visible issue is often only the last step in a much longer story.

My role is often to help make that story visible. I work on areas such as exception governance, data lineage, operational documentation, process transparency, ownership, and business readiness. I spend a great deal of time connecting people who each understand one part of the process and helping turn that distributed knowledge into something the organization can actually use.

One lesson I have learned is that recurring operational problems are frequently knowledge problems as much as technology problems. If the logic exists only in one developer's head, if business teams use different terminology, or if every cycle requires rediscovering the same root cause, that is a governance problem.

The work I enjoy most is taking something that initially feels messy—multiple teams, different interpretations, technical dependencies, manual workarounds—and creating enough structure that people can see the process, understand the decision points, and know what happens next.

You often describe yourself as a bridge between business and technology. What does that actually mean to you?

For me, being a bridge is not about sitting in the middle and passing messages back and forth. It is about being able to understand why each side is asking the questions it is asking.

A developer may explain an issue through an API, a transformation, a schema, or a piece of logic. A business user may describe the exact same issue as an exception, an incorrect output, a late-cycle problem, or a manual correction. Neither is wrong. They are looking at the same system from different points.

I have enough technical background to follow the first conversation and enough operational context to understand the second. The value comes from connecting them: What is the technical behavior? What is the business impact? Is it expected? Who owns the decision? Is there a repeatable way to diagnose it? What should be documented? And does the product need to change?

I have come to believe that being a bridge can itself be a specialization. Translation, synthesis, governance, and product thinking are not softer versions of technical work. In complex enterprises, they are what allow technical work to become usable.

Responsible AI is now used everywhere as a phrase. What does it mean to you when you strip away the buzzwords?

Responsible AI becomes meaningful when it changes a decision someone makes. Principles matter, but eventually someone has to decide what data can be used, what level of human oversight is appropriate, what needs to be documented, how a model is monitored, who can challenge an output, and who is accountable when the system behaves unexpectedly.

That is why I tend to think about responsible AI operationally. I ask questions such as: Where did the data come from? What assumptions are embedded in the workflow? Can we explain the output at the level required for this use case? What happens when confidence is low? What is the escalation path? What evidence would an auditor, regulator, employee, or customer reasonably expect us to have?

I also do not believe every use case should carry the same governance burden. Good governance should be risk-sensitive and proportionate. If controls become disconnected from the actual risk, teams either slow down unnecessarily or find ways around them.

The goal is not to make innovation harder. It is to make adoption trustworthy enough to last.

Why do you believe data governance is foundational to AI governance?

Because AI cannot magically repair uncertainty in the data beneath it. If an organization cannot answer basic questions about a critical data element—where it originated, how it was transformed, what it means, who owns it, and whether it is appropriate for a particular use—putting AI on top of that uncertainty does not make the foundation stronger.

My interest in data lineage comes directly from this. Lineage can sound technical or administrative until something goes wrong. Then suddenly everyone wants to know: Where did this value come from? Which transformation changed it? What downstream processes use it? What else could be affected?

The same discipline becomes even more important in AI, where data can influence training, retrieval, inference, evaluation, and automated actions. Definitions, lineage, ownership, controls, documentation, exception handling, and monitoring are not side activities. They are infrastructure for trustworthy AI.

AI may be new, but many of the problems it exposes—unclear ownership, inconsistent definitions, fragmented processes, undocumented assumptions—are governance problems organizations have been carrying for years.

Was there a moment when you realized governance was the direction you wanted to pursue?

It was less one dramatic moment and more a pattern I kept noticing. I would be in conversations where very capable people were trying to solve the same recurring issue, but each person held only one part of the context. Someone knew the technical logic. Someone else knew the operational workaround. Another person knew why the business cared. The missing piece was often a shared view of the whole process.

I found myself naturally wanting to build that shared view: map the flow, normalize the language, document the logic, identify ownership, and turn repeated troubleshooting into institutional knowledge. I realized I was more energized by creating that clarity than by solving only the individual incident in front of me.

That is probably the most personal definition of governance I have: making important knowledge less dependent on who happens to be in the room.

How has your experience as a speaker, reviewer, judge, and mentor influenced your professional thinking?

Those activities keep me from becoming too comfortable inside one organizational perspective. Speaking makes me test whether I can explain an idea clearly to people who do not live in my day-to-day context. Reviewing research makes me slow down and ask whether a claim is actually supported. Judging exposes me to people building with emerging technology in very different ways. Mentoring reminds me that a career makes much more sense in retrospect than it does while you are living it.

One experience that was especially meaningful to me was speaking on ethical AI and inclusive innovation. It forced me to think beyond governance as a set of enterprise controls and toward leadership: who gets included in technology decisions, what assumptions we normalize, and how leaders create the conditions for responsible adoption.

I also value research and professional service because they make me a better practitioner. I have reviewed research papers, participated in technical program committees, served as a session chair, judged technology initiatives, and published technical work. Each role asks for a slightly different kind of rigor. Together, they have made me more comfortable asking difficult questions without assuming there is one perfect answer.

Mentorship seems to be a recurring part of your profile. Why does it matter to you?

I know what it feels like to have interests that do not fit neatly into one job title. Earlier in my career, I had a technical background, but I was also drawn to strategy, communication, business problems, and leadership. It can be confusing when you are good at something but do not necessarily want that one skill to define your entire career.

That is why I particularly enjoy mentoring people who are trying to bridge disciplines. I recently worked with an early-career mentee who had a strong technical foundation but was more excited by strategy and by helping business and technology teams solve problems together. I recognized that immediately. My advice was not to abandon the technical background, but to use it as credibility while developing the skills required to translate, prioritize, influence, and frame problems.

The mentors who helped me most did not hand me a career map. They helped me understand how to think about the next decision. That is the kind of mentor I try to be.

What has your own education taught you about continuing to grow while working?

Education has been one of the ways I have deliberately reinvented myself. Moving from mechanical engineering into a master's program in data analytics was a major transition. It required me to become comfortable being a beginner again—learning statistics, machine learning, programming, databases, cloud concepts, and the language of a completely different discipline.

I am continuing that habit as a Doctoral Researcher pursuing a DBA in Business Intelligence and Data Analytics. At this stage, I am less interested in collecting another credential than in becoming more rigorous about how I connect research, organizational behavior, strategy, and technology. Working full time while studying also keeps the academic questions grounded. I can read a framework and immediately ask: what would this look like inside a real enterprise with competing priorities, legacy processes, governance requirements, and people who still have to get the work done?

That interaction between research and practice is increasingly important to how I want to grow.

What do you think organizations misunderstand about AI transformation?

Sometimes AI transformation is discussed as though the model is the transformation. It is not. A model can be impressive and still fail to create durable enterprise value.

Transformation happens when the surrounding operating model changes: the data is reliable, the workflow is redesigned, accountability is clear, employees know when to trust or challenge the system, controls match the risk, and the organization can learn from failures. That requires product thinking, change management, governance, architecture, operations, and leadership—not just model performance.

I think the organizations that mature fastest will stop treating governance as the team that arrives at the end to approve something. Governance should be part of design. It should help teams ask better questions earlier, when the cost of changing the approach is still low.

The real opportunity is not simply to automate existing work. It is to rethink how decisions and knowledge move through the organization.

What leadership principle has become most important to you?

Clarity before control.

In complex environments, it is tempting to respond to every problem by adding another process, approval, spreadsheet, or meeting. Sometimes that is necessary, but often the first need is simpler: make the current system visible.

What are we trying to achieve? What do we know? What do we not know? Where does the process change hands? Who owns which decision? Which issues are true defects and which are expected behavior? What is recurring? What evidence do we have?

Once people can see the same picture, accountability becomes much easier to establish. I have found that some of the most useful leadership work is not having the answer; it is creating the conditions in which the right answer can emerge and remain available after the conversation ends.

What advice would you give someone building a career across data, AI, business, and strategy?

Do not force yourself into a professional identity too early. Build real depth, but pay attention to the problems that consistently pull your attention.

My mechanical engineering degree still influences how I think. My analytics training gives me technical fluency. My experience in finance and operations taught me about risk, controls, and business consequences. Governance taught me to think about ownership and institutional knowledge. Speaking and mentoring taught me to communicate across very different audiences. None of those experiences replaced the previous one; they compounded.

> "Being a bridge can itself be a specialization."

I would also tell people to become very good at asking basic questions without embarrassment. Complex organizations can make simple questions feel unsophisticated: What does this field actually mean? Why do we do this step? Who uses this output? What happens if it is wrong? Those questions often uncover the most important problems.

You do not need to know your final title. You need to keep building a body of skills that makes you useful on increasingly important problems.

What do you want the next chapter of your career to be about?

I want the next chapter of my career to be about helping organizations move from AI enthusiasm to responsible, enterprise-scale capability. I am especially interested in the intersection of AI governance, data lineage, operational intelligence, product strategy, and organizational change - the areas where technology decisions become business and leadership decisions.

I want to stay close to practitioner work because real operating constraints are where leadership ideas are tested. At the same time, I want to continue writing, researching, speaking, reviewing, and mentoring because those experiences expose me to different perspectives and keep expanding how I think.

Long term, I want my work to contribute to a version of AI transformation where governance is not seen as a brake on innovation, but as part of the architecture that makes innovation credible. Technology will continue to change, but the leadership challenge will remain: creating clarity where there is complexity, bringing different perspectives together, and building systems people can understand and trust. If I can help organizations innovate while making decisions more transparent, responsible, and sustainable, that is the kind of impact I want my career to have.

Sarmishta Burujupalli

From AWS Engineer to Founder: Making Enterprise-Grade AI Work for Small Businesses

Sarmishta Burujupalli is the founder of NodeX Global, an applied AI company building specialized AI systems for the industries and small teams that big platforms tend to overlook.

Before founding NodeX Global, Sarmishta spent six years as a software engineer at Amazon, working on AWS Identity and Access Management (IAM), one of the most security-critical systems in the cloud. Building at that scale, where reliability and trust are not optional, shaped her conviction that AI is only useful when people can depend on it. Alongside that work, she built hands-on agentic systems.

In 2026, she made the move from software engineer to founder. Her first product, ReviewAgreement, helps content creators understand brand-deal contracts before they sign. It flags the clauses that matter most, such as usage rights, exclusivity and payment terms, explains them in plain language, and suggests how to negotiate. The idea came from lived experience: a 60-page home-loan document, and a friend who signed her first brand deal without realizing she had granted perpetual usage rights. ReviewAgreement is live with creators, and Sarmishta is extending the same contract intelligence to small businesses through Revo.

Through NodeX Global, she also helps founders and small business owners deploy AI workflows and agents that take over manual, text-heavy work, giving teams hours back every week so leads and follow-ups never slip through the cracks.

Sarmishta builds in public, writing openly about the journey from engineer to founder. Her mission: make enterprise-grade AI practical, trustworthy and affordable for the businesses that need it most.

She holds a Master's degree in Computer Science from the University of California, Davis. Learn more at nodexglobal.ai

1. What inspired you to leave Amazon after six years and begin your entrepreneurial journey with NodeX Global?

I had been telling my family and friends since 2024 that I wanted to build something of my own. I would talk about ideas, get excited, and then go back to work on a Monday.

My curiosity had shifted from how to build a system to who it is for and what problem it actually solves. I wanted to own the whole journey, from talking to customers to shipping the product to finding out whether it really helps.

So I stopped planning and started building. NodeX Global is the result: a place where I can take what I learned building secure systems at scale and use it to solve real problems for people who rarely get great technology built for them.

2. What has been your biggest challenge as a woman founder, and how did you overcome it?

The biggest challenge was not external. It was learning to take up space. As an engineer, I was used to letting my work speak for itself inside a team. As a founder, nobody sees the work unless you show it. The first time I walked into a room of investors and founders, I was nervous and unsure whether I belonged there. I had drafts of posts I postponed for weeks because I wanted them to be perfect.



Founder, NodeX Global | ReviewAgreement | Ex-AWS Engineer | Applied AI for Small Businesses

What helped was replacing perfection with consistency. I started sharing my journey publicly, imperfectly, every week. I started asking other founders direct questions, like how they found their first paying customers, and realized most of them were figuring it out too.

The harder shift was my mindset. As an engineer, I knew my craft deeply. As a founder, I suddenly had to wear every hat: marketing, sales, positioning, customer conversations, even company accounting. None of that came with a manual, and none of it could be skipped.

What helped was treating it like engineering. I broke each unfamiliar skill into small experiments, learned and built systems, including AI agents, to run the parts of the business I am still learning. I also learned to show my work before I felt ready. It came from action. Confidence did not come before action. It came from action. My advice to myself, and to other women, is to show the work before you feel ready.

3. How does ReviewAgreement help content creators understand brand contracts and negotiate better terms?

Most early-stage creators sign brand deals without a lawyer, and the contracts are written by the brand's side. ReviewAgreement reads the agreement and highlights the clauses that carry real consequences: perpetual or paid-media usage rights, exclusivity windows, payment terms, revision limits, and termination conditions. For each one, it explains in plain language what it means, why it

“

AI’s future isn’t one tool for everyone. It’s the right tool for every business, built on trust.

”

Sarmishta Burujupalli

Founder, NodeX Global | ReviewAgreement
Ex-AWS Engineer | Applied AI for Small Businesses

matters, and whether it is typical. Then it gives the creator a practical way to push back, including suggested wording for the negotiation.

The goal is not to replace legal advice. It is to make sure a creator never signs something they do not understand, and to give them the confidence to ask for fairer terms. A clause like "the brand may use your content in perpetuity across all media" sounds harmless until you realize it means your face can run in paid ads forever without additional pay.

4. What key lesson from AWS continues to influence your approach to building technology products?

At AWS, I worked on identity and access, the layer that decides who can do what. When that layer fails, nothing else matters. That taught me to treat security, privacy and reliability as the foundation, not features to add later.

It applies even more to AI. When someone uploads a contract or connects their business data, they are trusting you with sensitive information and with decisions. So I design for least privilege, clear explanations of why the AI said what it said, and graceful failure. The second lesson is the Amazon habit of working backwards from the customer. I start with the person's actual problem and the words they use to describe it, not with the technology.

5. What advice would you give women engineers aspiring to become technology entrepreneurs?

Start with a problem you have personally felt, and talk to people who feel it too, before you write a line of code. Your skills are an advantage, but they can also become a hiding place: it is comfortable to keep building and avoid selling. Make yourself talk to users early and often.

Second, build in public. Share what you are learning, including what does not



work. It attracts collaborators, customers and opportunities you cannot predict. Third, do not wait for permission or for the perfect moment. I spent two years waiting. The skills you need as a founder, like selling, positioning and decision-making under uncertainty, are learned by doing them first.

6. At AWS, you worked on systems supporting approximately 1.2 million accounts. How has this experience shaped your approach to building scalable, reliable products for smaller businesses?

Working at the scale of 1.2 million accounts teaches you that small mistakes multiply. A rare edge case becomes a daily event, so you learn to design for failure, monitor everything, and automate recovery. Small businesses deserve that same rigor, even if they have 5 employees instead of 5,000.

What changes is the shape of the solution. A small business cannot afford a platform team, so the system has to be simple to run and safe by default. When I build an AI workflow for a client, I bring the enterprise habits: clear access controls, logging, human review at the right checkpoints, and fallbacks when the AI is uncertain. But I package it so the owner never has to think about any of that. They just see the outcome - hours back and fewer things slipping through the cracks.

7. ReviewAgreement emerged from real-world contract challenges. How are you using AI to simplify complex agreements while helping creators identify risks and make informed decisions?

The AI does three jobs. First, it reads and structures the contract, identifying each clause and what category it belongs to. Second, it compares those clauses against patterns we have seen across many creator agreements, so it can tell the creator whether a term is standard, unusual, or a red flag. Third, it translates the legal language into plain English and suggests how to respond.

The design principle is explainability. Every flag comes with the reason behind it and the exact text it refers to, so the creator can verify it instead of blindly trusting a score. Every answer comes from the actual contract text, so the creator can check it themselves. And we are deliberate about privacy, because contracts are sensitive.

8. NodeX Global focuses on AI solutions for underserved industries. Why do you believe specialized AI tools can create greater value than general-purpose solutions?

General-purpose AI is a brilliant starting point, but it does not know your workflow, your terminology, your risks, or what "good" looks like in your industry. A realtor, a creator and a small accounting firm each live inside specific documents, deadlines and regulations. The value is in that last mile: connecting AI to the right data, encoding the domain rules, and fitting the output into how people already work.

Specialized tools also earn trust faster, because they can be accurate and explainable in a narrow domain instead of vaguely helpful everywhere. And many of these industries are underserved precisely because they are too small for big platforms to prioritize. That is where a focused team can create outsized impact.

9. How has transitioning from Amazon engineer to founder changed your leadership style, decision-making, and approach to customer acquisition and business growth?

At Amazon, I had clear scope, strong teammates, and a well-defined customer. As a founder, I own every decision, often with incomplete information. I have learned to make reversible decisions quickly and to save deliberation for the few that are hard to undo.



The biggest shift has been in customer acquisition. As an engineer, I believed a great product would sell itself. It does not. I now spend as much time talking to customers as building. When I asked founders how they got their first paying customers, the most common answer was warm outreach and solving a problem they had lived by themselves, and that matches my experience.

I have also become systematic about running a one-person company. I use AI agents for planning, engineering and content. It's how I keep up as a one-person company, and honestly, it's the best case study I have for my clients.

10. How do you envision AI agents transforming small businesses over the next five years, and what impact do you hope NodeX Global will create?

In five years, I believe a five-person business will operate with the leverage of a fifty-person one. AI agents will handle the repetitive, text-heavy work: reading documents, following up with leads, preparing proposals, reconciling information across tools, and flagging risks before they become problems. People will spend their time on judgment, relationships and craft.

But that future only arrives if the agents are trustworthy, affordable and fitted to real workflows, which is exactly the gap NodeX Global is built to fill. My hope is that NodeX Global becomes the partner small businesses and independent professionals turn to when they want AI that actually works for them: specialized, secure, and measured by one thing, the hours and opportunities it gives back.

CHOOSE



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Lekha Priyadarshini Bhan

Building the Next Generation of Trusted Enterprise AI.

Lekha Priyadarshini Bhan has spent 13 years working at the intersection of data, machine learning and enterprise technology, but her work today is centred on one of AI's most important transitions: moving Generative and Agentic AI from impressive prototypes into systems enterprises can actually trust.

As an AI architect and technology leader, Lekha specialises in Agentic AI, RAG, GraphRAG, multi-agent architectures and LLM engineering, focusing on the challenges of deploying AI in enterprise environments. Her work examines how AI agents make decisions, how their actions can be traced and controlled, and how systems can be evaluated to ensure reliability in real-world workflows.

Her career brings together enterprise AI architecture, research, technical thought leadership and knowledge sharing. She received the Best Research Paper Award at IEEE CCEM, has delivered more than 1,000 hours of AI and technology training, and has spoken or participated in panels at forums including Grace Hopper Celebration India (GHCI), Women in Data Science (WiDS) and the Indian School of Business (ISB).

Beyond her technical contributions, Lekha advocates for greater representation of women in AI and emerging technologies, encouraging their participation as engineers, researchers, speakers and technology leaders.

Her approach centres on developing AI systems that are not only functional but also measurable, transparent, governable and trustworthy.

Building AI Beyond Proof of Concept

Lekha's work spans enterprise knowledge intelligence, Information Technology (IT) service management, decision-support systems and AI-powered automation. Her architecture combines large language models (LLMs) with knowledge graphs, vector search, tool calling and workflow orchestration to support complex enterprise applications.

Evaluation frameworks, observability and governance are integral to these systems, helping organisations monitor performance, trace outputs and maintain accountability. As businesses move from experimenting with Generative AI to integrating it into everyday operations, her production-focused approach addresses the practical requirements of accuracy, reliability and control at scale.

A Career That Moved from Data to Generative AI

Lekha's professional background spans data and machine learning before expanding into Generative AI and advanced AI architecture. Her journey also reflects the need for continuous learning and adapting to changing times and technologies. She holds a PG Diploma in Data Science from IIIT Bangalore, an MBA from ICFAI National College, and a Bachelor's degree in Commerce.

The combination of business education and specialised data science training has supported her work at the intersection of technology and enterprise requirements. Today, her areas of focus include Agentic AI, RAG, GraphRAG, multi-agent architectures, and LLM engineering.



Generative AI Architect, Kyndryl

RAG: Connecting AI with Relevant Enterprise Knowledge

Lekha has extensive expertise in Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), which enables AI applications to retrieve relevant information from external knowledge sources before generating responses. This is particularly valuable in enterprise environments, where AI systems need to work with organisation-specific information.

Her work also extends to advanced retrieval approaches such as GraphRAG and knowledge-graph-based systems, where relationships between information can be incorporated into the retrieval process. These architectures are particularly relevant for enterprise knowledge intelligence when information is distributed across interconnected sources.

But technology is only one part of the equation. Lekha's work also looks at evaluation, observability and governance, which are critical when these systems move from demonstrations into production environments.

Moving from RAG to Agentic AI

Lekha's work also reflects the next stage in the evolution of enterprise AI: Agentic AI.

While conventional AI applications may respond to individual prompts, agentic systems can be designed to

work through multi-step tasks, use tools, coordinate actions, and interact with different components of an enterprise workflow.

Her recent work includes enterprise Agentic AI and intelligent ITSM automation, bringing agent-based approaches into practical business and technology operations. In IT service management, for example, AI systems can support processes involving incidents, classification, information retrieval, and decision-making.

Lekha's work specifically includes incident intelligence and root-cause analysis, as well as LLM-based taxonomy classification.

These applications illustrate how Agentic AI can move beyond conversational interfaces and become part of operational workflows. Rather than treating an LLM as an isolated component, the architecture can incorporate agents, tools, enterprise data, and workflow automation.

Her broader work in multi-agent systems and agent orchestration includes architectures where specialised agents perform distinct functions such as retrieval, reasoning, classification and decision support within a coordinated workflow.

A key focus of her work is building bounded, production-ready agentic systems, with evaluation, observability, human oversight and governance embedded into the architecture. This enables agent actions and decisions to remain measurable, traceable and controllable as AI systems move into real enterprise workflows.

Recognition for Research

Research has remained an important part of Lekha's career alongside engineering.

She received a Best Research Paper Award at IEEE CCEM, adding formal recognition to her work in the technology and AI space.

Her research and writing cover areas including RAG, Agentic AI, AI evaluation, LLM engineering, and production architecture. Through these efforts, she has also contributed to the wider conversation around how organisations can build and assess AI systems.

Her interest in evaluation is particularly relevant as AI applications become more complex. A system that produces an impressive demonstration is not necessarily ready for deployment. Measuring performance, monitoring behavior, and understanding limitations become important parts of the engineering process.

More Than 1,000 Hours of AI Training

Knowledge sharing is another major part of Lekha's work. She has delivered more than 1,000 hours of AI and technology training, helping professionals understand emerging technologies and apply them to practical engineering problems.

The training work reflects a broader interest in making AI knowledge accessible beyond specialist research and engineering circles. For professionals entering a rapidly changing technology landscape, practical understanding can be as important as familiarity with new terminology. Lekha's training focuses on helping learners bridge that gap.

Speaker and Panelist

Lekha has contributed as a speaker and panelist across technology and academic forums, including Grace Hopper Celebration India (GHCI), Women in Data Science (WiDS), and the Indian School of Business (ISB), sharing her perspectives on AI, emerging technologies and their practical application.

Women in AI and Technology Leadership

She is particularly passionate about increasing the participation and visibility of women in AI and emerging technology. Her interest goes beyond encouraging more women to enter the field; she wants to see more women building AI systems, conducting research, contributing technical perspectives, speaking on industry platforms and progressing into technology leadership roles.

Research and Technical Thought Leadership Research and Technical Thought Leadership

Alongside enterprise engineering, Lekha actively contributes to technical thought leadership around Agentic AI, RAG, GraphRAG, AI evaluation, LLM engineering and production AI architecture. Her writing focuses particularly on the engineering challenges involved in building, evaluating and deploying AI systems for practical enterprise use.

With close to a decade and a half of experience across data, machine learning and enterprise technology, her current work reflects how quickly the AI field has evolved, and how the demands of the role of an AI architect are increasingly tied to questions of reliability, evaluation, governance and practical deployment.

For Lekha, the challenge is not simply getting AI to work. It is building systems that can be understood, measured, controlled, and trusted when they are put to work in the real world.


LONG DRIVE.

Suba Karuppan

A Two-Decade Journey Across Data, AI and Leadership

Suba Karuppan is a data and technology leader with more than two decades of experience spanning data strategy, analytics, artificial intelligence, governance, digital transformation and organizational leadership.

Her professional journey has evolved from analytical and data-focused roles into senior leadership positions involving enterprise data strategy, AI adoption, governance frameworks, technology transformation and team development.

Based in the United States, Suba has worked across financial services, education, nonprofit and mission-driven organizations, building data programs and leading initiatives designed to improve decision-making, data quality, adoption and operational outcomes.

Her current professional focus combines data strategy, AI solutions, governance and organizational transformation. She has also developed frameworks aimed at helping organizations enable transformation on solid data and AI foundations, introduce governance incrementally, connect operational execution with strategic objectives and ensure that AI programs remain aligned with measurable business outcomes.

Education

Suba's academic background combines engineering, finance and management, providing a technical and business foundation for her work in data, technology and AI leadership.

She earned a Bachelor's degree in Engineering before completing a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Colorado Boulder, followed by an MBA in Finance from the University of Connecticut School of Business. Her education has continued throughout her professional career, including executive education in Management and Leadership at MIT Sloan School of Management and the Chief Data and AI Officer Executive Certificate Program at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy.

This combination of engineering, finance and executive education has contributed to her approach to data and AI leadership, where technical systems are considered alongside business objectives, organizational behavior and measurable outcomes.

Career

Suba's professional career spans more than 20 years and includes experience across financial services, education, nonprofit and mission-driven organizations, with a consistent focus on data and technology-led transformation.

Her early career included analytical and business-oriented positions working with financial and operational data. Over time, her responsibilities expanded into data governance, data quality, analytics and enterprise data management, eventually progressing into senior leadership positions with responsibility for data strategy, AI, data products, analytics, governance and large-scale transformation.

Her career progression reflects the wider evolution of enterprise data itself. Her early work centered more closely on analysis and business processes, while later roles increasingly involved designing data



Vice President Data and Technology, The Cadmus Group

programs, establishing governance structures, developing analytics capabilities and connecting data and AI initiatives with broader organizational strategy.

In recent years, her focus has expanded further into artificial intelligence, responsible AI adoption and digital transformation, positioning her at the intersection of data, analytics, AI and organizational change.

Current Role

Suba's current responsibilities center on enterprise data and AI strategy, with an emphasis on translating emerging technologies into practical organizational capabilities. Her work involves developing data and AI strategies, guiding transformation initiatives and creating frameworks that connect technology with business priorities.

She has also worked on large-scale product and data initiatives, governance programs and AI-enabled solutions, with experience spanning enterprise data strategy, generative AI adoption, predictive analytics and advanced analytics.

Another important part of her work is leadership. Suba has built and managed global, high-performing technology and data teams. Her approach places emphasis on developing people, advancing data education and creating cultures in which teams can adapt to technological and organizational change.

Her responsibilities therefore extend beyond technology implementation to strategy, people leadership, organizational alignment, governance and the measurement of business impact.

Data Strategy and Governance

Data governance is one of the strongest themes running through Suba's professional work. Her approach focuses on making governance practical rather than treating it solely as a collection of policies and compliance requirements.

She has developed lean governance models designed to become part of existing organizational workflows. Her Strategic Incrementalism framework, for example, embeds governance and change into existing processes to reduce resistance to transformation.

Another framework, the SID Framework, connects operational activity with organizational strategy, positioning governance and compliance as mechanisms that support business objectives rather than operating as separate administrative functions. This practical focus is also reflected in her work around data quality and data enablement.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is an increasingly important part of Suba's professional work, spanning strategy, governance, adoption and organizational readiness. She developed the BUD-AI Framework to connect AI initiatives with business objectives from vision through deployment, emphasizing clear outcomes and governance.

Her recent writing also examines how AI is changing enterprise data and decision-making. In a 2026 article, she explored the changing role of dashboards and traditional business intelligence, highlighting the shift toward more direct access to insights. Another article examined the importance of intelligent datasets as AI adoption expands.

Across this work, she emphasizes a consistent principle: AI strategy cannot be separated from strong data foundations, governance and the organizational processes needed to translate technology into measurable outcomes.

Achievements

Suba's professional record includes several measurable outcomes. One of the largest initiatives highlighted in her professional profile involved the development and delivery of a secure, privacy-focused data platform serving more than 4 million users across more than 800 institutions. The platform was completed in less than 10 months.

Her work also contributed to a 2X increase in user adoption within six months of launch, supported by intuitive user experience, training and stakeholder engagement strategies. Another achievement involved improving Tier-1 application data quality by 95 percent through the Data Quality Control Process framework.

Her broader work has included developing scalable governance models with senior executives and creating approaches to align AI implementation with strategic goals. Across these initiatives, her focus has remained on measurable outcomes rather than technology implementation alone.

Leadership

People leadership forms another important part of Suba's professional profile. She has recruited and managed global technology teams and describes her leadership approach as centered on trust, empowerment and organizational success. She places particular emphasis on building resilient data teams and developing cultures that allow professionals to adapt to changing technologies and environments.

She also speaks about women in data and technology, inclusive leadership and the relationship between organizational culture and technology strategy. Her speaking portfolio includes topics such as leadership in data and technology, embedding culture into strategy and developing resilient data teams.

Her approach treats culture as an integral part of transformation rather than something that follows technology implementation.

Responsible AI and Ethical Technology

Suba's work also places considerable emphasis on responsible technology. Her approach to AI focuses on developing ethical and scalable systems that solve practical problems while creating long-term value, with data governance, quality and trust serving as integral components.

Her publication, "The Good AI: Cultivating Excellence Through Data," examines the connection between AI success, governance, ethics and strategy. It reflects a broader theme in her work: organizations need reliable data foundations and governance mechanisms if they are to scale AI responsibly and effectively.

For Suba, responsible AI is therefore connected to the wider disciplines of data management, organizational culture and leadership.

Innovation and Framework Development

A distinctive feature of Suba's professional work is the development of frameworks designed to turn experience into repeatable approaches.

Among these are Strategic Incrementalism, the SID Framework and the BUD-AI Framework, each

addressing a different dimension of transformation: from embedding governance into organizational workflows, to connecting operations with strategy, to ensuring that AI initiatives remain aligned with business outcomes from vision through deployment.

Together, these frameworks reflect her emphasis on execution. Rather than approaching transformation as a single technology project, her models consider people, processes, governance and technology as interconnected components.

Publications

Suba has developed a body of written work around data, AI, governance and leadership. Her published topics include data enablement, external data strategy, data governance, data policies, data stewardship and responsible AI.

Her publication series includes "Beyond Data Access: Cracking the Code of True Data Enablement," followed by "Beyond Data Access: Enabling the Data-Driven Journey." She has also written about external data strategy, including developing a strategic vision and selecting external data sources.

Her more recent thought leadership has increasingly explored the foundations required for trustworthy AI, including *AI Agent Behavior Catalogs, knowledge graphs as a missing layer between AI and trust,* and *data contracts for AI transparency*. Together, these writings examine how organizations can move beyond AI adoption toward systems that are more transparent, governed, traceable and trustworthy.

Together, these subjects demonstrate a consistent interest in the operational side of becoming data-driven, not simply obtaining access to data, but establishing the governance, culture and processes required to use it effectively.

Industry and Academic Engagement

Suba's work extends beyond her organizational responsibilities through speaking engagements, advisory participation, workshops and professional writing. As a global speaker on data leadership and responsible AI, her topics span data and AI strategy, analytics, governance, organizational transformation and leadership.

She has participated in keynotes and panels at technology and data events, speaking about data governance, AI adoption, leadership and organizational culture, often with a focus on making complex subjects accessible to broader audiences.

Her commitment to developing the next generation also extends into the classroom, where she currently teaches Data & Analytics lectures to students, bringing practical data concepts and real-world applications into an academic setting. She also serves as a mentor through the Women's Groups, supporting emerging women leaders as they navigate their own professional journeys.

Her engagement with academic and professional communities also reflects her interest in developing the next generation of technology leaders. She has participated in discussions around women in data and technology and continues to make mentoring and knowledge-sharing important components of her leadership approach.

Evolution of Data Leadership

Suba's professional philosophy is centered on aligning people, processes and technology. That principle appears



across her frameworks, publications and speaking topics. Whether the subject is data governance, AI adoption, data quality or leadership, her work focuses on transforming ideas into practical and measurable action.

As organizations become increasingly reliant on artificial intelligence, Suba's career reflects the changing role of the data leader. The responsibility is no longer limited to running data and analytics functions; it increasingly includes establishing the foundations that allow organizations to adopt AI responsibly, effectively and at scale.

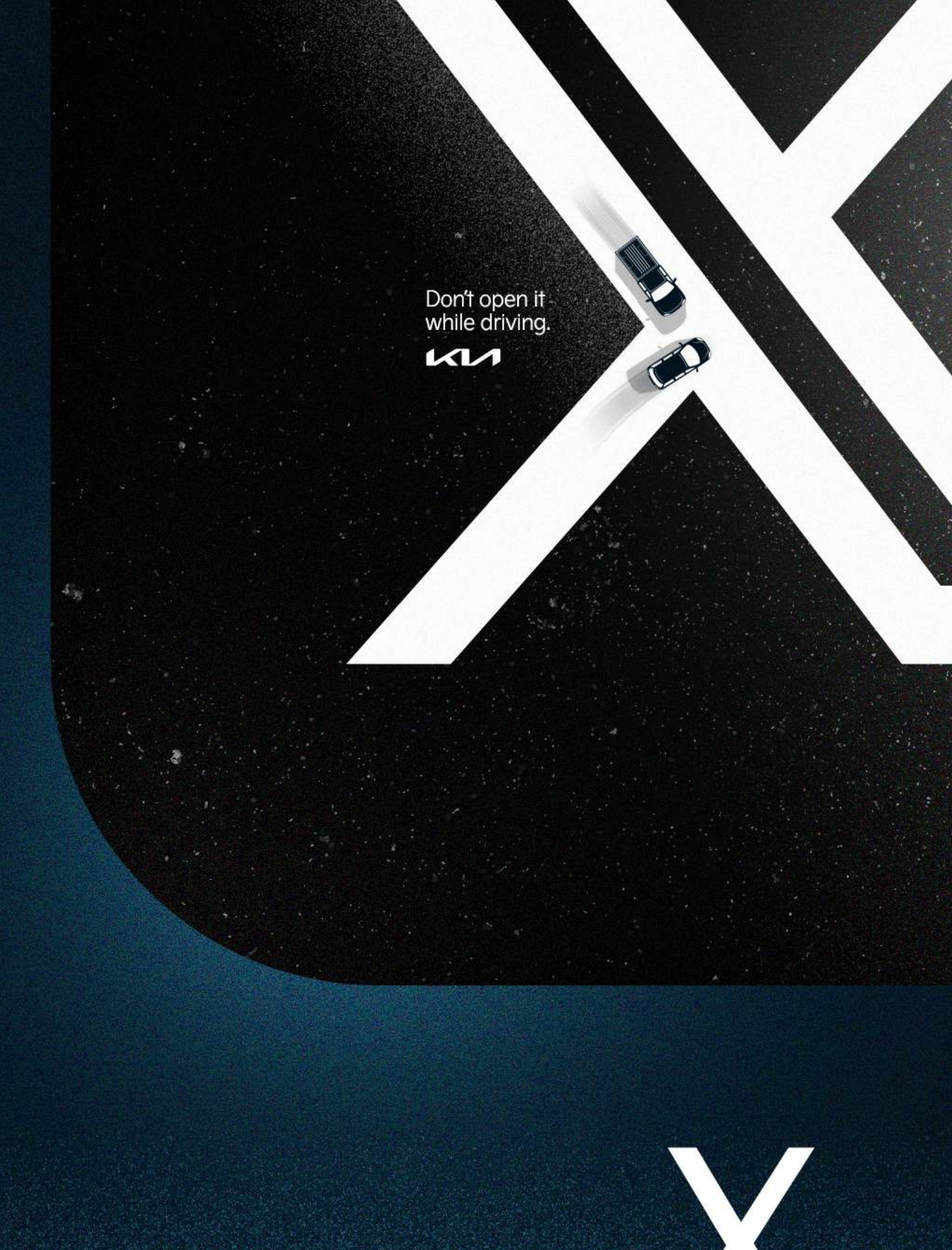
Her own path from engineering and analytics to enterprise data strategy, governance and AI adoption mirrors how the data function itself has evolved. At the core of that philosophy is a practical view of transformation: technology by itself does not create transformation. It requires alignment across people, processes, governance and organizational objectives.

For Suba, that alignment has become the foundation of her work across data, AI and organizational leadership.

Care beyond the drive




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Don't open it
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