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EV SPECIAL

MISSION IN MOTION

Bhavish Aggarwal is in a tearing hurry to ramp up production and sales of the Ola range of electric two-wheelers. His EV blueprint also includes making batteries, three-wheelers and cars. Is he moving too fast?

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Crusaders of Change

Tech leaders across companies are embracing disruption to drive real change

Leveraging Data and AI

Vidya Rao
Chief Information Officer, Genpact

In a world increasingly reliant on technology, a woman's journey in the corporate sector often begins with a focus on STEM. That was also the case with Vidya Rao, who, in her 30-year career, became a prominent figure in the technology industry and was recognised for her contributions

to innovation and leadership. As Genpact's chief information officer, Rao leads the company's global IT operations and enterprise data office, driving digital transformation to support business growth and scale.

Rao drives key transformation agendas to pivot Genpact to a modern digital enterprise, including the global ERP programme to ensure enhanced employee experience across work applications and self-service. She emphasises the pivotal role data plays in decision-making and organisational growth. At her organisation, Rao continues to leverage data and artificial intelligence (AI) with a strong footing in data management, data governance, and a responsible AI approach, to drive outsized impact for their clients as well as to improve internal efficacy.

She believes that data and technology must intersect with people and processes to drive real change and impact. Under her leadership, her teams have transformed data into actionable insights using innovative tech tools and programmes like Amber, Genome, Watercooler, TalentMatch and DataBridge to empower employees with data proficiency, and enhance experience and collaboration.

Rao and her team are working with businesses across industries and verticals to leverage cutting-edge technologies, including generative AI, to drive competitive growth and enterprise efficiencies in transition management, global service desk management, and infrastructure management, among others. They have implemented a robust culture of compliance to maintain data privacy and security, and the responsible use of AI technologies. Under her mentorship, her team constantly explores emerging technologies to stay ahead of the curve.

"Keeping myself updated with the current times and working hard to achieve my goals," is my success mantra, she says.

The Strategic Thinker

Avinash Naik

Chief Information Officer, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company

Avinash Naik is known for his innovation and strategic thinking. From the beginning of his career, he got an opportunity to work for Fortune 100 companies where he experienced the impact and change that cutting-edge technology could bring to businesses and society at large, and thus decided to pursue a career in technology and innovation.

As the chief information officer at Bajaj Allianz, Naik's focus lies on the intersection of technology, strategy and innovation, and aligning them with business strategy. He has implemented a multi-speed DX strategy that categorises initiatives into three streams: Run, Transform and Innovate. Underpinning these initiatives are strategies related to governance, risk and cybersecurity, collaboration, talent development, cost optimisation, and continuous improvement.

Naik recognises data as not only a strategic asset but also a critical factor in enhancing customer experiences, managing risks and staying competitive. Initiatives like Data Lake and Modernisation of data platforms have paved the way for enhanced customer experiences, risk management and gaining crucial competitive edge.

Bajaj Allianz, says Naik, has fostered innovation by having an 'Open Innovation' culture, giving dedicated time for innovation, aligning dedicated resources and cross-functional collaborations. One of the key initiatives led by Naik is the implementation of 'API Vault' to adapt to changing businesses which streamlines partner onboarding and operational efficiency.

To mitigate the challenges of the digital age, Naik has implemented a comprehensive strategy for data protection and cybersecurity threats which encompasses prevention, detection, response and continuous improvement. He believes in exploring and experimenting with new technologies. From AI-powered chatbots driving the expansion of services across platforms to OCR/ICR transforming processes within the insurance value chain, he has led his team to successful implementation and expansion of innovation.

"Be the change that you want to see in the world," is Naik's mantra. He is a firm believer in teamwork and spends a lot of time creating, developing, collaborating and mentoring talent.

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Visionary Leader

Krishna Tammana
CTO, Gupshup.io

An alumnus of BITS Pilani, Krishna Tammana ventured from mechanical engineering to computer science on his father's advice and found his passion. Today, as CTO of Gupshup group, his role is centred on advancing technology and crafting the finest conversational products globally. As a member of the tech industry, Tammana envisions his responsibility to advance technology to enhance the quality of life for everyone, by digitising manual processes, leveraging AI for process efficiency, thereby making everyone more efficient.

Tammana believes that understanding customer needs and staying abreast of technological advancements are key drivers of innovation. He encourages exposure and experimentation within teams to foster innovation. Tammana emphasises making security an integral part of the development process. Encryption, threat detection, early detection mechanisms, and remediation are key components of their security strategy.

Under his dynamic leadership, Gupshup is at the forefront of harnessing emerging technologies like AI to track consumer context, intent and sentiment to optimise their experience, and enhance corporate operational efficiency. They have launched generative AI products like the Autobot Builder tool to enable enterprises to build customised chatbots in minutes. Another initiative, ACE LLM, has transformed conversational experience across multiple domains and generated text in 100+ languages.

Tammana's success mantra revolves around three key principles of innovation, customer-centric approach and ethical AI. They guide his leadership style, encouraging a culture of creativity and curiosity within his teams. He believes in hiring the best talent, empowering them and tapping into their full potential. His drive and passion make him a true visionary tech leader.

Master Innovator

Hizmy Hassen

**Chief Digital and Supply Chain Officer,
Apollo Tyres Ltd**

Hizmy Hassen has been a pioneer in transforming legacy organisations using cloud technology in both India and the UK. With an impressive experience of running a global supply chain in his previous workplace, Hassen is now chief digital and supply chain officer at Apollo Tyres Ltd. He finds himself fortunate to have worked with organisations and managers who have given him the freedom to be an intrapreneur.

Hassen has always approached technology with a 'business hat', aligning technology with business objectives and goals. He believes in co-creating new ways of working and implementing new capabilities using technology with business and industry leaders. In the next few years, he envisions technology influencing critical goals such as achieving a net-zero business model, capital efficiency and sustainable customer value. He is determined to be at the forefront of the industry's transformation, driving new business models, revenue streams, and efficiency gains, especially in manufacturing.

Hassen nurtures innovation through 'Digital Innovation Centers', encouraging experimentation within the team and partnering with startups and universities to provide them practical exposure.

Using Internet of Things (IoT) technologies, they have connected most of their production machines to the cloud and have created a data lake. This data being used along with AI and machine learning (ML) technologies has led to 8 percent to 10 percent efficiency gains. Given this technology foundation and initial success, several other projects have been initiated to digitise their production plants using extensive data and data science.

'Embrace disruption to transform', is what Hassen believes in. By venturing beyond comfort zones and embracing change, Hassen has propelled the legacy business of Apollo Tyres with many investments and entrenched practices into the future where innovation and transformation are the cornerstones of success.

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Tech Wizard

Atique Kazi

President, data performance and digital products, GroupM India

Atique Kazi embarked on his career journey when the digital revolution was in its infancy. He finds himself fortunate to have worked with industry luminaries such as Ashok Jain and Ashok Wadhwa, on digital venture ideas, which laid the groundwork for the digital consumer era we know today.

Kazi was a witness to the transformative potential of mobile devices when he was involved with the launch of 3G mobile technology in the UK in 2003. He also worked in the Middle East to launch a D2C website for a consumer electronics giant. This confluence of technology, advertising and consumer engagement in his career spanning two decades evolved him as a tech leader and today he is president-data performance and digital products at GroupM India.

In his current role, Kazi continues to build on GroupM's best practices and technologies across the fields of data analytics, deep learning, process mining, performance marketing and business intelligence to create efficient, fast and scalable value-added processes.

For Kazi, clients and consumers are the focus of all their decisions, with the objectives and key results defined for individuals, teams, clients and partners within their ecosystem. Kazi believes that data is akin to oxygen, and the work output directly influences the volume, variety and velocity of the data. Under his leadership, AI and ML models are used to aid decision-making on audiences, pricing and creatives. Data is also used for consumer insights, market research, operational efficiency and measurement, with stringent emphasis on data handling and governance.

Kazi fosters innovation and communication through experimentation and A/B testing across all streams of work. They conduct hackathons, and an innovative programme called 'Excellerate', incubating company-wide ideas in areas like video advertising, AI and creative applications. One of the notable achievements under his leadership is the launch of India's first agency Data Management Platform, which garnered a user base of over 600 million, paving the way for substantial growth and operational efficiency.

In Kazi's words, "In the long run, there is no substitute for hard work."

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