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# INDIA Forbes

PRICE ₹200  
OCTOBER 20, 2023

DEEPTech SPECIAL

## DEEP BREADTH

Meet a bunch of entrepreneurs who are counting on science and technology to give them a competitive edge—and perhaps their own intellectual property

PLUS

VCs on the Deeptech Trail



From left:  
**Rohan Ganapathy** (Bellatrix Aerospace),  
**Nikhil Ramaswamy** (Cybernetics Laboratory or  
CynLr) and **Jogin Desai** (Eyestem)

ISSN 2278-0440



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# Enterprise 2.0

How five data mavens are marrying business with technology and innovation

## The Data Pioneer



### Avinash Raghavendra

President, Information Technology,  
Axis Bank Limited

**A**vinash Raghavendra, president, IT-Axis Bank, has always been passionate about technology in banking. With a master's in information technology from CISA, he is a recipient of various technology awards.

As a CIO, Raghavendra's role is aligned with strategic

business outcomes. His key responsibilities include enriching customer experiences, empowering employees, ensuring top-notch project execution, collaborating with various business teams to meet revenue targets, and advancing the bank's tech transformation programme while fostering innovation and risk control.

At Raghavendra's behest, the bank has heavily invested in data analytics, to bring in best-in-class personalisation capability and is leveraging alternate data to scale up customer-centric franchise. With the help of data analytics, they have deployed 100-plus use cases in more than 10 business domains to help the bank contribute to its GPS (Growth, Profitability, Sustainability) agenda.

Raghavendra has a dedicated team of enterprise architects to stay at the forefront of innovations in areas such as cloud-native and industry cloud platforms, Banking-As-A-Service, Enterprise Composability, Conversation Engines (Chatbots), Data Privacy, etc.

Raghavendra pioneered various initiatives, notably, Siddhi, an analytics-driven one-stop app for sales and managerial effectiveness, and Axis Mobile app providing customers with access to a comprehensive range of services. These digital channel enhancements have led to of 12 million Mobile Banking Monthly Active Users and more than 73 percent of current account customers being registered for internet/mobile banking. Under Raghavendra's leadership, Axis Bank has embraced emerging technologies like generative AI, ML (Axis AHA), and blockchain to improve customer experiences, streamline operations, and drive efficiency.

For Raghavendra, success revolves around simplicity, integrity, customer centricity, perseverance, and persistence. His guiding principles have been keeping technology solutions straightforward and focusing on outcomes rather than complexity. In his own words, "For anybody new starting out, I would say one should appreciate all areas and stages of one's career, and work with diverse teams to produce solutions that help achieve business and community objectives."



## Future-Ready

### Jyothirlatha B

Chief Technology Officer, Godrej Capital

**J**yothirlatha B's journey into the world of technology was propelled by insatiable curiosity and belief in the capacity of technology to create meaningful changes. From a young age, she was fascinated by the transformative power of technology to solve complex problems and improve lives. In her words, "Technology provides me with a unique opportunity to address the challenges of the real world in innovative ways and allows me to combine my creativity and problem-solving skills to make a tangible impact."

As the CTO of Godrej Capital, Jyothirlatha shoulders the responsibility of shaping the organisation's technological vision, by identifying key areas where technology can drive transformation and charting a roadmap to achieve these goals. For its effective execution, she emphasises the importance of assembling a talented tech team and empowering them to ensure that Godrej Capital's technology stack is future compatible. She believes in fostering an environment where every team member feels valued and respected. Regular knowledge-sharing and brainstorming

sessions and cross functional collaborations nurture the culture of continuous learning and innovation.

Under Jyothirlatha's dynamic leadership, the organisation is following a data-driven approach. The implementation of a centralised Snowflake platform, together with a robust analytics layer that utilises AI and ML algorithms, has empowered them to analyse data and derive meaningful insights. This approach has not only improved internal processes but also enhanced customer experiences by personalised offerings and providing targeted solutions. They are progressing towards becoming a TechFin company, providing financial services with a more customer and technology-centric approach. Through the implementation of a new platform, the company has reduced the turnaround time for issue resolution by 60 percent, resulting in improved customer satisfaction and a best-in-class Net Promoter Score.

Jyothirlatha recognises the value of focusing on the end user and fostering a culture of innovation, continuous learning, and effective communication within the team to stay ahead of the curve. She emphasises the importance of being agile, adaptable, and willing to take calculated risks in the ever-evolving tech landscape. In her words, "As technology evolves, so must we. Our success lies in our ability to pivot, innovate, and prioritise our customer's needs."



# Flying High

## George Thomas Fanthome Chief Information Officer, Bengaluru International Airport Limited

**G**eorge Thomas Fanthome, the chief information officer (CIO) at Bengaluru International Airport Limited (BIAL), is the driving force behind the innovation and growth of one of India's busiest airports. With an impressive and diverse career spanning over 34 years, Fanthome is a recipient of various prestigious accolades and awards.

As the CIO of BIAL, Fanthome's primary responsibilities and objectives encompass assembling and inspiring the right team, crafting IT and digital strategies, effective implementation within set timelines and budgets thereby ensuring ICT's operations tability, managing risk prudently, and fostering a culture of digital and IT innovation. These facets serve as a compass guiding him in contributing to the strategic direction and success of technology initiatives.

In an era dominated by data, BIAL places a significant emphasis on data-driven decision-making, a core component of the organisation's ethos. Fanthome has initiated the establishment of a comprehensive data structure in the form of a data lake that integrates all the systems at BIAL, providing a unified and holistic view of their operations. Under his guidance, they have employed advanced data visualisation and analytic tools to extract valuable insights from the wealth of data at their disposal, led by a dedicated team of experts at their Analytics Center of Excellence (COE). Fanthome fosters a culture of data literacy within the organisation through training and upskilling programmes, enabling the team members to access, interpret, and apply data-driven insights effectively, and gain proficiency in tools like Power BI and others.

Fanthome has been instrumental in implementing several strategies to nurture innovation and ensure seamless communication viz The Innovation Lab, which collaborates with startups and industry specialists, and The Ideation Portal, which empowers team members from diverse backgrounds to contribute innovative ideas. An emphasis



on cross-functional collaborations ensures that innovative ideas translate into impactful projects. By pioneering technologies like biometrics, computer vision, metaport, and SDN, Fanthome ensures that BIAL remains at the forefront of technological innovation, enhancing operational efficiency and passenger experiences. Of the many technology-driven initiatives led by Fanthome, a notable example is the DigiYatra: Biometric Technology initiative that offers an end-to-end seamless and secure airport experience that has revolutionised the passenger experience at BIAL.

Fanthome attributes his success to three guiding principles: Knowing the business, relentless execution, and building the best team. In his words, "Success is not a destination but a journey, and these principles serve as a reliable compass to navigate that journey effectively."

# Bringing Tech to Enterprise



## Yogendra Deep Singh

Chief Data Officer, Crisil Ltd

**I**n the world of finance where data reigns supreme, Yogendra Deep Singh, chief data officer at Crisil Limited, stands as a pioneer. With over two decades of experience, his journey from a finance background to a tech leader is a testament to his adaptability and foresight.

Singh's career began in finance, but the rapid integration of technology into the financial sector piqued his interest. He saw the potential for technology to enhance value across various aspects of finance, from products to processes and team dynamics.

As a tech leader, Singh emphasises aligning technology initiatives with the enterprise strategy. Every interaction with stakeholders is rooted in the overarching strategy, whether it's enhancing innovation or fulfilling corporate responsibilities across jurisdictions. This strategic alignment ensures that technology serves as a catalyst for achieving organisational goals. Singh highlights the importance of data quality and its role in strategic, investment, and operational decisions. The organisation relies on key metrics such as business value and employs scenario

analysis and simulations to validate future outcomes.

Singh's approach to fostering innovation includes giving employees the freedom to experiment, learn, and share their insights. The adoption of a scaled agile framework has improved communication, reducing silos and accelerating information flow. A recent success story under Singh's leadership is the implementation of a cutting-edge, user-configurable data ingestion platform. This innovation reduced data latency, improved data quality, and enhanced operational efficiencies, all at a fraction of a cost.

To address data protection and cybersecurity threats, Singh employs a multi-layered approach. The Chief Information Security Officer function safeguards the organisation from malicious attacks and breaches. Security by design is a core principle, with comprehensive training programs to make every system user an alert defender of data.

Singh takes an incubator approach to emerging technologies. An incubation lab identifies teams to develop prototypes addressing business challenges, which are then validated by leaders for scalability. This approach ensures that the organisation stays at the forefront of technology.

His success mantra is simple yet powerful: Have a growth mindset, prioritise continuous learning, and practise extreme collaboration. These principles have propelled his career and shaped Crisil's technology-driven journey.

# Staying Ahead Of the Tech Curve



## Sony A

**Senior general manager and chief information officer, South Indian Bank**

**S**ony A recognised early on the transformative power of technology and its impact on society. The prospect of continuous learning coupled with the use of creativity and innovation to entail groundbreaking solutions in the technology landscape motivated him to pursue a career in technology.

The senior general manager and chief information officer (CIO) at South Indian Bank has been conferred with many

prestigious awards in a more-than-three-decade-long career. Sony's responsibilities include staying ahead of the tech curve, bridging the gap between technology and business, and ensuring ethical and substantial growth. He envisions spearheading technological enhancements by building high-performance teams and inculcating a spirit of innovation and collaboration for the execution of projects. Under Sony's guidance, regular hackathons are conducted to inculcate a sense of healthy competition within teams. A collaborative environment encourages constructive exploration of multiple points of view and ideas expediting the work process.

Data plays a key role in any organisation and establishing a robust data infrastructure was a challenge for Sony initially, but it paved the way for the bank's current transformative journey. He considers data protection and cybersecurity as part and parcel of the technology journey. With comprehensive solutions such as Security Information and Event Management, Database Activity Monitoring, New Generation Firewall, Privileged Identity Management, and Fraud Risk Management, they have remained vigilant in safeguarding customer data and mitigating cyber threats.

Sony has embraced emerging technologies for the organisation's growth. The implementation of the Digital Pre-approved Personal Loan system built from scratch is an apt example of machine learning application. Exploring the potential of generative AI for personalised recommendations, leveraging machine learning for customer targeting, and pursuing various blockchain use cases have cemented their commitment to innovation.

Of the many technology-driven initiatives taken by Sony, a recent major one is the SIB OneCard Credit Card—in partnership with M/s FPL Technologies, it has helped them capitalise on the new market. This seamless process not only increased the bank's credit card lending portfolio but also eliminated cumbersome manual procedures, enabling effective customer service. "With the issuance of around 2.5 lakh cards, clocking a volume of around ₹1,000 crore, OneCard has generated great value addition to the bank," says Sony.

Sony's success mantra revolves around the philosophy of continuous self-improvement, fuelled by an insatiable curiosity and an inclination to learn across diverse domains. In his words, "A collaborative attitude combined with principle-based conflict resolution can go a long way."

# Establishing A Culture Of Continuous Innovation

## Amit Choudhary

Chief product and technology officer,  
Ecom Express

**A**tech luminary, Amit Choudhary has been instrumental in building products and platforms across various domains from telecom-tech, travel-tech, CRM-tech, fintech to his current set up in logistics-tech as the chief product and technology officer (CPTO) at Ecom Express. Enthralled by the internet's transformative potential, Choudhary's journey in the technological field led him to pursue a master's at the University of Pennsylvania collaborating with professors in solving complex problems and exploring the evolving field of internet.

As CPTO, Choudhary's prime focus is on orchestrating teams to adapt swiftly to evolving landscapes, ensuring products meet market demands at an unprecedented pace, and delivering business outcomes in the most efficient and agile fashion.

Choudhary believes in establishing a culture of continuous innovation through incentivisation and aligning business objectives as a shared vision among the teams. Empowerment, iteration and early stakeholder feedback foster an environment conducive to groundbreaking solutions. Under his leadership at Ecom Express, both business and product teams leverage a custom-built data platform to develop and validate hypothesis independently while harnessing advanced analytics for complex scenarios.

With the new advances in generative AI, Choudhary leapfrogged the technology cycle to develop India's first ever AddressGPT Large Language Model to solve the problem of address validation and correction. This transformative leap propelled operational efficiencies, setting industry benchmarks and steering the company closer to profitability. Choudhary is focussed on driving InfoSec initiatives across every device, user and network endpoint by implementing and rearchitecting the Zero Network framework, shielding the ecosystem from potential breaches.



Choudhary believes that as platform builders and problem solvers, one needs to stay curious and excited at the possibilities of new technological breakthroughs and commitment to solving problems and creating values. "Every day brings an opportunity to refine our craft, learn new skills, seek new answers and solve things better," he says.



# Creating Value With Digital Tools

## Reema Jain

Chief information and digital officer,  
Hero MotoCorp

**W**ith more than two decades in the IT industry, Reema Jain is a technology expert delivering business growth and transformation through cloud, artificial intelligence (AI), analytics and dev ops.

In her current role as chief information and digital officer at Hero MotoCorp, Jain is responsible for the digital transformation of business, driving growth and strategy by creating new value through digital tools, platforms and processes. This is done by identifying opportunities to integrate digital technologies across all facets—from product development to customer service.

Jain leads a fully empowered team to drive products and solve business problems. The team is given flexibility to experiment, find innovative solutions and is rewarded for risk taking. Initially a pilot is conducted on a small scale and if it yields results, it is scaled up.

For Jain, data sets are true assets and supported as products, and have dedicated teams to grow their potential by continuous monitoring and integration of new data sources. From warranty analytics platforms to predictive models forecasting customer behaviour, data analytics and AI are deeply embedded in shaping the technologies. She encourages her team to drive the analytics functions powered by machine learning models. Data generated through connected vehicles is used to gain valuable insights into vehicle operations, maintenance and providing personalised experience to the end user.

Jain gives top priority to cyber security and data protection, implementing measures such as vulnerability assessment tests, dev sec ops pipeline, data leakage prevention and continuous monitoring through security operation centre, to ensure risk minimisation and data security.

Jain credits her success to her quest for continuous learning. She believes that being passionate about one's role, embracing risks for high rewards, and an unyielding thirst for learning, all combine to form the ethos of a successful tech leader. 