

Interview series.

Leaders making a difference, 2024

International Women's Day Edition



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Saakshi, a strategic fintech leader, merges financial expertise with innovation, championing diversity and driving sustainable practices. Her journey embodies resilience while fostering continuous learning, defined by clarity, integrity, and empowering leadership.

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How did your journey in the fintech sector begin, and how has it progressed

My journey into the fintech sector began in 2019, marking a significant shift from my previous endeavours in consulting and other fields. It was, driven by a compelling desire to explore the dynamic landscape of financial technology. Looking back, it's clear that embracing this transition was one of the best decisions I've made. Fintech, by its very nature, is a rapidly evolving domain, expanding in diverse directions, and being a part of this evolution has been profoundly exhilarating.

Over the past four years, I've traversed a path of continuous learning and growth. Crucial to my progress has been the invaluable support and guidance from the exceptional individuals and senior leadership I've had the privilege to work alongside. From welcoming a newcomer to fostering an environment conducive to growth, the leaders here & mentors have played a pivotal role in shaping my journey.

While my background was heavily in finance prior to 2019, my aspirations extended beyond the confines of my initial role. Transitioning into a strategic role was a personal ambition, and I'm gratified to have realized it. Today, as Director of Strategy at Wibmo, a PayU Company, I find fulfilment in executing the very aspirations I once harboured. It's immensely satisfying to have reached a stage where I can align my professional pursuits with my personal aspirations, and it underscores a sense of contentment that is truly fulfilling.



Can you share with us your journey in the realm of strategy and how it has evolved? How have your background and experiences shaped your approach to strategic decision-making at Wibmo?

Reflecting on my journey, it's essential to trace back to my roots before Wibmo. As a chartered accountant immersed in the financial advisory / consulting sector, my early career revolved around rigorous financial tasks such as audits and advisory. While this provided a solid foundation, I harboured aspirations beyond traditional financial roles. A pivotal moment came when I embarked on an MBA journey, seeking to broaden my horizons and transition towards a more business-oriented trajectory. This academic pursuit was driven by a desire to augment my skill set, positioning myself for roles that transcend the boundaries of finance alone.

Transitioning from a finance-centric background to a multifaceted business perspective was not merely about abandoning my roots but rather enriching them. Having in-depth experience in finance really helped me build my new role. Embracing strategic roles demanded a blend of theoretical insights and practical acumen. My association with Wibmo coincided with the company's expansion and the establishment of a strategy function. Recognizing my potential, the CEO entrusted me with leading this pivotal aspect of the organisation. Drawing from my diverse experiences, I endeavoured to infuse new ideas and strategic vision into the company and enable growth and problem solving to the best of my knowledge.



The synergy between my financial expertise and strategic aspirations became apparent as I delved deeper into my role. Strategic decision-making necessitates a holistic understanding of business dynamics, coupled with a keen awareness of financial implications. My proficiency in finance served as a cornerstone, empowering me to decipher the nuances of numerical data and derive actionable insights. As I progress on my journey here, at Wibmo, I continue to strive to comprehend our objectives, target audience, and overarching mission.

Continuous learning has been a hallmark of my approach, epitomizing the ethos of staying abreast of industry developments. Remaining attuned to regulatory changes and market trends, such as those governed by the RBI, ensures that our strategies remain agile and responsive. Moreover, my propensity for undertaking diverse roles simultaneously has fostered a dynamic learning environment, albeit with occasional challenges. This penchant for versatility has been instrumental in navigating the intricacies of strategic decision-making, enabling me to embrace new opportunities with confidence.

In essence, my journey in strategy has been a testament to the symbiosis between professional evolution and personal aspirations owing to continuous support and guidance from the leadership. Leveraging my background and experiences, I endeavour to steer Wibmo towards sustainable growth and strategic excellence.



Q In your role, you gain insights into the heart of a company: the leadership, the people, and the company culture. What attributes do you look for and how does company culture impact the growth of a company and the creation of sustainable value?

In my experience, the essence of an organisation's culture emanates from its people. For me, culture is synonymous with the collective ethos and values upheld by its individuals. As reiterated in my previous responses, I firmly believe that people are the primary architects of organisational culture, shaping its trajectory for better or for worse.

At Wibmo, I've had the privilege of experiencing a culture characterized by receptivity and openness. Despite my unconventional background, the leadership here demonstrated unwavering faith in my potential and extended the freedom to learn and grow. This trust and encouragement served as a catalyst, propelling me to seize opportunities and strive for excellence. It's not merely about being handed opportunities but also about how one chooses to respond to them—a reciprocal exchange rooted in mutual respect and commitment.

Throughout my career, I've been fortunate to collaborate closely with C-suite executives, including the CEO, CFO, and Business Heads. Their mentorship and support have been instrumental in my personal and professional development, fostering an environment where learning is continuous, and contributions are valued. There's a prevailing ethos of collaboration and accessibility—a testament to the adage that a team's morale often mirrors that of its leadership. When evaluating an organisation, I place great emphasis on its growth-friendliness—a quality intrinsically linked to its people.

The presence of a supportive and nurturing environment can be transformative, enabling individuals to thrive and organisations to flourish. It's a dynamic interplay between culture and growth—a symbiotic relationship where the former serves as a catalyst for the latter.

Hence I truly believe that company culture is not merely a reflection of values; it's a driving force behind sustainable growth and value creation. It's about fostering a community where individuals are empowered to realize their potential, collaborate effectively, and contribute meaningfully to the organisation's overarching objectives.



Wibmo operates in a highly competitive market. How

do you navigate the dynamic landscape of online payment services, particularly in an era of rapid digital transformation and evolving consumer behaviours?

Navigating the dynamic landscape of online payment services demands a comprehensive approach that balances market intelligence with the company's overall vision. At Wibmo, we adopt a two-pronged strategy, combining an "outside-in" perspective with an "inside-out" lens to chart our course amidst rapid digital transformation and evolving consumer behaviours.

The "outside-in" perspective entails keeping a pulse on external factors shaping the industry. This involves diligent market research, continuous engagement with stakeholders, and staying abreast of regulatory developments. For instance, we observe the government's proactive measures to regulate the sector and encourage innovations to enhance digital payments and risk management, which significantly influence the market dynamics. Moreover, understanding evolving consumer behaviours, such as the growing preference for credit card usage and emerging trends like "Buy now pay later," is paramount. By aligning our strategies with these market realities, we remain agile and responsive to evolving demands.

Simultaneously, the "inside-out" approach emphasizes leveraging our internal capabilities and strategic priorities. While the market presents numerous opportunities, it's imperative to prioritize initiatives aligned with our strengths and organisational objectives. This entails a meticulous assessment of our short term goals, capacity, resources, and long-term vision.

Effective navigation in this competitive landscape also hinges on fostering continuous engagement with our customers. By establishing open channels of communication, we gain invaluable insights into their pain points, preferences, and evolving needs. This proactive approach enables us to anticipate customer requirements and tailor our offerings, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Ultimately, our approach revolves around value creation—understanding market dynamics, leveraging internal capabilities, and prioritising customer-centric initiatives. By embracing a balanced strategy that integrates external market insights with internal strengths, Wibmo remains poised to thrive amidst the dynamic landscape of online payment services, driving innovation, and delivering unparalleled value to our customers.





Leaders are increasingly turning to technology and innovation for inspiration and a competitive edge. In what capacity do you see technology and innovation creating more sustainable business practices? What would you say are the other key drivers to create a sustainable business that is resilient and better positioned to withstand industry volatility, particularly in emerging markets?

As a leader in the fintech space, I firmly believe that technology and innovation play a pivotal role in fostering sustainable business practices. Our business model not only prioritises efficiency and security but also contributes to broader sustainability objectives. By facilitating the transition from offline to online transactions, we promote digitisation, thereby reducing paper usage and fostering a more eco-friendly environment. Moreover, our focus on providing secure digital payment solutions ensures not just convenience but also sustainability in financial transactions.

However, sustainability extends beyond operational practices. As an organisation, we recognize the importance of minimizing our environmental footprint and actively pursue initiatives to become more eco-friendly.

Furthermore, our sustainability efforts extend beyond environmental considerations. We are dedicated to creating a positive social impact by empowering our stakeholders, including customers, employees, and communities. Through various CSR initiatives, such as digital literacy campaigns, we strive to contribute to societal well-being and promote economic empowerment.

In addition to technology and innovation, fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within our organisation is another crucial driver of sustainability. By championing diversity and providing equal opportunities for all employees, we cultivate a more inclusive workplace culture. This not only enhances employee satisfaction and productivity but also strengthens our resilience as an organisation.

Ultimately, the key to creating a sustainable business that withstands industry volatility lies in a holistic approach that encompasses technological innovation, environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and inclusive practices. By aligning our business strategies with these principles, we position ourselves to navigate challenges effectively and thrive in emerging markets.



Embrace every opportunity to expand your skills and understanding, whether it's through formal education, mentorship, or hands-on experience. Cultivate a mindset of continuous learning, curiosity, and adaptability.



Diversity and inclusion are increasingly recognised as critical factors for business success. How does Wibmo promote diversity and inclusion within its workforce and ensure equal opportunities for all employees?

At Wibmo, we are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace culture where every employee feels valued, respected, and empowered to thrive. Our approach to promoting diversity and inclusion centres around creating equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their background or identity.

We recognize that diversity encompasses a broad spectrum of experiences, perspectives, and talents. As such, we actively cultivate a workforce that reflects this diversity across various dimensions, including gender, ethnicity, age, and

cultural background. Our recruitment processes prioritize meritocracy, ensuring that candidates are evaluated based on their skills, qualifications, and potential contributions to the organisation, rather than any personal characteristics.

Beyond recruitment, we invest in initiatives and programmes aimed at supporting the professional development and advancement of all employees. We provide training, mentorship, and career progression opportunities designed to nurture talent and enable individuals to reach their full potential. Additionally, we promote a culture of open communication and collaboration, where diverse viewpoints are welcomed and respected, contributing to innovation and creativity within the organisation. Leadership plays a crucial role in driving our diversity and inclusion efforts forward. Our leaders lead by example, championing D&I initiatives and actively advocating for a workplace culture that values diversity and promotes inclusivity. They are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents, fostering a sense of belonging and collective success.

Our goal is to create a workplace where diversity is celebrated as a source of strength, and inclusion is ingrained in everything we do. By fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion, we not only enrich the employee experience but also drive innovation, creativity, and sustainable business success.

“Commit to excellence in all that you do, honouring your responsibilities and commitments with diligence and professionalism. Uphold ethical standards and demonstrate integrity in your actions, earning the trust and respect of your peers, mentors, and leaders.”



As you know, this interview is part of a series called “Leaders Making a Difference.” What would you say you’re most proud of in terms of your leadership?

When reflecting on my journey as a leader, I find pride in the dual role of being both a leader and a mentor. To me, these roles are intertwined, as leadership inherently involves guiding and nurturing a team towards collective success. Whether leading a large team or working closely with just one team member, I’ve learned invaluable lessons about the significance of clarity, inclusivity, and accountability.

First and foremost, clarity of outcomes is paramount. I firmly believe in setting clear expectations and working backwards from the desired outcome. This approach not only guides my planning but also empowers my team to perform with purpose and direction.

Inclusivity is another cornerstone of my leadership philosophy. I strive to create an environment where every team member feels heard, valued, and empowered to contribute. I’ve often found that fresh perspectives, regardless of experience level, can spark innovative solutions and foster a sense of ownership among team members.

Furthermore, I recognise that as a leader, I am a representative of my company at all times. I take pride in upholding the values and reputation of my organisation, understanding that my actions reflect not just myself but also the collective identity of the company. This sense of ownership drives me to approach every task with diligence, professionalism, and a commitment to excellence.

Finally, compassion and empathy are guiding principles in my leadership approach. I believe in leading with heart, understanding that genuine connection and support are essential for fostering a positive and productive work environment. By prioritising empathy and compassion, I aim to cultivate a culture of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect within my team and beyond.

Leadership for me, is about empowering others to reach their full potential, fostering a culture of continuous growth and learning, and making a positive difference in the lives of those I have the privilege to lead.



Given your experience as a mentor, what three top tips would you give to someone just starting their career in fintech?

Reflecting on my own journey and experiences, I'd offer three key tips to those embarking on their careers in fintech or any industry for that matter:

- 1. Stay Hungry to Learn:** In an ever-evolving industry like fintech, the thirst for knowledge is invaluable. Embrace every opportunity to expand your skills and understanding, whether it's through formal education, mentorship, or hands-on experience. Cultivate a mindset of continuous learning, curiosity, and adaptability, as it will propel you forward and keep you motivated amidst challenges and changes.
- 2. Work Diligently and with Integrity:** Hard work and integrity are the cornerstones of success in any career, including fintech. Commit to excellence in all that you do, honouring your responsibilities and commitments with diligence and professionalism. Uphold ethical standards and demonstrate integrity in your actions, earning the trust and respect of your peers, mentors, and leaders. Remember, integrity is non-negotiable and forms the foundation of your reputation and credibility in the industry.
- 3. Remain Open-minded and Embrace Diversity:** Embrace diversity in perspectives, experiences, and approaches, recognizing the richness it brings to problem-solving and innovation. Stay open to new ideas, feedback, and experiences, as they offer valuable opportunities for growth and learning. Foster a collaborative and inclusive mindset, valuing the contributions of others regardless of their background or tenure in the industry.

Remember, every interaction is an opportunity to learn and broaden your horizons.

By embodying these principles—embracing learning, working diligently with integrity, and fostering openness and inclusivity—you'll not only navigate the complexities of the fintech landscape but also forge a fulfilling and impactful career path in this dynamic and transformative industry.



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