#### **StorytelHER Record02 - Speak up your mind!**



Do you also have a dream of getting into big tech companies like Google but believe that the only way to get into it is to be a 5 star coder at the online coding platforms?

The protagonist of my StorytelHER Record 02, Surabhi Sharma is working excellently against all these misconceptions.

Surabhi works as a Site Program Manager at Google Hyderabad and has been mentoring the scholars of Google supported TalentSprint Women Engineers Program, including me.

On asking about her journey so far, she explained,

“*I haven’t started my career journey in tech, my areas of interest were communications, branding, strategy, and employee engagement. But like most of the students, when I started my career 13 years back, my dream companies were those that featured in the “Best brands to work for” - Google, BMW, and Tatas. I knew that the core business of my dream companies was product engineering, a skill totally unrelated to my field of study, however, I was also aware that there is no dearth of non tech roles in any company around the world. So I started exploring and immersing myself in roles that required skills like communications, creative thinking and strategy. Today, I am happy to share that I got to work at each of my dream companies.”*

Throughout my personal journey in college, I have seen people forcibly getting into coding because they want to join top companies like Google and Microsoft. This has two major disadvantages, first, if you’re doing in without interest, you won’t be reaching out too far and second, it’s injustice to your abilities and powers”

***You don’t always need to change your skill set because of your dreams, rather learn to use your skills and interests as a tool to achieve your dreams.***

On the process of getting into engineering companies, Surabhi explained,

“*There are a lot of roles and opportunities available in the tech world today. If you skim-through the Careers pages of any company, you will get to see the variety of roles that are available for tech, non-tech, freshers as well as experienced professionals. The key is to know what you want to do and what is your strength. Once you have figured that out, craft your resume meticulously and submit it on the Careers pages of tech firms, leverage your LinkedIn to apply to relevant job postings. Apart from these obvious steps, invest time in participating in hackathons and tech events like Hashcode, Code Jam, etc. These platforms help to expand your network and also connect you with tech recruiters.”*

On speaking about the gender bias faced in the industry,

“ *I am proud of my present organization because it is a place where everyone is valued and respected, but I did face some gender bias when I started my career in 2007. Once, I was not allowed to go for a work trip because my manager believed that I was too young to travel alone. Another time, I was judged for speaking my mind, for my choice of clothes, and even the highlights done on my hair. Irrespective of what came my way, I faced every situation head on. I continued to do what I thought was right for me and had some critical conversations with a few of my bosses on letting me make decisions for myself!”*

***In life, nothing comes easy, you need to speak up and let people know your exact thoughts and desires. Always remember that if you can’t speak for yourself, nobody in this world will ever be doing it for you!***

On work life balance, Surabhi has some very strange thoughts,

“*In my view, there is nothing like a work-life balance. I think the evolved term is “work-life fitment” which means that you create a work schedule, which fits into your personal life. It is custom to each individual and you need to figure out what works for you as it totally depends upon your commitments and priorities.*

*My only suggestion is, to create a schedule that doesn't make you feel guilty. If you end up blaming yourself for the work-life fit plan that you follow, then it is not worth it. The right fit empowers you. So take your time, and just like you try various clothes before buying one, try several work-life fit plans, and go for something that makes you feel good about what you are doing.*”

Many times, after listening to an interview or a career guru, we think that we should be following that particular person in every manner and only then we will be able to succeed. On this, Surabhi shared her opinion saying,

“*I don't think that it helps to emulate any leader or a successful person. I say that because you do not know where they are coming from or what was the background when they made a certain choice or a certain decision. Instead of trying to be like someone, carve your own path and set your journey. Take pride in who you are and what are your strengths.”*

*“So, do not try to imitate the interview experiences. Instead, follow the trial and error method to come up with an optimum solution of your life. Focus on the skills and learning you can get from the experiences rather than following the lifestyle.”*

When asked about failure management, Surabhi said,

“*None can keep failures at bay. Hence, do not be too hard on yourself or compare yourself with someone else. Keep practical expectations from yourself and stop believing that you will be a loser if you don’t reach the goal that you set for yourself.”*

*“Feeling bad is natural, the important thing is to move on and learn from your experiences. Do not force things or any tight schedules on yourself. Express yourself, deliberate over what happened, learn from it and move on!”*

**To move out of a certain thing, you need to get everything outside from you in whichever form you’re comfortable with and once you’re done with that, focus on the analysis part that could have done better and stay out of the trap of victimisation and the baba syndrome!**

On asking about what advice she’ll be giving to other women, Surabhi said,

“*For women, seeking allies is very important. During my career journey, I have noticed that women do not support women enough. We definitely need to change that. We need more empowered women, empowering women.”*

*“Maybe someone is undergoing self doubt, maybe someone is behaving in a way that looks immature to others, instead of passing judgements, if we could just reach out and lend a hand of support, it will be helpful and far more productive.”*

*“Other than that, be confident and take yourself wherever you want to go, but do not forget to take one more individual along! That is the only way of paying it forward or giving back to the ecosystem that helped you grow.”*

***Explore the world around, have fun and learn to stand for yourself by speaking up your mind!”***

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**About Surabhi Sharma**

Surabhi works as a Site Program Manager at Google, Hyderabad. She has over 13 years of experience in corporate strategy, marketing, branding & communications with fortune 500 companies across multiple industries. She loves crafting creative solutions for the business.

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**About StorytelHER**

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