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EDITOR'S PICK

THE PROMISE OF WEB3 AND BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY

DECODING THE GO-TO WAY FOR MAXIMIZING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY?

Dr. Kogila Vani Gopalan
IT Director – India CoE Leader,
Flowserve Corporation

10 BEST
tech
LEADERS
IN INDIA 2023

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COVER STORY

10 BEST TECH LEADERS IN INDIA 2023

Passionate About Bringing Out the Best of Technology & People

Dr. KOGILA VANI GOPALAN

IT Director – India CoE Leader,
FLOWSERVE CORPORATION

> To drive lasting change in the enterprise, IT leaders must step outside of their technological confines to be a more active business partner with the entire organisation.

"Transformational leaders love the people they lead," says Dr Vani Gopalan, IT Director and India CoE Leader, Flowserve. At Flowserve's India CoE, she is transforming the field for everyone to play around in the most powerful mode, be it clients or employees. Dr Vani's mission is to enable one million graduates to successfully transition from campus to corporate life and climb the corporate ladder. She is also passionate about bringing the best out of people through constructive coaching, and mentoring is her passion. Dr Vani has successfully impacted the lives of over 5,000 executives, women, and students to date.

Her Doctorate in Organisational Leadership along with certifications in ITIL, APM, Prince2, and Prosci Change Practitioner enable her to deliver her duties effortlessly. She is a recipient of several awards, such as the Unified Brainz of India Award De Excellence for Innovation and Organisational Leadership Excellence.

TradeFlock interviewed Dr Vani to understand her process and how she is bringing a positive change within the organisation enabling and empowering more youth to have not just a job but a career that has no stopping.

Can you please walk us through your journey at Flowserve?

Flowserve manufactures and services fluid motion control solutions for the world's toughest, most critical applications Our history began over 200 years ago, and today, Flowserve employs more than 15,000 associates in 300-plus locations globally, including over 180 quick response centres that provide aftermarket parts and services to customers. Flowserve offers more than 100 distinct pump models and a wide range of valve and seal products.

When I joined Flowserve in mid-2015, we nearly were 30 odd people in IT India CoE. Today, we have significantly grown to employ 55% of the entire IT employee base in the organisation. In my role as the IT Director, India CoE Leader, I am responsible for growth, efficiency, and profitability by leading strategic IT initiatives that generate significant RoI and enhance user experience. The India CoE is responsible for IT project delivery in the latest and niche technology advancements, global application support and enhancements, system governance, and cloud infrastructure management. With a motivational leadership style, I leverage innovative and collaborative broad functional expertise.

How did you transform IT CoE at Flowserve?

I, together with our IT senior leadership, worked tirelessly to transform the entire IT CoE in India. We had a few targets set in our minds. To better support the current complex economic and business environment, we transformed technical support and systems management into a highly optimised asset for the Flowserve enterprise. We also transitioned from a high-cost support model with disconnected support groups to a lower-cost model with a dedicated focus on our CoE in India.

As a CoE, we have put greater focus on addressing the challenges of dealing with global attrition by coming up with greater retention strategies, fostering workplace happiness best practices, and focusing on talent development while striving to be the employer of choice. We can proudly say that we are at the lowest attrition rate of <3% right now. We've also introduced our first-ever Flowserve Technology Associate Program, uniquely designed to provide new graduates with holistic exposure to and experience with cutting-edge technologies. It is a talent programme aimed at recruiting cohorts of highly skilled, early-career professionals to develop into future leaders. This model has proven highly successful as Gen Z brings a new form of diversity called generational diversity, which is certainly having a positive influence on the CoE. At the CoE, a people-first culture is in our DNA, and we lead by example. We provide them with behaviour-based learning and purposeful collaboration, host team events, encourage employee engagement, and conduct Health@ Work events.

As organisations began to reopen offices, although we were eager to see employees back at the workplace, we recognised that forcing them to return is a disengagement driver. Therefore, we ensured the office is a compelling place to come back to and is aligned with our key business objectives. We slightly shifted our outlook to promote the office atmosphere more as a place for networking, socialising, informal collaboration, learning and development, and for well-being and brainstorming.

In your opinion, what are the crucial traits that tech leaders should possess to bring about transformational change in their businesses?

To drive lasting change in the enterprise, IT leaders must step outside of their technological confines to be a more active business partner with the entire organisation. They should have an enterprise mindset, follow the 3 E strategy (engage, empower, and empathise), inspire others and put people first, be customer-centric, have a data-centric mindset, and invest in talent.

What advice would you give to aspiring directors in the industry?

Climbing the career ladder in IT is no easy feat because one of the biggest challenges faced by technologists on the path to the top is "fearing the self-threat of not fitting in". Some strategies to overcome this fear and make you ready to shift as a leader are: continuous learning, unlearning, and relearning; adaptability; valuing yesterday but living today; moving forward courageously amid uncertainty; realising today's best will not meet tomorrow's challenges; and re-creating yourself. The most important thing is to be royal in your own fashion. ◆