

Contact

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Top Skills

Telecom Domain Leadership
Market Development
First of its kind breakthroughs

Languages

Tamil
English

Honors-Awards

TATA Innovations Award:
Breakthrough Innovation on Modular
Mobile Phones
Brand Anchor
Client Delight - C-Suite Testimonial:
Special Award
First Platform Deal - Global Award
Best Transformational Deal in APAC
region

Bala Shanmugakumar

Telecom Trendsetter | From AI to 5G: Building Revenue, Purpose
& the Future | Award-Winning Growth Catalyst for Bold Business
Reinvention

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Summary

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.” – Peter Drucker.

This quote perfectly defines me—a visionary leader fueled by curiosity, innovation, and a drive to push boundaries.

Throughout my 23+ years in telecom and technology, I’ve led industry-first innovations, driven \$750M+ net new revenues in large deals, and spearheaded high-impact market expansions.

My passion lies in incubating and scaling practices, value-driven growth acceleration, and strategic execution at scale.

I began my journey at TCS, progressing through solutions, delivery, sales, and P&L leadership roles. As a Client Partner, North America, I built and scaled the Cable Practice, driving 1500% growth in 18 months—an early testament to my market expansion expertise.

At Tech Mahindra, as Country Head, Philippines, I led a \$25M+ telecom portfolio growth, unlocking new revenue through digital platforms in a highly competitive market

At Cognizant, as Global Head of Business Development (CME Practice), I led \$350M+ in new revenue, spearheaded large transformation deals, and helped acquire 25+ new logos while building high-performance teams.

At L&T, as Head of Business Solutions (Telecom BU), I pioneered India’s first carrier-grade private 5G rollout, transforming manufacturing plant productivity through AI-driven automation.

A defining moment, during this stint, was unveiling my brainchild—a 5G Smart Farming innovation—a technology-enabled social

impact initiative, in the presence of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, alongside Airtel and CDAC. This milestone underscores my ability to blend innovation, strategy, and execution at scale for both business and social impact.

Now, as Commercial Head of CMT Industry Solutions at Cognizant, I continue to incubate and scale next-gen AI solutions, foster break-through innovation and drive exponential growth through domain leadership with clients.

My Core Strengths:

- Strategy | Innovation | Monetization | Thought Leadership
- 5G | AI | Emerging Technologies
- Large Deals | Value Selling | Practice Incubation & Buildout
- Pioneering "First-of-its-Kind" Breakthroughs
- Building High-Performance Teams

Beyond telecom, I am also a passionate short filmmaker, with international acclaim and award-winning projects. This creative mindset fuels my leadership, storytelling, and strategic thinking in business.

I am eager to connect with industry leaders, partners and innovators to shape the next wave of telecom and AI transformation.

Reach out at bala.values@gmail.com or drop a message here.

Experience

Cognizant

Assistant Vice President, Industry Solutions Group - Telecom, Media, Technology BU

November 2023 - Present (1 year 8 months)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Steering transformational growth (40+% YoY) and business acceleration for CMT BU, through domain solutions led value creation. Driving Adaptive AI strategy for the TMT segment.

Domain Solutions and AI led growth through business reimagination:

- Pioneering strong growth, P&L, and significant TCV expansion, strategizing on 3 big bets in Telecom - B/OSS, Networks, and Domain aligned AI.
- Created multi-million dollar high impact transformation deals, reimagining client's businesses through a perpetual Adaptive AI roadmap, based on design thinking principles.
- Shaped up "Reimagination-as-a-service" design thinking model as a repeatable vehicle for deal engineering, co-creating business/technology blue prints with clients, delivering high double digit growth.
- Enhanced network efficiency by 20% through Agentic AI in OSS on modern platforms (like Rakuten/Palantir) for a Tier-1 NA CSP.
- Enabled rapid revenue growth (20+% in sales) for multiple EU CSPs by transforming their BSS through strategic partnerships with Oracle, Beyondnow, Servicenow and CSG.
- Delivered ~30% cost savings with a next-gen WiFi7 device engineering solution for an MSO in NA.
- Led the reimagination and transformation of Ad Ops processes leveraging AI for a leading Media/Telecom conglomerate in the UK.
- Spearheaded digital reimagination of channels and customer experience at a Tier-1 CSP in NA. ensuring their readiness for the future.
- Pioneering the "Future of Telecom Orders" across top Tier-1 CSPs, leveraging Agentic AI, delivering significant improvement in revenue. and reducing cost/order, fallouts.
- Driving transformational large deals through reimagination of Smart NOC and Field operations, leveraging AI interventions.
- Leading Adaptive AI, Smart NOC, and channel reimagination coupled with domain thought leadership to drive exponential growth.

L&T SMART WORLD & COMMUNICATION (Now LTTS)

Head of Business Solutions (Consulting), Communications BU

November 2021 - November 2023 (2 years 1 month)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Incubated and scaled a private networks practice to \$50+Cr sales and \$350+Cr TCV pipeline, driving Industry 4.0 transformation through Private 5G, AI and Cloud.

Drove Go-To-Market strategy and revenue acceleration through business consulting for the Telecom BU delivering 9000% growth in less than 12 months.

Pioneered strategic telecom initiatives at client's C-Suite and board level, accelerating digital adoption that bridge industry gaps.

Key Achievements & Thought Leadership:

Industry 4.0 Transformation with Private 5G & AI:

- Led India's first production-scale Private 5G deployment, securing #50Cr TCV in just 6 months across major industries.
- Integrated 200+ legacy OT machines into a 5G-enabled IIoT network, enabling two-way telemetry and increasing plant productivity by 25%, delighting client's board.
- Developed ROI-driven Private Network strategies—navigating greenfield vs. brownfield P5G challenges, deploying telco cloud, and optimizing O-RAN & traditional RAN in carrier-grade networks.

Brand Ambassador & Industry Recognition:

- Conceptualized and launched an AI & 5G-enabled AgriTech solution, unveiled by Hon'ble PM of India, Shri Narendra Modi at IMC 2022.
- Built it to be an affordable, "Make in India" DIY AgriTech kit, in partnership with Airtel & CDAC.
- Addressed 7 key challenges through AI led crop health management, IoT-led yield optimization, and climate-resilient farming through IOT.

Consultative growth through Industry Solutions:

- Secured #12Cr TCV enabling Private LTE solutions for an engineering firm, solving complex OT and plant productivity challenges.
- Built a #350Cr+ pipeline through 100% consultative selling, eliminating RFPs by blending domain expertise with digital innovation delivering tangible value.

Practice Buildout:

- Pioneered the "Telecom as a Horizontal" model, driving business value across industries.
- Built a high-performance team with multi domain expertise and Full-Stack Telco skills.

Cognizant

6 years 7 months

Head of Global Business Development, Telecom, Media, and Education BU

January 2021 - October 2021 (10 months)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Drove global BU strategy, domain solutions and presales driving \$70M new revenues for the global Telecom, Media and Education BU.

Collectively drove \$350M net new revenues in CME BU as Head of Business Development, across my promotion arc and elevation in the role: Associate Director → Director → Senior Director.

Global Strategy and Transformation Deals:

- Led the business unit's three-year global strategy creation (FY21-24).
- Devised GTM plan for Telco network cloud with 5G/IOT players, hyper scalers, SAAS partners and niche modern network engineering companies.
- Played key role in monetizing Telco Cloud solution through securing a strategic deal to deploy 5G Telco Cloud at a European CSP (\$10M TCV).
- Key role in 5 new logo acquisitions in the US.

Director and Head of Global Business Development, Telecom and Media BU

October 2017 - December 2020 (3 years 3 months)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Led strategy, business solutions and techno-commercial solutions driving \$200M in new revenues for the Telecom & Media BU,

Large , Transformation Deals:

- Orchestrated penetration strategy for a US enterprise telco by transforming OSS automation (\$3M revenue), leveraging relationships with client's GCC in India.
- Developed a multi-pronged approach to acquire a strategic "dream logo" in the US northwest region through analytics solutions and data engineering (\$30M TCV)
- Led positioning and pursuit for the "first-ever" annuity ITO deal with a leading US publisher, differentiating through automation and digital publishing (\$35M TCV).
- Accelerated elevation in role, based on high impact results, expanding accountability 10X within 18 months into the organization.
- Pioneered a new "Thematic" approach to monetizing client visits with a 100% success rate of conversions.

Market Expansion through Innovation:

- Key driver in 15+ new logo acquisitions globally over three years..

- Spearheaded ASEAN market penetration, advising a Malaysian telco on 5G/IoT B2V monetization strategies.
- Devised an entry strategy for a European publisher seeking adjacent revenue streams via sports and fan engagement, leveraging a unique “Live Sports Engagement” proposition.

Practice leadership & buildout:

- Established vertical-specific partnerships with disruptive startups, collaborating with Anthill Cohorts – a global startup accelerator.
- Represented Cognizant at TM Forum Asia 2018 & 2019, positioning 5G, AI/ML, AR/VR, and blockchain led telco solutions.

Associate Director and Head of Global Business Development, Telecom BU

April 2015 - September 2017 (2 years 6 months)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Spearheaded business solutions and techno-commercial strategy driving \$80M new revenues through high-impact transformation deals for the Telecom BU,

Practice Buildout & Large Deals:

- Delivered 2000% growth with the BU's first telecom digital operations deal at a leading Australian CSP.
- Optimized the CSP's order-to-activate operations with AI/ML, digitization and process re-imagination, achieving 50% cycle time reduction, 30% cost savings and episode NPS improvement.
- Secured three major BSS transformation deals across the UK, Middle East, and US cable segment, contributing \$50M TCV collectively.

Practice Leadership:

- Elevated Cognizant's brand, propelling its ranking in Gartner's Magic Quadrant to the “Challenger” category for the first time since unit incubation.
- Cultivated a high-performance team culture, driving domain thought leadership and innovation beyond bid management to accelerate business growth.

Tech Mahindra

Country Head, Telecommunications and Media BU

May 2013 - April 2015 (2 years)

Manila, Philippines

Spearheaded strategic growth and P&L for Tech Mahindra in a highly competitive TMT market delivering \$26M in annual revenues.

Market Expansion through Strategic Initiatives:

- Within four months, I onboarded two new accounts and scaled an existing one, making Tech Mahindra the only SI vendor partnered with all three major Philippine telcos, concurrently.
- Devised an innovative “GTM Special Purpose Vehicle” to capture the market position.
- Positioned a live track-and-trace solution, for a global logistics provider based in Manila, in partnership with a leading CSP, reducing client losses due to pilferage by 20%.
- Played a key role as a founding member of the Philippines M2M/IoT Consortium, collaborating with OEMs, CSPs and verticals to drive B2V adoption.

Innovation & Digital Excellence:

- Pioneered lead generation for a media conglomerate prior to their MVNO launch, delivering 300K leads on day zero; Secured Tech Mahindra’s first-ever platform-based solution sale in the region.
- Drove their social media analytics strategically, monetizing volumes of 25+M monthly transactions, while introducing a pay-per-mention non-linear revenue model, generating 65% margins for Tech Mahindra.
- Led a command center approach for real-time coverage of “THE PAPEL’s” historic visit, earning board-level recognition; Expanding Tech Mahindra’s presence across six additional business units.
- Integrated command center outcomes to client’s Salesforce CRM improving conversions by 10%.

Transformative Deals & Consultative Sales:

- Led ERP and GRC transformation at a CSP, through consultative advisory and a strong partnership with SAP.
- Co-developed a B2B GTM plan leveraging IoT for utility, healthcare and transportation sectors.

With a passion for digital innovation, I pioneered strategic growth, forging high-impact partnerships, and delivering cutting-edge solutions that redefined Tech Mahindra as the market leader.

Tata Consultancy Services

12 years

Client Partner, Telecom Business Unit

January 2010 - May 2013 (3 years 5 months)

Virginia, United States (2010-2012) and Kuala Lumpur , ML (2013)

Led strategic growth and market creation, driving \$180M in TCV across US (predominantly) and Malaysia, for the Telecom and Cable BU.

Practice Incubation & Market Creation:

- As Cable Industry Partner, founded and scaled the MSO practice, achieving 1500% growth in 18 months and driving \$150M TCV.
- Secured one of TCS's largest telco/cable ITO annuity deals with a leading digital MSO in NA.
- Expanded the cable practice nationwide, winning two additional accounts:
 - Launched a mobile customer engagement channel for a Tier-2 cable provider in St. Louis, improving brand relevance in the operating markets.
 - Delivered E2E network QoE assurance framework for a leading East Coast cable provider, reimagining network experience and resilience.
- Provided CXO advisory for a landmark \$10M omni-channel initiative at an ASEAN CSP, shaping the digital transformation strategy within Telecom BU.

Practice Buildout:

- Represented TCS as a thought leader at The Cable Show (2010-2012), showcasing cutting-edge domain solutions and innovations.
- Repurposed telco offerings for the cable segment, creating MSO-focused assets , accelerating Cable GTM with strategic clients.
- Pioneered a disruptive "Immersion" strategy within a client's contact center, earning executive recognition for innovative practice-buildout.

Relationship Manager, NA Telecom Industry Solutions Unit

May 2008 - January 2010 (1 year 9 months)

Denver, Colorado, United States

Led portfolio expansion, P&L and CXO relationships at a strategic client relationship (\$60M revenues) in mid-west US, driving 30% growth YOY.

Strategic Growth Initiatives:

- Secured the "first-ever" annuity deal in the incumbent CSP's Wholesale BU through IT lifecycle transformation (\$12M TCV).
- Pioneered an output-based commercial model differentiation, instrumental in securing the first managed services deal in a 15-year relationship.

- Turned around portfolio margin positively, through stringent productivity measures and automation.
- Spearheaded diversification beyond IT, into CTO group; Complemented B2B and B2C product innovation (0.5M TCV).
- Advised on CDN transformation, video NOC evolution, and video engineering COTS platform migration to enhance video distribution experiences.

Innovative Portfolio Expansion:

- Devised a disruptive strategy for clients' India captive vision, blueprinting and executing the "first-ever" captive transition.
- Converted this GCC move, perceived as revenue cannibalization initiative, into a strategic advantage, earning CIO endorsement for a long-term partnership.
- Secured Test Data Management program for B2B and B2C businesses, mitigating peak season challenges, blending GCC in execution, for differentiation.

Business Innovations Manager

February 2007 - May 2008 (1 year 4 months)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Steered growth through product innovation and turned a cost center (telecom labs) into a profit center, through monetization of solutions.

Monetization through Business Innovation:

- Established an advanced telecom showcase center at TCS, focusing on disruptive, future-ready solutions.
- Pioneered first-ever monetization (3M TCV) of this innovation center by digitizing audit processes for a leading media research firm:
 - Solution deployed across 60+ countries using customized PDAs and cost-effective feature phone models.
 - Earned Group CIO-level recognition and recognition from TCS leadership.
 - Set up a dedicated customer lab within 48 hours for customized solution showcase.
- Championed "Telecom as a Horizontal" to create cross-industry solutions for Retail, Media, OEMs, and e-Commerce.

People Innovation driving Bottom-line Turn-around:

- Designed and institutionalized Program DALI, an industry-first people transformation initiative, driving cultural transformation inspired by "Innovator" Salvador Dali.

- Addressed excess bench, cost burdens and enhanced resource utilization through the deploying a model to accelerate freshers' readiness for business.
- Conceptualized and implemented "Night Gear", an innovative infrastructure utilization strategy:
 - Transformed night shifts into mentorship-driven talent acceleration/asset creation initiatives.
 - Enabled fresh recruits to rapidly mature into high-value telecom analysts.

Business Excellence:

- Recognized by TCS leadership for groundbreaking contributions, by being nominated for Ambassador Corps , TCS Business Excellence Program, chosen from the top 0.01 percentile of the organization.

Project Manager

September 2005 - January 2007 (1 year 5 months)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Led successful delivery , CSAT and ASAT managing mission critical BSS applications for a US based Telco.

Complex Program Management:

- Established the "First ever" 24*7 innovative production support model for 300+ applications, including mission critical ones, with 100% execution at offshore, in a record time of 4 months.
- Strengthened trust and partnership with clients, through this initiative by delivering 30% cost savings proactively.
- The success in establishing this program later helped scale up the product support and operations for over 250 applications from offshore.
- Importantly, the associate care index was also maintained at >90%, even in a challenging 24*7 production support environment, through innovative aspirational programs/skill development and cultural drive.
- Led program to be the chosen brand level showcase for ISO and CMMI certifications, successfully demonstrating high quality delivery, value creation for clients and turn around in associate index.

Technical Project Manager

August 2003 - September 2005 (2 years 2 months)

Denver, Colorado, United States

Led Technical Project Management of Order Management Systems for a Tier-1CSP, delivering 20% reduction in order fall-outs, through automation (screen-scrapping) and improvement in data validation accuracy.

- Stabilized order management systems and processes, through technology transformation, managing debt.
- Led conversion of order fallout handling systems from Perl to Open Systems (Java based), eliminating technical debt and risks.
- Built a strong relationship with business users through high impact continuous improvement initiatives and automation.

Software Developer

June 2001 - August 2003 (2 years 3 months)

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Delivered promise on new product rollout across 14 states, reducing order fallouts through automation, and delivering software on time, budget and exceeding quality.

Created risk-free product rollouts and new order intakes, delivering a failproof order management and fallout handling system (Perl and Java technologies).

Education

Coimbatore Institute of Technology

Bachelor of Engineering, Mechanical Engineering · (September 1997 - March 2001)

LV Prasad Film & TV Academy

Certificate in Film Making , Story, Scripting, Direction · (March 2021 - January 2022)